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**Personal Vote Seeking and Committee
Membership in Colombia**

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Abstract

This paper explores the different patterns of committee service among members of the Colombian legislature between 1974 and 1998. Among the issues considered in this paper is the extent to which members use committees as a method to engage in personal vote seeking activities. The electoral laws and weak party control creates a system with strong incentives to cultivate a personal vote. Additionally, since committees possess staff and resources they can help deputies to build expertise and significantly impact the legislative process. This makes Colombia a good test case of whether the research on US Congressional committees can usefully be applied to Colombia. Deputies in Colombia do follow similar patterns. They tend to prefer a longer career on a committee that is useful to them to experience on a variety of committees. Some members build long careers upon “prestige” committees that enable them to control the flow of pork generally. Others seek service (repeatedly in many cases) upon committees in which they can engage in constituency service activities. These findings are generally consistent with the US literature providing further support for the importance of committees in systems with high personal vote seeking incentives.

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Woodrow Wilson's 1885 observation that "Congress in its committee rooms is congress at work" succinctly captures the importance of committees in the United States Congress. U.S. Congressional committees matter because they are at the heart of policy making in the United States. We frequently hear about the power of congressional committees and committee chairs to bottleneck, block or substantially alter legislation. As Unekis and Rieselbach note, "in a very real sense, congressional politics is committee politics" (1984, 159). They argue that this has been true since the 1910-11 revolt against House Speaker Joseph Cannon undercut strong political parties and made committees the center of legislative decision-making.

While committees have been extensively studied in the United States because of their importance in the policy-making process, comparative politics has generally ignored the role of committees, treating the importance of committees in the United States as an exception (Longley and Davidson 1998). However, whether committees matter in the legislative process, and whether deputies in other countries can use them for credit claiming, is really an open empirical question. This paper draws on data from Colombian to consider the effect that institutional rules and district characteristics have upon patterns of committee service. As such it considers a country where the legislature is composed of deputies whose party discipline is low and incentives to cultivate a personal vote are high. Thus, Colombian deputies face similar incentive for credit claiming and constituency serve to members of congress in the US.

This paper begins with a brief review of the literature on the role and functioning of committees in the US Congress. This establishes expectations regarding how members should treat committee assignments. Next, I discuss the role and functioning of committees in the Colombian Congress. This demonstrates why committees matter both for policy-making and a deputy's ability to engage in personal vote seeking. This section also describes the committee and political system in Colombia. This highlights the similarities and differences between the Colombian and US cases, allowing for an assessment of which US based expectations are valid. The remainder of the paper uses evidence from committee assignments for both chambers of the Colombian Congress between 1974 and 1998 to describe the patterns of committee service in Colombia and determine the extent to which the characteristics of a member's district predict the committees on which they will build careers and develop expertise.

Committees as a source of legislative power

It is easily assumed or asserted that committees matter in the United States, but why? Unekis and Rieselbach (1984) argue that committees are important because "they have the expertise necessary to dominate consideration of issues within their jurisdictions; in consequence, they have won the respect, sometimes reluctant, or at least the deference of nonmembers. Committee views have tended to become congressional policies" (Unekis and

¹ This paper is part of a larger study being conducted with Brian Crisp, Mark Jones, and Michelle Taylor-Robinson and Brad Jones on legislative entrepreneurship and deputy behavior in six Latin American democracies. The committee assignment data for Colombia was collected by Brian Crisp and supported by NSF Grant #SBR-9708936. All errors, omissions, etc in this manuscript are mine alone and are not the responsibility of my co-collaborators. Please contact the author prior to citation to obtain the most recent version (Escobar@polisci.tamu.edu).

Rieselbach 1984, 159). The power of committee expertise is enhanced by rules that protect jurisdictions (turf) and autonomy, helping to reinforce the independent power of committees. The specific focus of the committee allows them to become experts on an issue (or at least experts relative to their colleagues). Committee staff further increases this informational advantage. Polsby (1968) argues that the increased staff is one measure of the institutionalization of Congress. MacNeil (1963) cites Speaker Thomas Brackett Reed as emphasizing that the committee's power came from their extra staff and the other informational advantages they possess vis-à-vis the chamber as a whole. An informational advantage strengthens the committee's position not only relative to members of the parent chamber but also relative to the executive branch as well. As Jacobson (1997) notes the alternative to the information and expertise the committee system provides is for congress to rely on the White House, Executive Agencies and/or the private sector.

