

Committees

17.251/252

Fall 2015

Wilson's Famous Quote

- Congress in session is Congress on public exhibition, whilst Congress in its committee-rooms is Congress at work.



Organization

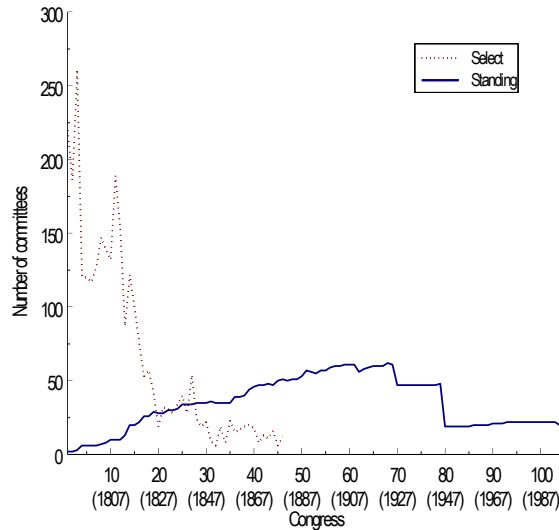
- Mechanics
- Theoretical perspectives on committees

What do Committees Do?

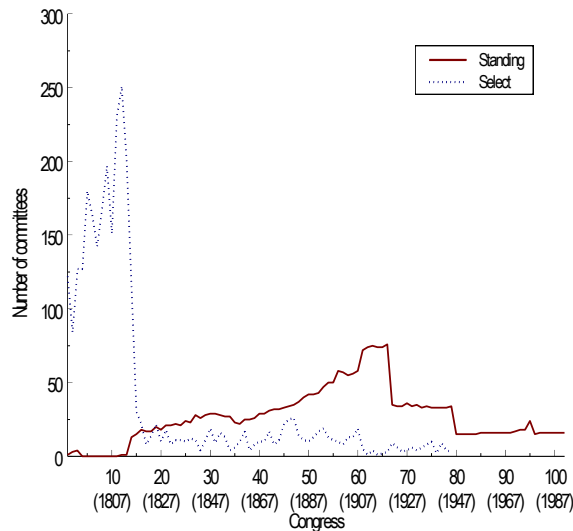
- Study issues and provide expertise
- Channel ambition
- Provide for representation of groups

Development of Committees

a. House



b. Senate



- House
 - Slow to develop (Hamilton)
 - Short leash
 - Gradual increase under Clay
- Senate
 - Even slower
 - 1819 boom

House/Senate comparisons

- House more reliant on committees than the Senate
 - House more specialized
 - First-mover advantage may give Ways and Means even great power

Types of committees

Type	Can originate legislation
Standing	✓ ✓
Select/special	✓
Joint	
Conference	

Committees in the 114th Congress

House

Standing

- Agriculture
- Appropriations
- Armed Services
- Budget
- Education and the Workforce
- Energy and Commerce
- Ethics
- Financial Services
- Foreign Affairs
- Homeland Security
- House Administration
- Judiciary
- Natural Resources
- Oversight and Government Reform
- Rules
- Science, Space and Technology
- Small Business
- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Veterans Affairs
- Ways and Means

Select

- Permanent Intelligence
- Benghazi

Senate

Standing

- Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
- Appropriations
- Armed Services
- Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
- Budget
- Commerce, Science, and Transportation
- Energy and Natural Resources
- Environment and Public Works
- Finance
- Foreign Relations
- Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
- Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
- Judiciary
- Rules and Administration
- Small Business and Entrepreneurship
- Veterans Affairs

Select

- Indian Affairs
- Ethics
- Intelligence
- Aging

Joint

Economic
Library
Printing
Taxation

Membership

- Party ratios
 - Renegotiated every Congress
 - Sometimes a bone of contention with minority party
 - There is usually a bonus given to the majority party
 - Special bonus for certain committees
 - House right now: $\geq 1.4:1$ for “important” committees, closer to $1.3:1$ for others
 - House Ag: 26/18, Fin. Svc., 34/26; Ed: 22/16,
 - HAC: 30/21, Rules: 9/4, WAM: 23/15
 - Senate: Reps have a majority of 2 on most committees

