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Let the Chits Fall Where They May? Executive and Constituency Influences on Congressional Voting on NAFTA

The approval of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) by the House of Representatives in November 1993 depended heavily on lobbying by President Clinton. I show that this lobbying power does not inhere in the presidency, but was strategic. Clinton concentrated his lobbying on members who were either undecided or leaning against NAFTA in September, as well as members who received large contributions from business and from districts where the president did well. I use estimates of lobbying efforts derived from probit analysis to predict the NAFTA vote. This endogenous measure of contacting had the third greatest effect for Democratic House members voting on NAFTA (behind only presidential support) and labor political action committee contributions. But for Republicans, contact seemed to have a perverse negative effect.

Congress challenged conventional wisdom in late 1993. It passed, by comfortable margins, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a free trade pact with Mexico and Canada. We often presume that legislators attempt to faithfully represent their constituents (cf. Mayhew 1974). Year after year, the American public has preferred protectionist policies to free trade (Schneider 1992) and for most of 1993, NAFTA was no exception. The legislative branch is also said to be hospitable to particularistic interests that press for protection (O'Halloran 1993). The Democrats, originally the party of free trade, had become the party of higher tariffs in the 1970s. Key elements in the Democratic coalition, particularly organized labor, fought free trade (and NAFTA in particular). The third ranking Democrat in the House leadership, Rep. David Bonior (MI), led the opposition to the free trade pact; the number two leader, Majority Leader Richard Gephardt (MO), was less vocal but nonetheless remained a critic. With public opinion and key leaders and interests associated with the majority party stacked against NAFTA, there was little reason to expect victory for the treaty.

What changed likely defeat into victory? As in many previous battles over free trade, the answer seems to lie in the one actor who

can turn a defeat into a win: the president. Presidents usually get their way on trade pacts, and Bill Clinton played a key role in the NAFTA battle. But the explanations for executive success are not always convincing. Presidents are the only nationally elected leaders, some argue. They can ignore the demands of particular industries and focus on the big picture. As the Congress is particularistic and protectionist, presidents think more globally and back free trade (Milner and Rosendorf 1994). Yet, the commitment of executives to free trade is not always so strong (Magee and Young 1987, 149). Presidents are more likely to cast aside public opinion when they believe it is wrong, especially on trade, another argument holds (Haggard 1988; Pastor 1980, 198). The executive branch somehow has more resources to fight the tide of public opinion than the legislature does.

This institutionalist thesis has gained considerable currency (cf. Lake 1988). Yet it ignores both the inconsistent record of presidents on trade policy and the constraints that presidents face when trying to convince legislators to back their agendas. From Neustadt (1960) onwards, the message from the domestic literature on legislative-executive relations is that presidents are highly constrained in their ability to pull Congress toward their preferred agendas. Neustadt's (1960) classic formulation is that "Presidential power is the power to persuade." The president needs a large base of support within his or her congressional party (Bond and Fleisher 1990), among party leaders, *and* the opposition (Bond and Fleisher 1990, ch. 9; Covington, Wrighton, and Kinney 1995). But presidential skill, as something that either inheres in the office or the individual chief executive, appears to be more of a myth than a well-established regularity (Bond and Fleisher 1990, ch. 9; Edwards 1989, ch. 9).

Yet, presidential lobbying *can* switch votes at least some of the time (Sullivan 1991). Clinton was active in contacting members of Congress on NAFTA. I shall show that these efforts paid off. But the president did not succeed because of his institutional position. Clinton lobbied strategically; he pressed his case before two sets of legislators. One bloc was members without firm positions who fit the profile of NAFTA's firmer supporters (big contributions from business, low share of union membership, and a large share of Hispanics in the district). The second group had electoral links to Clinton: the president had fared well in their districts in 1992—and many of the Democratic members were not quite so secure themselves. Clinton was careful in his targeting, suggesting that presidential lobbying is strategic rather than inherent in the Oval Office.

And the lobbying paid off. Many of the constituency factors that shaped House members' voting on NAFTA led members to vote against the accord. Legislators who were lobbied were 44% more likely to back NAFTA than members who weren't. But strategic lobbying has its limitations. Clinton's efforts paid off only among Democrats. They even seem to have backfired among Republicans. The strategic impacts were also limited among the groups Clinton targeted the most heavily: the undecided members and legislators who leaned toward support of the treaty in the early fall. The biggest transformations came from energizing legislators who seemed likely to *oppose* NAFTA two months earlier. The president energized his own base, the members who seemed likely to oppose him initially.

Did the president's strategic lobbying decide the fate of NAFTA? Retrospective analyses don't allow causal judgments. While there is some reason to doubt the efficacy of presidential lobbying, there are more reasons to hold that pressures applied strategically had big pay-offs. Strategic executive lobbying is highly constrained. Presidents can't twist arms as Lyndon Johnson was said to do (though mostly as Senate Majority Leader). "The Johnson treatment" involved pressuring, pleading, and threatening members to get them to do the leader's bidding (Dallek 1995). Even the most skillful chief executives (including Johnson) recognize that they are creatures of their political coalitions. Sometimes there is room for maneuvering, when coalitions cross partisan and ideological lines. But these are the outer limits of presidential lobbying abilities. If executive influence is constrained on these votes, it is even more limited when conflict is more structured along party lines.

Lobbying Whom?

All presidents lobby. But whom should they target? We don't know much about executive contacts, but there are contending schools of thought on whom interest groups do (and should) approach. One holds that groups concentrate on their natural allies. Bauer, Pool, and Dexter (1972) found that interest groups on trade focused on legislators who share their ideology. Hall and Wayman (1990) show that political action committees reward their friends. The logic is both simple and compelling. It makes little sense to invest in your opponents, since there is little chance that you will convert them to your cause. And investing time or money in undecided members is risky. Concentrating on loyal supporters may seem like a waste of effort since these members are already on your side. But they can use their positions of influence to do the job that you can't: Preach to the undecided. Concentrating

on your supporters is part of a two-step process by which lobbyists reach undecided legislators and even opponents while minimizing risks.