Committee power can also arise from institutional rules. For instance, Shepsle and Weingast (1987) argue that it is not just expertise, but rather their position in the process that makes committees so powerful. "In our view, the explanation of committee power resides in the rules governing the sequence of proposing, amending, and especially of vetoing in the legislative process. We demonstrate a surprisingly important role for the last stage of the legislative process, the conference procedure, in which bicameral differences are resolved" (Shepsle and Weingast 1987, 86). They argue that the conference committee has the final say on legislation because their position in the sequence allows them to "roll" the floor – override decisions made there. In effect the conference committee is a form of *ex-post veto* that makes it reasonable for the committee to initiate debate on a bill knowing that they will have another chance to modify/analyze the bill later.² In summary then, committee power derives from a real or perceived level of expertise in the subject matter which results in part from extra resources and staff, and in part from institutional rules including a privileged position in the process (*ex-post veto*), both of which give them the ability to affect the content of the final legislation.

Congressional committees are also important because they affect the ability of members to get "their" legislative agenda passed and to claim credit for the success or failure of particular legislation. Students of American politics have recognized that to a large extent the American Congressman is a legislative entrepreneur. To some extent he or she is likely to run on their personal reputation. This has resulted in studies on the politics on congressional "pork" and personal vote seeking (for instance Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1984). Carey and Shugart (1995) provide a significant advance to this literature by developing a conceptual typology regarding the way in which institutional incentives shape member's incentives to build a personal reputation or rely on the party. They argue that it is the interaction of ballot structure, vote pooling, whether votes are cast at the individual or party level, and district magnitude that determine a deputy's incentives to seek a personal vote.

In the *Personal Vote* Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina (1987) compare different strategies used by deputies in Great Britain and the United States to cultivate a personal vote. While they, like others, acknowledge the role of committees for personal vote seeking in the United States, they do not focus on it because committee work is not nearly as useful in Great Britain. Specifically they note that because of the power of committees in the United States it is possible for an individual member to attain his/her preferred outcome. This is not the case in Great Britain

² Keith Krehbiel (1987) disagrees with Shepsle and Weingast noting that there are institutional alternatives that give the parent chamber some advantages back and constrain committees more than the Shepsle and Weingast study would suggest.

because the average member is far weaker and committees do not play nearly as significant a role.³

While the expectations regarding committee service and personal vote-seeking in Latin America have not been well developed, the importance of committees for credit claiming and constituency service activities has been well documented in the United States congress. The Single Member District Plurality electoral system in the United States encourages members to cultivate a personal vote, thus literature on the utility of committees and committee assignments implicitly assumes personalistic incentives. Members of congress are assumed to be best able to protect their interests (and those of their constituents) as well as advance their careers by serving on particular committees.

Not only is the fate of most legislative proposals determined in committee: to an important degree the fate of the individual congressman may be decided there too. A person's congressional career may rest largely on the kind of committee post he is given. A "good" assignment may greatly enhance his value to his constituents and provide unusual opportunities to publicize his activities in Congress; here he can develop the expertise and reputation as a "specialist" that will enable him to influence his colleagues and important national policies. This is not to say that a "bad" assignment is an irretrievable setback, since effective work on an unimportant committee can identify a new man as "comer" and lead to a better assignment. Indeed, it usually does. But being named to a committee in which he has little interest defers the day when a congressman can begin to acquire seniority on a committee of his choice (Clapp 1963, 183).

It is quite obvious then that members of congress, both junior and senior, desire to be on "good" committees. Of course there is substantial variation among members of congress as to what constitutes a "good" committee. For instance, the jurisdiction of one committee may make it a natural first choice for one member and an apparent "kiss of death" for another. Consequently, the choices members make about which committees to request and the committees on which to try and achieve seniority, will be determined in part by the characteristics of their districts as well as their future ambitions. At its most basic level then we can say that within the US congress members use committee assignments as a way to further their own interests and in particular to help secure reelection.

Party leaders also seek to ensure that members serve on committees which will benefit their district, thereby helping the party retain the seat. Clapp (1963) presents evidence that the party leadership acted to try to save members from their own bad requests by not giving them committee assignments where they would be forced to cast votes that would make them look bad. Instead, the leadership sought, as much as possible, to give members assignments that would help them.