How Committee members are chosen

- Party committees make choices
 - House tends to rely on party committees
 - Senate tends to go by seniority
 - Republicans pure seniority
 - Democrats weight seniority highest
- Formal and informal constraints
 - Property rights in committee assignments arose around the turn of the last century
 - Allocation restrictions
 - Senate
 - “Johnson rule” most famous
 - All junior senators get one “good” assignment before a senior senator gets a second
 - Rules, create “A,” “B,” and “C” committees*
 - » **A:** Agriculture; **Appropriations**; **Armed Services**; Banking; Commerce; Energy; Environment; **Finance**; **Foreign Relations**; HELP; Homeland Security; Judiciary; Select Intelligence [limit of 2]
 - » **B:** Budget; Rules and Administration; Small Business; Veterans’ Affairs; Special Aging; JEC [may serve on 1]
 - » **C:** Select Ethics; Indian Affairs; Joint Taxation; Joint Library; Joint Printing [may serve on one or more]
 - “Super A” Committees: Senate in **bold** and Democrats underlined. [limit 1]
 - House
 - Dems & Reps have created “exclusive committees:” Appropriations, Ways and Means, Energy & Commerce; Financial Services

*From 113th Congress; seems to be in force in the 114th

House Committee Chairs

- Agriculture
 - Conaway (TX)
- Appropriations
 - Rogers (KY)
- Armed Services
 - Thornberry (TX)
- Budget
 - Price (GA)
- Education and the Workforce
 - Kline (MN)
- Energy and Commerce
 - Upton (MI)
- Ethics
 - Dent (PA)
- Financial Services
 - Hensarling (TX)
- Foreign Affairs
 - Royce (CA)
- Homeland Security
 - McCaul (TX)
- House Administration
 - Miller (MI)
- Judiciary
 - Goodlatte (VA)
- Natural Resources
 - Bishop (UT)
- Oversight
 - Chaffetz (UT)
- Rules
 - Sessions (TX)
- Science
 - Smith (TX)
- Small Business
 - Chabot (OH)
- Transportation
 - Shuster (PA)
- Veterans' Affairs
 - Miller (FL)
- Ways and Means
 - Ryan (WI)
- Permanent Select Intelligence
 - Miller (FL)

Senate Committee Chairs

- Agriculture
 - Roberts (KS)
- Appropriations
 - Cochran (MS)
- Armed Services
 - McCain (AZ)
- Banking
 - Shelby (AL)
- Budget
 - Enzi (WY)
- Commerce
 - Thune (SD)
- Energy
 - Murkowski (AK)
- Environment
 - Inhofe (OK)
- Finance
 - Hatch (UT)
- Foreign Relations
 - Corker (TN)
- HELP
 - Alexander (TN)
- Homeland Security
 - Johnson (WI)
- Judiciary
 - Grassley
- Rules and Administration
 - Blunt (MO)
- Indian Affairs
 - Barrasso (WY)
- Select Ethics
 - Isakson (GA)
- Select Intelligence
 - Burr (NC)
- Special Aging
 - Collins (ME)

Chairs

- Seniority system: the practice of reserving the chairs of committees for the most senior member (on that committee)
 - Result of revolt against Cannon
 - Senate: pretty inviolate until recently, with bidding (+ 6-yr term limit for R's)
 - Senate Byrd/Biden shuffle (next slide)
 - 114th Congress: committees choose their chairs, ratified by the Conference
 - House
 - Democrats in 1970s put chairs up to confirmatory vote
 - 2008 deposition of Dingell by Henry Waxman similar to Les Aspin's deposition of Melvin Price in 1985
 - Scrapped term limits in 2008; currently agitation to bring them back.
 - Republicans
 - 1970s put ranking members up to confirmatory vote
 - 1994: term limits (6 years) plus vote of caucus
 - » 2000: Affected virtually every chair (ideology + \$\$ mattered)

Senate chair shuffle in 111th Cong.



- Byrd cascade
 - Appropriations: Byrd (WV) → Inouye (HI) [Commerce]
 - Commerce: Inouye (HI) → Rockefeller (WV) [Select Intelligence]
 - Select Intelligence: Rockefeller (WV) → Feinstein (CA) [Rules and Administration]
 - Rules and Administration: Feinstein (CA) → Schumer (NY) [Jumping over Byrd, Inouye, Dodd]
- Biden cascade
- What could have been
 - Foreign Relations: Biden (DE) → Dodd (CT) [Banking]
 - Banking: Dodd (CT) → Tim Johnson (SD) [Ethics] (?) / Reed (RI)
 - Ethics: Possible shuffle, depending on what Johnson does;
 - Instead:
 - Biden (DE) → Kerry (MA) [Small Business & Entre.]
 - Kerry (LA) → Landrieu (LA) (Jumping over Harkin (IA) and Lieberman)