Sometimes, one has to lobby opponents, claim Austen-Smith and Wright (1994). They offer a model (and evidence from the nomination of Robert Bork to the Supreme Court in 1987). They posit a scenario in which groups lobby legislators, but may present information about the impact of policies that is biased. Group A may find it imperative to lobby its “natural” opponents to counter claims from Group B that it considers wrong—or even purposefully distorted. Lobbyists do more than present their own cases. They counteract what they claim are misleading arguments of their opponents.

Often it doesn’t make sense to lobby likely opponents. In many cases the deck is stacked. Lobbyists testify before Congressional committees, which have distinctive political cultures favoring one point of view (Kollman 1997). This is also the core problem faced by presidents. Conflict in Congress, Poole and Rosenthal (1997) argue, is largely unidimensional. Members line up on one side or the other of an ideological divide and change little over their careers. Presidents don’t have much maneuvering room in the drive to get legislators to change their votes. They might mobilize their core supporters, but they face great obstacles in persuading their opponents. Presidential success largely depends on the size of their *own party’s* base in Congress (Bond and Fleisher 1990). Counteractive lobbying might work for interest groups, but it does not appear to be quite so useful for chief executives.

Presidents have some maneuvering room under divided government, when they must gain the support of some members of the minority to get anything done and during periods of weak partisanship, such as the 1970s, when cross-party coalitions arise frequently (Cooper and Young 1997). However, Bill Clinton had neither advantage. His administration marked the return of single-party government for the first time since 1981. And throughout the previous decade or more, partisanship in both houses of Congress rose to levels not seen since the turn of the century (Rohde 1991). Clinton’s early lobbying efforts centered on his own party: His economic program passed by just one vote in the House early in 1993, with nary a Republican voting yea.

Yet NAFTA presented a different scenario. The trade pact was originally negotiated by Republican President George Bush in 1991. Clinton became a reluctant supporter in the 1992 campaign. In the battle to approve the accord in the House and Senate, Republican leaders were among the more prominent supporters and Democratic leaders were either vocal opponents or at best quiet backers. The Democrats had historically (back to the 19th century) been the party

of free trade, and the GOP was the party of protection. But this changed in the 1970s as the parties exchanged their stands (Uslaner 1994).

The partisan role reversal was never complete. There remained pockets of protectionism in the Republican party and strands of free trade among the Democrats. Some of the conflict was regional. Both Democrats and Republicans in areas with labor-intensive industries (such as manufacturing in the Northeast and textiles and footwear in the South) adopted protectionist stands as cheaper imports from less developed countries threatened their economic base. Similar cross-party coalitions developed in the West, where service industries and high-tech firms depended heavily on exports.

Beyond economic interests, there were competing philosophical ideas that split the parties. Does trade create more jobs than it destroys? The conflict between traditional economic theory and popular beliefs sets up a credibility problem for interest groups and presidents seeking to make their case akin to the Austen-Smith–Wright model of counter-active lobbying. In this situation, it makes sense to approach foes as well as friends.

It wasn't easy to extrapolate from traditional partisan coalitions to the likely line-up of forces on NAFTA. Clinton had relied largely on his Democratic party base in 1993. But Democrats in the Congress, especially the House, formed the biggest bloc of opponents to NAFTA. In September, 70% of the likely supporters of the pact (according to a survey by the business-oriented USA-NAFTA, *Inside U.S. Trade*) in the House were Republicans and 84% of the likely opponents were Democrats. The average *Congressional Quarterly* Presidential Support Score for 1993 was 72% for the likely *opponents* of the pact and just 52% for the probable supporters. NAFTA thus gave the president opportunities to lobby *both* prospective friends and likely foes. The trade issue was marked by cross-cutting cleavages that pitted a Democratic president against labor unions and allied him with most business interests.

There was ample opportunity for lobbying on NAFTA. The trade pact was the subject of an expensive public campaign, especially on television, that rarely occurs in political life. While Clinton initially hesitated on NAFTA after taking office, he ultimately threw his weight strongly behind it. Together with business groups, he launched a strong offensive for the accord. On the other side were former presidential candidate H. Ross Perot, labor unions, and many environmental lobbies. At the beginning, the nays seemed to have a strong advantage. But the public campaign seemed to change many minds in the American public and NAFTA became a safe vote for many members, including some House Democrats (see Uslaner 1996). Even with most of his party's

leadership in opposition, Clinton prevailed by 34 votes in the House of Representatives on November 17, 1993. Democrats voted 156–102 against NAFTA, while the GOP supported it by 132–43. There were similar margins in the Senate, which passed the pact by a larger margin (61–38) three days after House action.

Whom, then, did the president lobby and what difference did it make? First, I look at the president's lobbying strategy on NAFTA and then pose a model of the House vote on the trade pact. My measure of lobbying comes from Palazollo and Swinford (1994), who traced White House contacts on NAFTA as reported in the prestige press. They recorded presidential meetings with House members in major newspapers and magazines from August 13, 1993 to the vote.¹ The contact measure is sparse on information. It doesn't tell us *what* the president said—or offered. But we rarely have this sort of detailed information on *whom* the president contacted. The closeness of the NAFTA vote and the cross-partisan coalitions that were emerging brought presidential lobbying to the fore.