In looking at the types of committees members of congress request Rohde and Shepsle (1973) utilize request data from the Democratic Committee on Committees to gauge the factors that lead to a request for a particular committee assignment. They begin with the premise that different committees will have different attractiveness to different members. They find that almost three-quarters of freshmen making requests get some committee they requested and they are more likely than non-freshmen requestors to get their preferences met. In considering how

³ Like the Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina study studies of personal vote seeking in Latin America (Ames 1995A, 1995B Taylor 1992, Crisp, *et al* 2000) have focused on the casework and legislative aspects of cultivating a personal vote.

the Democratic Committee on Committees makes decisions about assignments they find that the committee takes a requestor's first choice seriously and they work to fulfill a management goal of satisfying all requests where possible. Rohde and Shepsle also find support for a party support model of assignments as well. There is clear evidence that congressional representatives from marginal districts (who barely won their seat) get their first choice more often than do people who won by a large margin. This would seem to imply that the party wants to allow members to use assignments in a way that facilitates meeting their constituent's needs thereby helping the party to retain the seat. However, they also find evidence that the party wants to use assignments to maintain some discipline. "In each of the four Congresses, high party supporters were more successful in securing assignments (i.e. being granted any one of their requests) than low party supporters" (Rohde and Shepsle 1973, 904).

Prior to the 1910-11 revolt against Speaker Joseph Cannon, committee assignments were handed out to reward supporters and punish opponents, thus ensuring party discipline. This meant committee positions were not secure and members needed to stay in the party leader's good graces to retain their seat. In fact, breaking with the party was grounds for losing a good assignment or being passed over for a chairmanship, even if the person had seniority. "We cannot automatically assume that members had career tenure in their committee assignments in the pre-1911 Congress. It was often commented that before 1911 that Speakers exercised the right to remove members from committees for whatever reason they wished, especially majority party members who refused to walk the straight and narrow" (Stewart 1992, 840). In fact, Stewart finds some evidence that Cannon actually dealt more severely with dissenting members of his own party than with the opposition party.⁴ The development of the seniority norm, however, has eroded the ability of party leaders to use committee assignments to reward or punish members.

The seniority norm not only weakened the ability of party leaders to use committee assignments and chairmanships to reward or punish members, it has also increased the ability of members to use committees for constituency service. If a member generally controls their fate with regard to committee assignments, then they can use committee work to serve their district. But, not all committee assignments have equal value for constituency service. In a seminal work on the subject, Richard Fenno (1973) identifies three possible member goals among congressional representatives—winning re-election, prosecuting partisanship, and gaining leadership and influence within the chamber. Different committees will be of different utilities in helping a member meet each of these goals. He finds that some committees (like Interior or Post Office) allow members to meet re-election goals by delivering services to the district, others (such as Education and Labor) allow members to prosecute partisanship, and still others (including Appropriations and Ways and Means) allow a member to gain influence in the chamber. Without denying the varying utility of committees, it is still possible, and indeed worthwhile to ask, are some committees more useful or desirable than others?

The answer, at least in the United States Congress, has been probably yes. One of the early efforts to identify which committees were most desirable was Bullock and Sprague (1969). They assumed that committees that were most demanded would be the hardest to get a seat on and so would see the fewest transfers. Stewart (1992) finds that committee desirability has varied little over time. Only lower ranked committees had a less stable ranking, which reflects the

⁴ Recent Republican controlled congresses have begun to return to placing higher value upon party loyalty and less upon seniority. See Jacobson 1997, pg 185 for details.

varying salience of the committee's jurisdiction. Those consistently ranked as most desirable are those which Fenno (1973) identified as committees with significant influence in the chamber.⁵

Munger (1988) refines the Bullock and Sprague (1969) method of ranking the most desirable committees as those which had the fewest transfers. He computes a ranking based on a ratio of transfers to that committee vs. all transfers between committees. In effect this creates a measure of net transfers to establish which committees are more preferred. Consequently, if more people go from committee A to committee B than go from committee B to committee A, committee B is a more desirable committee. Groseclose and Stewart (1998) later challenged this measure claiming that it does not take into account that not all transfers are 1-1 transfers. Especially in the case of the "exclusive" committees members often give up two assignments to get this one. Instead they propose to use total transfers into the committee as an alternative measure. The chief advantage derived from this method is that they obtain a cardinal list of rankings and standard errors. The transfer method of ranking committees has an intuitive advantage in that members are making a conscious expression of the preference for one committee over another.⁶ Still, the advantages of seniority can make it hard to give up even a "bad" committee assignment once some seniority has been achieved. Reforms such as the subcommittee bill of rights have also made members less likely to switch committees as now even relatively junior members have some hope of achieving a powerful position as subcommittee chairs (Ray 1982).