114th Cong example: House Ways and Means

Ways and Means

113th Cong.:

1102 Longworth House Office Building, phone 225-3625

<http://waysandmeans.house.gov>

Dave Camp, of Michigan, *Chair*

Sam Johnson, of Texas.
Kevin Brady, of Texas.
Paul Ryan, of Wisconsin.
Devin Nunes, of California.
Patrick J. Tiberi, of Ohio.
David G. Reichert, of Washington.
Charles W. Boustany, Jr., of Louisiana.
Peter J. Roskam, of Illinois.
Jim Gerlach, of Pennsylvania.
Tom Price, of Georgia.
Vern Buchanan, of Florida.
Adrian Smith, of Nebraska.
Aaron Schock, of Illinois.
Lynn Jenkins, of Kansas.
Erik Paulsen, of Minnesota.
Kenny Marchant, of Texas.
Diane Black, of Tennessee.
Tom Reed, of New York.
Todd C. Young, of Indiana.
Mike Kelly, of Pennsylvania.
Tim Griffin, of Arkansas.
James B. Renacci, of Ohio.

Sander M. Levin, of Michigan.
Charles B. Rangel, of New York.
Jim McDermott, of Washington.
John Lewis, of Georgia.
Richard E. Neal, of Massachusetts.
Xavier Becerra, of California.
Lloyd Doggett, of Texas.
Mike Thompson, of California.
John B. Larson, of Connecticut.
Earl Blumenauer, of Oregon.
Ron Kind, of Wisconsin.
Bill Pascrell, Jr., of New Jersey.
Joseph Crowley, of New York.
Allyson Y. Schwartz, of Pennsylvania.
Danny K. Davis, of Illinois.
Linda T. Sánchez, of California.

Post Politics

Brady formally decides to take on Ryan for Ways and Means chairmanship



By **Robert Costa** September 25, 2014   Follow



Ryan, who chairs the House Budget Committee, has long been expected to lead the GOP's legislative push next year to reform the U.S. tax code, and has been hinting at his playbook in interviews this month.

Brady said that he has raised more than \$4 million ahead of the midterm elections, citing his combined fundraising for his political action committee, his House campaign, and the National Republican Congressional Committee. He called his haul a sign of his ability to raise money for committee members

“The expectations are very high for the next chairman, both on policy and on financial support for others,” Brady said. “I’m determined to exceed every one of those expectations.”

Ryan is one of the GOP's most prolific fundraisers. He has millions in his campaign account and over the summer he donated more than \$1 million to the NRCC. Brady said Thursday that he would match Ryan and committed to give \$1 million to the NRCC as November's elections neared.

Subcommittees and Their Role

- Subcommittees sometimes just smaller versions of committees
- The congressional receptor for the “Iron Triangle”
- Increasing importance of subcommittees
- “Subcommittee bill of rights” in 1973 (House Dems)
 - Written jurisdictions
 - Members given rights to pick memberships and bid for chairmanships

Staff and Resources

- Varies by committees
 - Number
 - Who controls



Moving To and Fro

- If there are property rights in committee seats, then a transfer reveals a preference for Committee_{new} over Committee_{old}
- This gives rise to independent measures of committee value (see table 8-6)

Groswart Scores for the House

95th-112th Congress

Ways & Means	2.42
Energy & Commerce	1.64
Appropriations	0.94
Rules	0.29
Foreign Affairs	0.17
Financial Services	0.15
Armed Services	0.14
Judiciary	0.06
Ethics	-0.03
House Administration	-0.04
Budget	-0.13
Transportation & Infrastructure	-0.18

Natural Resources	-0.22
Oversight & Government Reform	-0.33
Education & the Workforce	-0.37
Agriculture	-0.40
Veterans Affairs	-0.46
Science, Space, & Technology	-0.54
Homeland Security	-0.54

Hearings

- Civics book perspective on hearings is incomplete
 - Information-gathering (substantive and political)
 - Build the public record
 - Symbolism
 - Establish jurisdiction
- Put together by staff
- Rarely change minds

<http://www.c-span.org/video/?186877-1/border-patrol-agents>

The Markup

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[Chairman's Mark]

112TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. CON. RES. _____

Establishing the budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2013 and setting forth appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2014 through 2022.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin, from the Committee on the Budget, reported the following concurrent resolution; which was committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Establishing the budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2013 and setting forth appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2014 through 2022.