I estimate three models for presidential lobbying—one for all House members and separate ones for each party—to determine whether Clinton concentrated on likely friends or foes. Then I use these estimates, together with other variables of theoretical import, to develop models of NAFTA support in the House. Finally, I ask how important presidential lobbying was in the drive to enact the trade accord in the House.

The two dependent variables, presidential contact and the NAFTA vote, are dichotomies. The president either lobbied a member or didn't. Legislators vote either yea or nay on NAFTA. So I estimate each by probit analysis. Since probit coefficients have no direct interpretation, I calculate probabilities for the minimum value of each independent variable and the maximum value for the variable, with the overall measure of impact being the difference in probabilities. Sometimes the maximum (or, less frequently, the minimum) value is an outlier, so I substitute a more reasonable value.² Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) call these differences "effects." All other variables retain their original values. I then take the estimate for contacting and use them as instrumental variables in the equations below for the NAFTA votes.³

Presidential Contacts

Whom does the president lobby? My models for contacting, as with the vote itself, focus on the coalitions that emerged in the NAFTA debate. Member ideology and loyalty to the president might also matter, as would initial predispositions toward the pact.

TABLE 1
 Presidential Contacts by September Position on NAFTA

| | Strongly Support | Lean Support | Undecided | Lean Oppose | Strongly Oppose | Total |
|-------------|------------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|-----------------|-------|
| All Members | 7.3 | 17.0 | 43.4 | 25.3 | 12.9 | 20.5 |
| Democrats | 9.7 | 38.9 | 54.7 | 27.9 | 12.8 | 27.4 |
| Republicans | 6.3 | 5.7 | 23.3 | 12.5 | 13.3 | 10.3 |

Note: Figures are percentage of members in each category lobbied by the president.

The cleanest test of whether the president lobbied friends or foes is to look at members' predispositions. The *Inside U.S. Trade* (1993) survey found 38% were strong or moderate supporters, while 43% were opponents. Clinton focused on undecided members: While only 19.1% had no position, the undecideds made up 40.5% of all members lobbied. The simple figures (see Table 1) show that Clinton put his strongest lobbying efforts among Democrats—and among the undecided. He rationally ignored the strongest supporters and most committed opponents of the pact. Overall, Clinton was more likely to lobby likely foes than friends (by 25.3% for leaning against to 17% leaning for). But this conclusion must be qualified. Among Democrats, he concentrated on members who said that they were likely to back the pact (by 38.9% to 27.9%). And Clinton focused his attention on Democrats (by more than two and a half to one). Among *Republicans*, he concentrated on prospective opponents.

Yet, it was hard to tell who the president's real friends and foes were. Likely opponents, recall, were among the president's usual base of support, while probable supporters were not generally part of Clinton's typical voting bloc. And the bulk of his efforts went to members who played coy, perhaps hoping to avail themselves of the presidential bazaar: Clinton reputedly promised support on all manner of other bills in return for the legislator's promise on the trade pact (Wines, 1993). Strategically, it might have paid members to be silent. For the multivariate analysis to follow, I create dummy variables for undecided members as well as for those leaning yes and no.

Clinton sought to influence both the Congress and the public. He "went public" with his pro-NAFTA campaign. And his attempts to influence Congress were most likely to receive a favorable reception

in areas where he was strongest (Kernell 1986). The three-way presidential race in 1992 robbed Clinton of almost all of his coattails. He ran behind all but four of the winning Democratic House candidates (Ornstein, Mann, and Malbin 1996, 71). Yet, a strong Clinton vote share might convince members that they have less to fear from their constituents if they back the president. Presidents should also be more willing to reach out to legislators most in their debt.

Members' own electoral security might affect both their likelihood of being contacted and of voting for the pact. But the direction of the effect is debatable. On one view, the most vulnerable Democratic members should be most concerned with demonstrating their independence from the president. They would resist presidential contacts and align themselves with the dominant interests in their electoral coalitions—labor and environmentalists. An alternative perspective would be that these vulnerable members would seek to minimize differences with their Republican opponents. They might be willing to meet with the president to try to extract whatever they can—and then show their centrism by joining the bipartisan coalition supporting the trade pact.

Members with a large Hispanic population should be more likely to listen to presidential entreaties. NAFTA was primarily a trade pact with Mexico (an earlier treaty with Canada had created a free-trade zone with that country). There was strong support in the Hispanic community for the accord, and this backing should translate into pressure on members of Congress. Clinton should find legislators with large Hispanic populations receptive targets for a pro-NAFTA message.

One of the core conflicts on the trade accord was labor-management. If a large share of the district's workers belong to unions, the representative should also vote against the pact.⁴ Labor's clout extends beyond raw numbers. Unions threatened to withhold political action committee contributions from members who voted for NAFTA. Members who received the largest contributions from labor in 1992–93 should be less supportive of NAFTA *and* less willing to listen to the president's entreaties. Business funds may be a countervailing force in getting the president's ear. Business spent a lot more than labor on political campaigns in 1992: the mean business contribution (\$178,500) was more than three times that of labor. But business was divided on NAFTA and many firms place the accord far lower on their priority list than did labor (cf. Box-Steffensmeier, Arnold, and Zorn 1997). I use union membership and business PAC contributions in the contact model. Labor PAC contributions were not significant (though they will be in the vote equations).

Finally, ideology and positions in Congress should shape both receptivity to Presidential lobbying and to support for NAFTA. Members loyal to the president, even if they were initially reluctant to back NAFTA, should be more willing to listen to his lobbying. So should Democrats. For presidential loyalty, I use *Congressional Quarterly's* Presidential Support Scores for 1993. For party, I use a dummy variable set at 1 for Democrats and 2 for Republicans. More senior members should be more willing to resist administration pressures. They have their own electoral bases and their own positions of influence within the Congress. Junior members should be more susceptible to White House pressure.