The development of the seniority norm combined with decreases in turnover and increased staff, allowed committees to become independent centers of power. It also created the expectation that a member would remain on a committee until he/she requested re-assignment. This security allowed them to develop expertise on a committee by building longer committee careers (Price 1977). Katz and Sala (1997) demonstrate that reappointment to the same committee increased significantly after 1890. Their work is one of the few attempts to explicitly link longer service and incentives to cultivate a personal vote. They demonstrate that the introduction of the Australian ballot created incentives for members to build a reputation.

Stable committee assignments give members the leeway and confidence they need to become policy experts within their committees' jurisdiction. Policy experts are better equipped to claim credit and are more noteworthy position takers on policies within their committee's jurisdictions than are randomly selected members of congress. Hence, a 'norm' of reappointing incumbents to their same committees would be consistent with a widespread desire for building personal reputations (Katz and Sala 1997, 23).

As a member decides on which committees to build a career, they must balance the general utility, influence and prestige that come with leadership committees, with the more extensive opportunities for district service that come from the constituency service committees. Adler and Lapinski (1997) use constituency characteristics to predict the committees that would be most useful to congressional representatives in winning reelection through district service.

⁵ This has strengthened the consensus among congress scholars that Appropriations and Ways and Means, and more recently Budget are the "best" committees. This is reflected in the fact that both parties treat these committees differently by making membership on them exclusive.

⁶ Committee membership is limited not only by restrictions on service but also by the number of seats on a committee and increasing the number of seats can hurt a committee's prestige. Munger (1988) finds that as committee size grows the value of the committee decreases because expanding membership has decreased the value of each seat.

Their research confirms that congressmen use committee assignments to try to bring particularistic goods to their constituents. Not surprisingly they find committees traditionally viewed as constituent service committees (such as Agriculture, Interior and Insular Affairs, and Merchant Marine and Fisheries) are composed of people whose districts possess higher than average levels of these activities and their membership is not a mirror of the chamber.⁷ An especially interesting finding in this article is that instead of assuming that all benefits must be tangible goods, they demonstrate that some constituency demands can be met with policy. Traditional policy committees—like Banking, Finance, Education and Labor and Foreign Affairs—are also composed of members whose presence corresponds logically to the nature of their district. For example, Foreign Affairs members come from districts with large immigrant populations and members of Education and Labor from districts with a large number of unionized workers. The particularly exciting innovation in this article is that constituency service can take both particularistic and policy oriented forms.

Several key points emerge from this review of the literature on committees regarding the United States Congress. First, congressional committees are powerful because they have expertise (thanks in part to staff and resources) that allow them to frequently dominate the chamber's opinion and provide a counterweight to the expertise of the executive branch. Second, the development of the seniority norm significantly weakened the ability of party leaders to use committee assignments and chairmanships as a way to reward or punish party members. This erosion of party discipline weakened the control of party leaders and increased the ability of members to use committee service for personal vote seeking activities.

Third, committee service is important because it allows members an additional opportunity to represent their district and to protect the interests of their constituents and this district representation can take on either policy or particularistic forms. Fourth, while membership on committees whose jurisdiction is directly related to the nature of your constituents may be helpful and is likely or logical, constituency service committees are usually not among those considered most desirable. Instead, the most prized committees tend to be those Fenno (1973) would classify as influence committees. The valued position of these committees may arise from the fact that some, like Budget or Appropriations, allow members to gain/exercise influence, as well as serve their district because their work affects legislation that will substantively impact the district as well.