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
2 *concurring),*

3 **SECTION 1. CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET**
4 **FOR FISCAL YEAR 2013.**

5 (a) DECLARATION.—The Congress determines and
6 declares that this concurrent resolution establishes the

Sec. 603. Policy statement on deficit reduction through the cancellation of un-
obligated balances.

Sec. 604. Recommendations for the elimination of waste, fraud, and abuse in
Federal programs.

1 **TITLE I—RECOMMENDED**
2 **LEVELS AND AMOUNTS**

3 **SEC. 101. RECOMMENDED LEVELS AND AMOUNTS.**

4 The following budgetary levels are appropriate for
5 each of fiscal years 2013 through 2022:

6 (1) FEDERAL REVENUES.—For purposes of the
7 enforcement of this resolution:

8 (A) The recommended levels of Federal
9 revenues are as follows:

10 Fiscal year 2013: \$ _____,000,000.

11 Fiscal year 2014: \$ _____,000,000.

12 Fiscal year 2015: \$ _____,000,000.

13 Fiscal year 2016: \$ _____,000,000.

14 Fiscal year 2017: \$ _____,000,000.

15 Fiscal year 2018: \$ _____,000,000.

16 Fiscal year 2019: \$ _____,000,000.

17 Fiscal year 2020: \$ _____,000,000.

18 Fiscal year 2021: \$ _____,000,000.

19 Fiscal year 2022: \$ _____,000,000.

20 (B) The amounts by which the aggregate
21 levels of Federal revenues should be changed
22 are as follows:

23 Fiscal year 2013: $-\$$ _____,000,000,000.

Committees to Know About

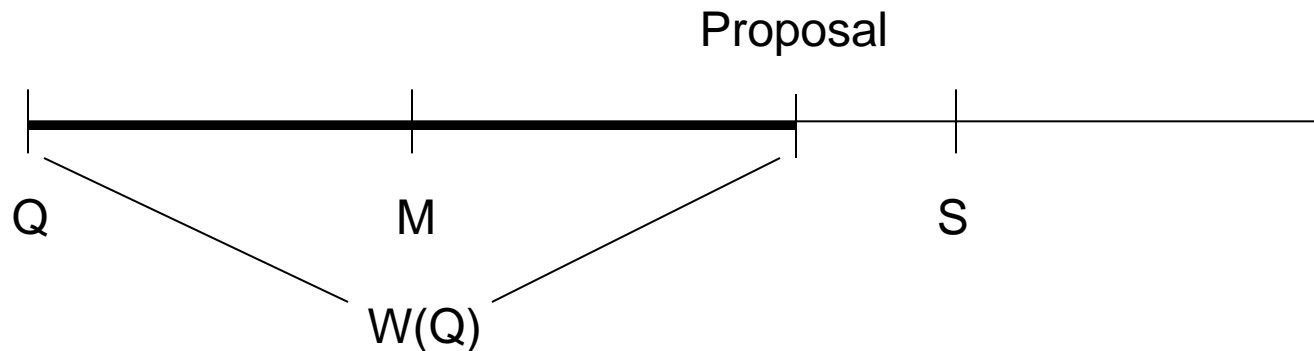
- House
 - Rules
 - Appropriations
 - Ways and Means
 - Budget
- Senate
 - Finance
 - Appropriations
 - Budget
 - Judiciary
 - Foreign Relations

Theoretical perspectives on committees

- “Distributive” theories
 - Agenda setting (the setter model)
 - Gate-keeping
 - Structure-induced equilibrium view
 - “Stacking”
- Information theories

The “Setter Model” Reprised

- Romer and Rosenthal
 - An agenda-setter has power to offer a “take it or leave it” motion.
 - If the agenda-setter is “high demand” and the reversion point is well below the median’s ideal point, the agenda-setter makes out like a bandit



Application of Setter Model to Committees

- Easy to think of committees as providing “take it or leave it” propositions and being composed of “high demanders”
 - “deference” to committees
 - Supposed “self-selection” on committees
- Problems with this view
 - “high demand committees” hard to sustain in a majoritarian institution
 - Empirical evidence mixed
 - Amendment opportunities galore
 - Status quo rarely so Draconian

Gatekeeping

- Gatekeeping is the right of a committee to decide to keep an item off the floor if it doesn't want action.
- Usually thought of in a majoritarian setting
- Example:
 - Classic case: Civil Rights legislation