I present the probits predicting presidential contacts in Table 2. The multivariate models point to a president who was clearly strategic. Clinton was likely to target members who were undecided in September (effect = .325) and who leaned either for or against the pact (.149 and .113, respectively). He placed particular emphasis on members representing districts where he did well in 1992 (effect = .378), and where business gave the maximum contributions (.356). Members with a lot of union members in their districts were *less* likely to be targeted (-.149). More senior members and legislators with a large Hispanic population were also more prone to be lobbied. So were Democrats and majority party members who barely won in 1992. But presidential support (as well as Conservative Coalition voting, which is not included in the model) is insignificant.

The results are even more dramatic for Democrats. Clinton sought out Democrats who were either undecided (effect = .417) or leaned against the pact (.367) in November. And he targeted legislators who received big contributions from business (.450), who came from districts where the president did well in 1992 (.425). A big Hispanic population made one a more likely target, while a heavy union membership shielded legislators from the presidential touch. The president targeted few Republicans, so it is not surprising that few variables are significant for the GOP equation. Only presidential support (.312), percent Hispanic (.217), and September indecision (.140) yield significant coefficients.

Clinton's logic seems sensible. Put the maximum effort on Democrats. The 103d Congress, like most of its recent predecessors, was highly partisan. The House Republican leadership drummed up support for NAFTA largely independently of the president. Clinton contacted eight Mid-Atlantic Republicans who were more sympathetic to his overall agenda, and five Florida legislators whose districts had large Cuban-American populations. Yet many of Clinton's own

TABLE 2
Probits for Presidential Contacts

| | All Members | | Democrats | | Republicans | |
|---|-------------|--------|-------------|--------|-------------|--------|
| | Coefficient | MLE/SE | Coefficient | MLE/SE | Coefficient | MLE/SE |
| Union Membership | -1.938** | -1.850 | -2.999*** | -2.458 | .311 | 2.187 |
| Business PAC Contributions ^a | .014*** | .005 | .017*** | .005 | .011 | .012 |
| Clinton Percent | .021*** | .008 | .025*** | .009 | .046** | .021 |
| Democratic Vote Percent | -.012** | .007 | -.011* | .008 | | |
| Percent Hispanic | .008* | .005 | .008* | .006 | .014* | .011 |
| Seniority | -.013* | -.005 | -.012 | .010 | -.005 | .018 |
| Presidential Support | .006 | .008 | -.004 | .011 | .012 | .011 |
| September Undecided | 1.117*** | .197 | 1.307*** | .246 | .702** | .325 |
| September Lean Yes | .571*** | .252 | 1.135*** | .367 | -.168 | .364 |
| September Lean No | .452*** | .198 | .587*** | .226 | -.168 | .364 |
| Party | -.921* | .603 | | | .271 | .486 |
| N | | 434 | | 259 | | 175 |
| R ² | | .581 | | .497 | | .699 |
| Percent Predicted Correctly: | | | | | | |
| Probit | | 81.5 | | 74.9 | | 90.3 |
| Null | | 79.5 | | 72.6 | | 89.7 |
| 2*Log Likelihood Ratio | | 363.68 | | 255.35 | | 100.10 |

Note: Maximum value for business PAC contributions: \$900,000 for all members and Democrats, \$530,000 for Republicans; union membership ranges from .044 to .373 for Democrats and .026 to .321 for Republicans. Clinton's percent ranges from 24 to 87 for Democrats and 21 to 58 for Republicans. Presidential support ranges from 48 to 100 for Democrats and 17 to 74 for Republicans; seniority (year elected) ranges from (19)41 to (19)93 for Democrats and from (19)56 to (19)93, with sign reflected. Percent Hispanic ranges from .33 to 83.72 for Democrats and from .27 to 69.6 for Republicans.

^aCoefficient multiplied by 1000.

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. **** $p < .0001$.

Democrats were unlikely converts to NAFTA. The president had little leverage where labor was strong, but considerably more when business gave a lot of PAC money or the president had run well a year ago.

When lobbying his fellow Democrats, Clinton avoided lost causes and concentrated on the members most likely to be swayed. The president contacted members from districts where he ran strongly and legislators from heavily Hispanic districts. Overall, the president's strategy supports the idea of lobbying one's friends.

The NAFTA Vote

How much did presidential lobbying matter? To answer this question, I need a more general model of roll-call voting on NAFTA. The determinants of contacting provide a starting point for formulating such models.

As in the contacting models, I employ measures of member ideology and of constituency interests, as well as presidential contacting. For contacting, I employ the predicted values from the estimates in Table 2. For the separate Democratic and Republican estimates, I employ the models developed separately for each party (see n. 2 for the overall justification for this methodology). Beyond contacting, members' Presidential Support Scores and Conservative Coalition scores, both developed by *Congressional Quarterly*, should shape NAFTA voting.⁵ Support for free trade has become associated with conservative ideas about economic competition in recent years, so I expect members with high Conservative Coalition scores to back the accord. But since the initiative became so tightly connected with the president, legislators with high Presidential Support Scores should be more likely to vote yea. I use ideology measures instead of party. Following Brady and Krehbiel (1993), I found no independent effect for party in a well-specified model of NAFTA voting. The impact of party comes through presidential decisions on whom to contact—not on the vote itself.