Committees and Committee Service in Colombia

Before discussing patterns of service in Colombia, it is useful to first describe several of the key points regarding how committees function in the Colombian Congress and the way in which they are similar to and different from the United States Congress. Like the U.S., Colombia is a presidential system where the legislative branch consists of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The chamber of deputies is composed of 114 members (prior to 1991 membership was 199) who are elected from multimember department-level districts using the

⁷ Groseclose's (1994) findings do not directly challenge this composition characteristic. His analysis only demonstrates that neither party stacks committees with ideological outliers nor do they create committees that are ideologically representative of their parent chamber. However, just because the Democrats do not stack a committee with Liberals does not mean they do not stack the agricultural committee with people from farming states.

simple quota and least remainders rule.⁸ District magnitude ranges from 1-29. The Senate is currently composed of 100 members who are also elected using simple quotas and least remainders, but they are elected from a single nationwide district. Prior to the adoption of a new constitution in 1991 the 114-member Senate was elected from department-level districts using the same electoral law. The most striking feature of the Colombian electoral system is that despite the strong and deep historical roots of the two dominant parties—the Liberals and the Conservatives—party discipline is extremely low in Colombia. Parties do not control the use of their label nor are they required to submit only one list. The result is the proliferation of multiple lists from each party creating high inter-party and intra-party competition. Colombia is consequently a case where members have substantial incentives to seek a personal vote (see Archer and Shugart 1997 for details).

Both chambers of congress have seven committees whose existence is constitutionally. Their functioning is governed by Law 5 of 1992 (the *Reglamento Interno*) and their jurisdictions are clearly proscribed in Law 3 of 1992. Additionally both chambers have special committees who are, for this analysis, are treated as an eighth committee. [A complete translation of the jurisdictions is provided in Appendix 1.] The *Reglamento Interno* in Colombia provides a detailed discussion of committees including how they are to conduct themselves, how members are to be appointed, term length, appointment of committee presidents and vice presidents, etc.⁹

Committees in Colombia possess office staff and meeting space over and above the staff and offices allocated to each individual member. According to the *Reglamento* each Senate committee is allocated 10 staffers and each Chamber committee 11.¹⁰ Deputies are assigned to committees at the beginning of a legislative term and membership remains constant during the term. Since the number of members per committee is fixed by Law 3 of 1992, each party's representation on a committee is determined by the share of the seats the party holds in that chamber.

Committees in Colombia exercise influence in the legislative process and have the ability to determine the fate of a bill. Once a bill is assigned a committee that committee can effectively kill the bill by refusing to report it out. Additionally, the committee can issue a negative report which will kill the bill. While the procedure for reconciling differences in House and Senate versions of a bill are not spelt out, since the same bill must clear both chambers something akin to Shepsle and Weingast's *ex-post veto* through the conference committee must exist.

⁸ The intermediate level of territorial organization in Colombia is the department, which is most closely akin to the state in the United States.

⁹ While it should also be noted that the *Reglamento* is a set of rules prescribing how the congress should conduct its business that does not mean this is always the case. In some cases the *Reglamento* is silent or vague on areas which would be of substantial interest. These omissions or vagaries may be the result of accident or of careful framers intent to leave "wiggle room" for later chamber leaders. Still, where the rule has been clearly written and clearly defined it is mostly likely to be followed because in these cases the minority has the greatest justification for crying foul. It is in the cases where there is no rule that the chamber leadership has the greatest discretion and it is in these cases where we may still see unwritten rules regarding committees emerge.

¹⁰ In the Senate the 10 staff is distributed as follows: one secretary (Secretario de Comisión), one sub-secretary, (Subsecretario de Comisión), one executive secretary (Secretaria Ejecutiva), one equipment operator (Operador Equipo), one typist (Mecanógrafa), and one messenger (mensajero) plus two transcriptionists (Transcriptor) and two drivers (Conductor). In the Chamber each committee has one secretary (Secretario de Comisión), one sub-secretary (Subsecretario de Comisión), one system operator (Operador de Sistemas), one typist (Mecanógrafa), one messenger (mensajero), one driver (Conductor), one equipment operator (Operador Equipo) plus two transcriptionists (Transcriptor), and two executive secretaries (Secretaria Ejecutiva).