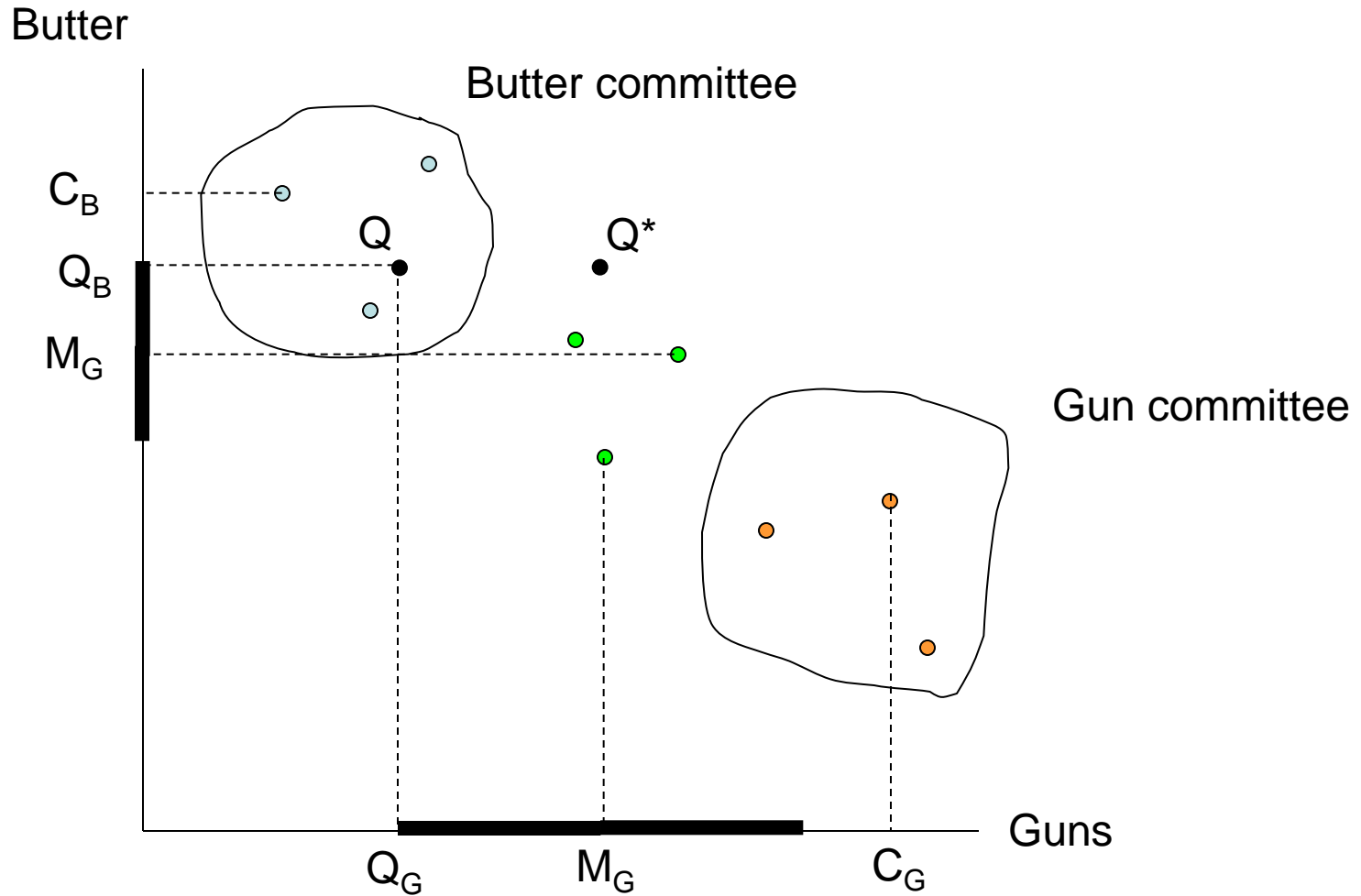
Applicability of the View

- Corresponds to practical application of rules (esp. in House)
- Problems with view
 - Majoritarian objection (again)
 - The Senate, especially, has ways around committees
 - Other ways around gatekeeping
 - Discharge
 - “speaker discharge”
 - Committee changes in House since 1994 have aligned the committees more with parties
 - Note that this is definitely a negative power