Both high concentrations of union membership in the district and generous labor PAC contributions should lead members to vote against NAFTA. On the other hand, business contributions should lead members to vote for the pact. Members from districts where Perot ran well in 1992 should be less likely to support the agreement. The Southeast and the Middle Atlantic states have many people employed in industries that have been hit hard by cheaper imported goods from developing countries. The South was historically a major source of support for free trade. But threats to cotton and other industries shifted

sentiment toward protectionism after World War II in the South. Southern conservatives also turned their distrust of the federal government to a distaste for commitments to international accords such as trade pacts (Jewell 1962, 18–31; Rieselbach 1966, 16–17, 106–14). The rise of the Republican party in the South should have strengthened support for free trade, but Southern Republicanism often took a different attitude toward trade than the Northern and Western GOP did. Many Southern fundamentalists are skeptical of international agreements in general and of trade accords in particular. I use dummy variables for these regions as surrogates for better measures of the sensitivity of the regional economies to imports, and political culture more generally (cf. Wade and Gates 1990).

Two constituency groups should pull legislators toward the accord: white collar workers and farmers. The United States hoped to export services to Mexico, so white collar constituencies would benefit. Farmers were initially worried about NAFTA. When the Congress gave President George Bush “fast track” authority to negotiate the treaty in 1991, senators from states with many farmers were likely to vote no. By 1993, Clinton had assuaged agriculture interests and cut many side deals to protect commodities (Cloud 1993, 3179). NAFTA also promised greater market access for many agricultural products, especially dairy, to the Mexican market.

Electoral security may also shape a member’s vote on NAFTA. Democrats who barely won were *more* likely to listen to presidential entreaties. Were they also more willing to vote for the accord itself? And might this same logic apply more generally—to vulnerable freshman members, looking for cues and perhaps seeking center ground?

I present the results for NAFTA voting in Table 3. To save space, I include only the effects for Democrats and Republicans. Models for NAFTA voting with contact treated as exogenous (the simple dummy variable) are shown in Table A-1 of the Appendix.⁶

Presidential contacting mattered mightily on the NAFTA vote. It had the third strongest effect (.439), behind only the Presidential Support Score (effect = .512) and labor PAC contributions (effect = -.486).⁷ A lobbied legislator is 44% more likely to back NAFTA than one not contacted by Clinton. But contacts only helped among Democrats. For the president’s own party, the contact instrument was the most powerful predictor of NAFTA voting (effect = .618). It outranked the Presidential Support Score and labor PAC contributions.

Among Republicans, 89% of legislators contacted by the president backed the accord compared to 74% not lobbied ($p < .08$, $\phi = .106$, $Q = .478$). Three lobbied legislators switched from expected opposition

TABLE 3
Voting in the House of Representatives on NAFTA with Contact Endogenous

| Independent Variable | Estimated Coefficient | MLE/Standard Error | Effect | Democratic Effect | Republican Effect |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Constant | -1.086 | -.631 | | | |
| Presidential Support Score | .033**** | 4.398 | .512 | .581**** | .435**** |
| Conservative Coalition | .007** | 1.976 | .207 | .184* | -.121 |
| Contact Instrument | 1.786*** | 2.981 | .439 | .618**** | -.667** |
| Union Membership | -2.905** | -2.208 | -.165 | -.165 | -.134 |
| Labor PAC Contributions | -.000008**** | -5.008 | -.486 | -.367**** | -.680**** |
| Business PAC Contributions | .000001* | 1.287 | .095 | .013 | .227* |
| Perot Percent in District | -.015 | -.864 | -.116 | .049 | -.321** |
| Democrats' Winning % | -.023** | -2.513 | -.283 | -.173* | |
| Freshman Winning Percentage | -.006** | -2.052 | -.083 | -.092** | -.115* |
| Southeast | -.766**** | -3.319 | -.199 | -.081 | -.342**** |
| Midatlantic | -.742**** | -3.197 | -.202 | -.197** | -.132* |
| % Farm Population | .093*** | 2.582 | .238 | .249*** | .177 |
| % White Collar | .009**** | 3.309 | .171 | .146** | .146** |

Note: Maximum probabilities estimated at 10% for farm districts, 75% for white collar districts, \$200,000 for labor contributions (\$75,000 for Republicans), \$500,000 for business contributions. Minimum winning percentages set at 50 for freshmen and Democrats.

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. **** $p < .0001$.

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|---------|--------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| All Members: | -2*LLR = 406.54 | N = 434 | R ² = .548, % | Predicted Probit: 71.9 | Null: 53.9 |
| Democrats: | -2*LLR = 208.41 | N = 259 | R ² = .605, % | Predicted Probit: 79.5 | Null: 60.6 |
| Republicans: | -2*LLR = 151.24 | N = 175 | R ² = .593, % | Predicted Probit: 78.3 | Null: 75.4 |

to support (with one going the other way). Of the lobbied, six undecided members voted to back the treaty, compared to just one who voted no. Yet, the multivariate result shows that contact seems perversely *negative*! Its impact is almost as great as labor PAC contributions. The instrument for contact is a measure of the president's political capital. And Clinton had little clout with Congressional Republicans in 1993. *Among Republicans, the president was preaching to the converted. Legislators the president lobbied were already more likely than other Republicans to vote with the administration.* The contacts had no additional positive effect beyond the president's stock of political capital—and may even have backfired slightly. Clinton did not invest time with likely GOP supporters, and the effort he put out with opponents and undecideds did not pay off. The Republicans who were most likely to back the accord were *not* contacted by Clinton.⁸

Beyond contacts, the *Congressional Quarterly* Presidential Support Score was the strongest predictor of NAFTA voting. A strong Clinton loyalist would be 51.2% more likely to back the pact than a legislator who backed the president only 17% of the time (the minimum score). NAFTA's support came from conservatives who shared with the public the belief that free trade should mean less government: *CQ's* Conservative Coalition scores also predicted the NAFTA vote well; an ardent conservative was 21% more likely than a firm liberal to back the treaty.

Labor had less money to spend on campaigns in 1992, but its dollars were spent more efficiently. Business PAC contributions were barely significant ($p < .10$). A \$500,000 increase in business contributions would lead to an increase of less than 10% in the likelihood of a pro-NAFTA vote. Unions investing \$200,000 would have an almost 50% change in member's expected votes (compared to a base of no contributions). And unions got mileage from their membership base as well: A member from a district that is 37% unionized is 15% less likely to vote for NAFTA than one with just 3% of the work force unionized.

These results paint a stark picture of a hobbled business lobby that seemed unable to match the clout of labor. But this picture is incomplete. The estimation of the NAFTA vote with contact exogenous shows more powerful effects for business contributions, though still not approaching the efficiency of union funding. The impact of corporate money came earlier: business contributions, and not labor funds, shaped the pattern of presidential contacts, especially among Democrats. Union membership also has much more powerful effects on NAFTA voting in the models treating contact as exogenous and it

helped to shape presidential lobbying. The big battle between labor and management occurred *before* the vote—and here the advantage went to business.

On the NAFTA vote itself, business funds had bigger impacts for Republicans than for Democrats. But corporate money was overwhelmed by labor PAC contributions (effect = $-.680$). Labor funds is the most important factor in the model. Seven of the 16 Republicans who received more than \$30,000 from labor voted against NAFTA. Labor did not single out moderate Republicans; the mean Conservative Coalition score for Republicans who topped \$30,000 was 85.6, not significantly lower than the 87.1 for all other GOP House members. Had labor targeted more Republicans more strategically, it might have prevailed on the final vote. Labor could rely upon union strength in Democrats' constituencies to sway members against the accord; it needed to spend money on Republicans to win votes.

Perot's percentage of the vote had no impact overall or for Democrats, but it was important for Republicans. A Republican legislator from a district where Perot received a third of the vote would be 32% less likely to back NAFTA than a colleague whose district gave Perot hardly any votes at all. But overall electoral insecurity led members of both parties to seek the center, where bipartisanship may be more welcome. Democrats who barely won their seats are 17% more likely to back the accord than members who ran unopposed. Freshmen of both parties are about 10% more supportive of NAFTA if they had close races than if they won without opposition.

There are also strong regional effects. Democrats from Middle Atlantic states and Republicans from the Southeast are especially likely to vote against NAFTA. The Middle Atlantic opposition may reflect the aging industries in that region. In the South, textiles and footwear have pressed for protection. So have some agricultural interests, fearful of competition from Mexico. Finally, members whose districts have either many farmers or many white collar residents are more supportive of NAFTA. A member whose district has 10% farmers is 24% more likely to back the pact than one with no farmers; legislators from districts with white collar populations of 75% are 17% more supportive than members from exclusively blue-collar constituencies.

Did Contacts Win the Day?

In September, members of the House opposed the pact by 43% to 38%, with 19% having no position, according to *Inside U.S. Trade*. By November, 72% of the 83 undecided members swung toward

support; 61% of the members with positions in September who changed backed the accord.⁹ Clinton's lobbying strategy seems to have paid off: 81% of members contacted moved to support of the pact, compared to 66% of the ignored legislators. *Of members with a position in September, 58% of the 36 opponents lobbied by the White House backed the treaty. Just 7% of the 152 opponents not targeted changed to support. Among initial supporters, 14% of the 146 not contacted defected, compared to 6% Clinton lobbied. Presidential contact converted many opponents and held supporters in line.*

In Table 4, I lay out the proportions of members voting for NAFTA by September position and presidential contact. For both the undecided *and* members leaning in favor of the accord, lobbied members are somewhat more likely to vote yea than are legislators Clinton did not contact. But the impacts are modest (about 15% for each party) for undecided members. There is more of a pull for both Democrats and Republicans leaning yes. But the biggest shifts come from members who leaned against the accord in September. Among these legislators there is a 53% difference between members Clinton contacted and those he didn't.

Multivariate analysis shows that most members who had not made up their minds in September voted in November according to their ideological proclivities (their Conservative Coalition score), their overall loyalty to Clinton (Presidential Support Scores), and their dependence on labor PAC contributions.¹⁰ The simple contact measure is significant at only .10 and the endogenous measure is not significant at all (MLE/SE = .432). Only for Democrats do we find a significant effect for strategic contact—and it is barely significant ($p < .10$). Its effect is moderate, however, at .340. *Undecideds who sided with the president ranged from moderates to conservatives who were generally loyal to Clinton and who did not depend heavily on labor money for their reelection.*

Clinton's impact was greatest among those who were ready to vote against the pact in September. While each side lost about 25% of its supporters by November, a little more than half of the defectors to "no" were Republicans, compared to a quarter of those who switched to support. Both for all members and Democrats, strategic contacts has the greatest effect on members who leaned against the pact in September. Labor PAC contributions is second. The effect for union money is $-.420$ for all members and $-.373$ for Democrats. The effects for strategic contact are .894 and .932, respectively.¹¹ For members leaning no, contact seemed to make all the difference.

TABLE 4
 Probabilities of Voting for NAFTA by September Position
 and Presidential Contact

| September Position | All Members | | Democrats | | Republicans | |
|--------------------|-------------|---------|------------|---------|-------------|---------|
| | No Contact | Contact | No Contact | Contact | No Contact | Contact |
| Strongly Against | .01 | .42 | .01 | .40 | .00 | .50 |
| Lean Against | .14 | .67 | .09 | .64 | .36 | 1.00 |
| Undecided | .66 | .81 | .62 | .79 | .70 | .86 |
| Lean For | .70 | .89 | .56 | .86 | .76 | 1.00 |
| Strongly For | .93 | 1.00 | .89 | 1.00 | .95 | 1.00 |
| Total | .49 | .74 | .28 | .70 | .74 | .89 |

Note: Entries are proportions of members voting for NAFTA.