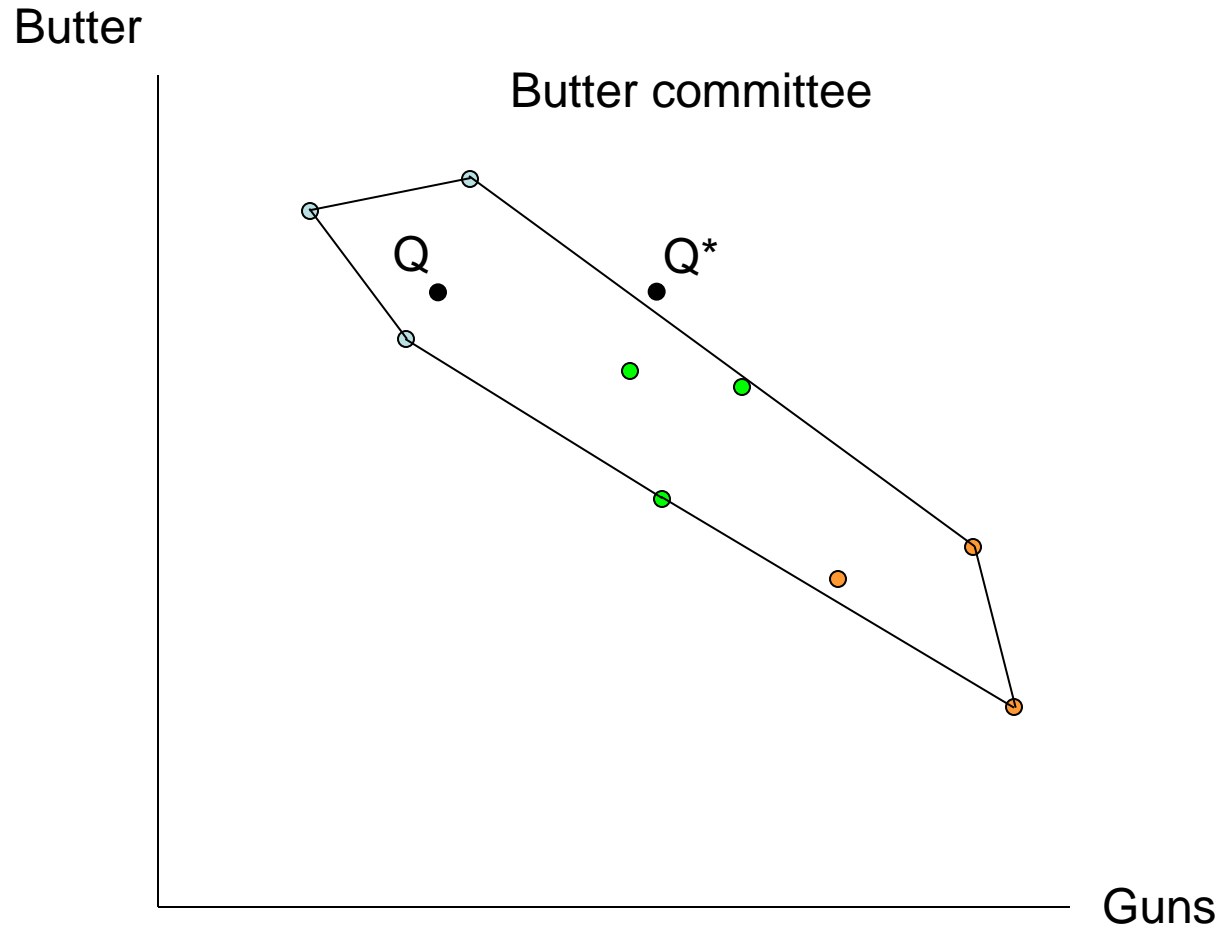
Structure-Induced Equilibrium View

- Combines gate-keeping with a certain view of jurisdictions
 - “Explains” (or at least illustrates) two stylized facts
 - Stability
 - “capture”

SIE: The Picture



Compare with the Pareto Set



Some Comments About This View

- Why it's called the "gains from trade" view
- Majoritarian objection very clear from the "out of the Pareto set" result in the example
- Nonetheless, if the majoritarian objection doesn't hold, this is an attractive descriptive view of much of policymaking + an explanation for why "everyone" can be dissatisfied with the current state of policy

Informational View

- Fundamentally different from other modern views
- While “rational choice,” more in consonance with more traditional views

Sum-up points