Members leaning no had, following the committed opponents, the second lowest amounts of business PAC contributions, and the second highest labor funds and union membership. Yet, they were tempting targets in some other ways. Their districts had the lowest Perot votes in 1992 and the highest Clinton shares. Their own voting support for Clinton was (among all members, though not Democrats) the strongest. These members were cross-pressured, and thus likely targets for a strategic lobbying campaign.

The undecideds, even among Democrats, did not form a coherent bloc. They were all over the place ideologically. Their districts did not provide a clear picture either. Some were kind to Perot or Clinton, others weren't. Even though the president lobbied this bloc the most, his efforts did not appear to pay off as well. But maybe he didn't need the personal touch with members on the fence. Loyalty to the president's overall agenda did the trick, whereas they did not for cross-pressured members. For these legislators, the president needed to make personal appeals. And these meetings likely involved more than simple cajoling: presidential bargaining on NAFTA often involved favors as executive influence often does. The cost may have been steeper for legislators leaning against than for members on the fence.

Clinton had some good luck. Many members leaning no in September were loyal Democrats who preferred to back the president, other things being equal. As the tenor of the debate shifted away from labor's arguments and toward the president's, the cross-pressures lessened. The NAFTA case is unusual. Presidents rarely find that their

most persuadable members are their most likely allies. Yet, presidents don't often go public with their case so strongly as Clinton did on the trade pact. Out of the adversity of facing a majority of his party opposed to a major initiative, Clinton used links to the party and the White House and his own public campaign to swing a likely defeat into a victory.

Representatives and Constituents

The NAFTA victory depended on both undecided members and converts to the cause. Some of the clout came from strategic contacts, but most of the impact stems from legislators' own values, their support for the president, and the clout of labor. Yet, NAFTA was on track to go down to defeat in September. What happened to change its fate?

Clinton was able to lobby well and to call on his base of support because he had succeeded in his campaign to change public opinion on the pact.¹² Public attitudes toward NAFTA changed from September to November largely because the president was able to convince the electorate that free trade brought economic growth. He argued that all other living presidents supported the pact, and the public bought into this case. At the same time, Perot's popularity plummeted. And voters also sent a message to their elected officials that they need not worry about losing votes in the general election if they voted for NAFTA, as both Perot and union officials threatened.

The president was influential because he both molded public opinion and reacted strategically to how it changed, not because he somehow stood above it. The administration can't simply decide it wants to place an issue on the agenda to transform public opinion.

Presidents are creatures of their political coalitions. Clinton put his greatest effort into convincing likely allies on NAFTA. Yet he ultimately had his greatest success among members who ought to be with him through thick and thin: those leaning no, those whose districts voted heavily for him in 1992, and those whose legislators received the biggest contributions from labor PACs. Even on an issue that seemed to defy the overlapping sharp ideological and partisan cleavages of recent Congresses, the president had to rely on his party's traditional base of support.

The NAFTA saga suggests that there may not be an easy answer to the question of whom a president should lobby. Clinton found out that success among likely foes was really success among tried and true friends. The president focused on members who *should have been* his natural allies, but initially lined up against the trade pact. He had

little clout (maybe even negative influence) among the members (largely Republicans) who initially lined up for the pact. Ironically, the president had more success among people who initially opposed him than among fence-sitters. Legislators who haven't made up their minds—in general and on NAFTA—are less likely to be susceptible to presidential influence. Their indecision is strategic, reflecting competing constituency pressures (Box-Steffensmeier, Arnold, and Zorn 1997). They listen more to their constituents than to the White House. Clinton realized that he would ultimately have to rely on his most loyal supporters. Even on a vote such as NAFTA that seems to challenge the idea that legislative conflict is unidimensional, a chief executive's partisan and ideological base is key. As they say in Texas (if not Arkansas), you must dance with the one who brung you.

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TABLE A-1
Voting in the House of Representatives on NAFTA

| Independent Variable | Estimated Coefficient | MLE/Standard Error | Effect | Democratic Effect | Republican Effect |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Constant | -.500 | -.639 | | | |
| Presidential Support Score | .038**** | 5.270 | .531 | .444**** | .832** |
| Conservative Coalition | .008** | 2.040 | .200 | .143** | -.082 |
| Contact | 1.198**** | 5.723 | .277 | .346**** | .188** |
| Union Membership | -3.817*** | -2.964 | -.332 | -.410** | -.076 |
| Labor PAC Contributions | -.000006**** | -5.240 | -.479 | -.311**** | -.569**** |
| Business PAC Contributions | .000001*** | 1.800 | .129 | .147 | .177* |
| Perot Percent in District | -.023* | -1.469 | -.164 | -.100 | -.383** |
| Democrats' Winning Percentage | -.029**** | -5.653 | -.297 | -.019** | — |
| Freshman Winning Percentage | -.004* | -1.371 | -.064 | -.067 | -.126* |
| Southeast | -.971**** | -4.197 | -.230 | -.118** | -.166**** |
| Midatlantic | -.906 | -3.540 | -.227 | -.204*** | -.166** |
| % Farm Population | .098*** | 2.779 | .231 | .177*** | .126 |
| % White Collar | .010**** | 3.201 | .171 | .217** | .114** |

Note: Maximum probabilities estimated at 10% for farm districts, 75% for white collar districts, 25% for Asian population, \$200,000 for labor contributions, \$500,000 for business contributions. Minimum winning percentages set at 50 for freshmen and Democrats.

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. **** $p < .0001$.

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|---------|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| All Members: | -2*LLR = 416.90 | N = 434 | R ² = .614 | % Predicted Probit: 74.1 | Null: 53.9 |
| Democrats: | -2*LLR = 208.41 | N = 259 | R ² = .667 | % Predicted Probit: 77.6 | Null: 60.6 |
| Republicans: | -2*LLR = 150.10 | N = 175 | R ² = .590 | % Predicted Probit: 81.1 | Null: 75.4 |

TABLE A-2
Two-Stage Least Squares Estimates for NAFTA Voting

| | All Members | | Democrats | | Republicans | |
|---|-------------|---------|-----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| | b | t Ratio | b | t Ratio | b | t Ratio |
| Constant | .021 | .047 | -.716* | -1.670 | .750* | 1.921 |
| Contact | .384** | 2.540 | .694*** | 4.345 | -.341 | -.906 |
| Presidential Support Score | .010*** | 4.707 | .014*** | 4.275 | .008*** | 2.374 |
| Conservative Coalition Score | .003*** | 2.328 | .002** | 2.253 | -.0003 | -.098 |
| Union Membership | -.922*** | -2.575 | -.570 | -1.153 | -.311 | -.465 |
| Labor PAC Contributions ^a | -.002*** | 4.713 | -.002*** | -3.357 | -.009*** | -3.568 |
| Business PAC Contributions ^a | .0002* | 1.417 | .00002 | .214 | .0005* | 1.430 |
| Perot Percent in District | -.005 | -1.147 | .002 | .370 | -.011* | -1.343 |
| Democrats' Winning Percentage | -.005** | -2.227 | -.002 | -.903 | — | — |
| Freshman Winning Percentage | -.001* | -1.786 | -.001 | -1.009 | -.002 | -1.164 |
| Southeast | -.247*** | -3.730 | -.131* | -1.430 | -.263** | -2.113 |
| Midatlantic | -.218*** | -3.557 | -.151** | -1.769 | -.050 | -.389 |
| % Farm Population | .023*** | 2.560 | .029*** | 2.542 | .021 | 1.132 |
| % White Collar | .002*** | 3.254 | .002** | 1.916 | .003** | 2.061 |
| Party | .170 | .913 | .170 | .150 | .150 | .195 |
| N | | 433 | | 259 | | 174 |
| Adjusted R ² | | | | .291 | | .032 |
| Standard Error of Estimate | | .381 | | .412 | | .425 |

^aCoefficient multiplied by 1000.

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. **** $p < .0001$.

NOTES

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1. The press sources are: *Christian Science Monitor*, *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *National Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Post*. Their coding of contacts include both presidential lobbying and members who were recorded as undecided. I included only reported contacts, which Palazollo and Swinford (1994) report in an Appendix.

2. For the maximum, I use values that correspond to the cumulative 95th percentile. For the minimum, I use the fifth percentile.

3. I use separate instruments for each estimation, preferring the Democratic probit for the party's estimation for NAFTA and the GOP instrument for the Republican NAFTA equation. (There are only minor changes if I use the full sample instrument throughout.) The estimates are simple probits, since I know of no routine to estimate two-stage probit. This means that the standard errors for the instrumental variables will be too conservative (cf. Bartels 1985, 807, n. 7). Hence, the MLE/SE's will be slightly overestimated. I also estimated two-stage least squares equations, which I report in Table A-2 of the Appendix. (The effects reported for the two-stage least squares estimates are the regression coefficients times their range. They are similar, but not identical, to the effects for the probits.) I prefer the probit estimates with instrumental variables: 11% of the estimates for the full sample, 27% of the estimates for Democrats, and 13% of GOP estimates lie outside the [0,1] range. Nevertheless, the 2SLS and simple probits are very similar.

4. Box-Steffensmeier, Arnold, and Zorn (1995) estimate union membership by Congressional district from union membership files from the Current Population Study files compiled by Barry T. Hirsch and David Macpherson of Florida State University. They map membership data by Congressional district.

5. The two *CQ* measures are imperfect measures of presidential influence and legislator ideology (cf. Jackson and Kingdon 1992). Given the importance of both executive influence and personal values in theories of trade policy making, I felt it important to include them. See Doran (1994) for evidence that another roll-call based

measure (from the *National Journal*) shaped the NAFTA vote. Most probits reported employ heteroskedastic-consistent standard errors. Those in the final section are based upon smaller N's and use the regular standard errors.

6. The full models for Democrats and Republicans are available on request.

7. The effects for the contact instrument are estimated at the minimum and maximum of the original contact dummy variable (zero and one). The instruments are probabilities that a member will be contacted. In the case of GOP members, the probability ranges from .003 to .517; for Democrats, it ranges from .015 to .835. The effects for the instruments at these ranges are .349 for all members, .528 for Democrats, and -.341 for Republicans.

8. The coefficient on the contact instrument is significant at $p < .05$ for a one-tailed test (MLE/SE = -1.811). For a two-tailed test, which might be more appropriate since the impact is in the opposite direction of what I have predicted, $p < .10$.

9. Box-Steffensmeier, Arnold, and Zorn (1995) have derived estimates of when members of the House decided on their NAFTA votes. These estimates indicate that there were far fewer undecideds than the *Inside U.S. Trade* survey shows. There is no easy way to account for this discrepancy.

10. These results are from truncated models excluding Democratic and freshman winning percentages, farm and white collar populations, and the regional dummies. I used truncated models because the sample sizes are smaller: 83 for September undecideds, 53 for Democratic undecideds, 53 for members leaning yes, 95 for members leaning no, and 79 for Democrats leaning no. For members leaning toward support in September, the only significant variable is the share of workers in a district who are unionized (MLE/SE = -2.814, effect = -.641). The instrument for contact has an MLE/SE = -2.486, which suggests that it had a significantly negative impact on NAFTA voting.

11. These effects are estimated at 10% and 90% thresholds except for strategic contact.

12. This paragraph is based on Uslander (1996).

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