Up to this point committees in Colombia seem to resemble committees in the United States. But, while US congressional representatives must make their committee requests to the party leaders who determine appointments, members in Colombia appeal to their fellow members. Committee members are "elected" on the floor of the congress. Candidates can run either individually or as part of the party slate. Votes are distributed using the same electoral rule used in general elections, meaning those who do not achieve the electoral quotient can still win a committee seat through the least remainders system.¹¹ Like in the U.S. changing assignments during the term is infrequent (Crisp 2000). This method of committee assignment can be argued to directly weaken the control of party leaders over members because assignments cannot be used to reward or punish supporters. The other major difference between the U.S. Congress and the Colombian is in the way committee leadership positions (called presidents and vice-presidents) are determined. Committee presidents and vice-presidents are elected by the committee membership. Furthermore, these elections take place annually and neither the president nor the vice president can be re-elected during that four-year congressional term.¹²

The final major difference between the Colombian congress and the US Congress is that re-election rates are much lower in Colombia. Table 1 compares reelection rates for Colombia and the US. It should be noted that in this case by immediate re-election I am only considering cases where the deputy wins/does not win immediate reelection to the same chamber. As in other bicameral systems there is movement between the two chambers. Also, members may not serve consecutive terms because they moved into the executive branch or because they switched between chambers.¹³ Having described the nature of committees and the political system in Colombia, it is now possible to turn to the empirical analysis of committee service in Colombia.

Patterns and Determinants of Committee Service in Colombia

Despite a lower re-election rate than in the United States, the high personal vote seeking incentives and weak party discipline mean that to the extent possible, we would expect Colombian congressmen to look like American congressmen in terms of their behavior on committees. Specifically, we would expect them to try to serve on committees that will help them serve their district, thereby allowing them to distinguish themselves from their co-partisans.¹⁴ This is useful because it allows me to test whether or not many of the assumptions made in the extensive literature on committee careers and committee service in the United States can be applied to Colombia.

¹¹ From the point of view of the data analysis to be presented later in the paper it is clear that given this method of election deputies are able to control their committee assignments and if a deputy changes or stays on a committee it is safe to assume that he/she wants that assignment. In other words, party leaders cannot force a member to serve on a committee he/she does not want to be on. The one thing we do not know is if this was really a member's first choice committee or a second choice that they pursued because they knew the chances of getting a seat on their preferred committee were low. Data on slates and elections was simply not available.

¹² See article 10, Law 3 of 1992 for details.

¹³ The concurrent election of the president and both chambers of congress and the fact that all are elected for a concurrent 4-year term may facilitate even greater movement between branches.

¹⁴ Their preference for traveling to their districts and doing as much as possible to bring pork to their districts has already been well documented. For a recent consideration see Ingall and Crisp (2001).

Table 1: Re-election Rates: U.S. vs. Colombia

Year	US Congress^A (Selected years)	Colombia Chamber^B	Colombia Senate^B
1974	78.9		
1978	82.3	38.00%	46.02%
1982	81.4	45.64%	51.72%
1983			
1985			
1986	88.5	46.46%	56.03%
1987			
1988	92.4		
1989			
1990	89.7	51.26%	58.26%
1991		39.50%	43.69%
1992	74.7		
1993			
1994	80	28.57%	40.78%
1995			
1998	90.1	34.55%	51.96%

^A Data on the U.S. Congress taken from Ornstein, Norm, Thomas E. Mann and Michael J. Malbin. 2000. *Vital Statistics on Congress, 1999-2000*. Washington, DC: CQ Press. U.S. House percentages are reelected deputies a percentage of House Membership.

^B The percent returned as a percent of total house membership was computed by the author. Observations start in 1978 because that is the first election following the National Front which spelt an end to the equal distribution of seats between the Liberals and Conservatives.

The analysis presented in this paper draws on committee membership data in Colombia from 1974 – 1999 yielding eight congresses worth of observations for each chambers.¹⁵ Because of the need for a member to be reelected before we can observe whether they stayed on the same committee or switched, the analysis only considers members of congress who served on committees for two or more consecutive terms.¹⁶ The practical implication of this is that it has reduced the number of cases which will be observed in the next section. The committee membership patterns of the 448 members in both chambers who meet the above criteria were examined in greater detail. Patterns of service were classified into one of three categories. Members could stay on the same committee for all terms, switch to a different committee each term, or pursue a strategy that combined the two. The options they chose to pursue are presented in Table 2.

¹⁵ Congressional terms in Colombia are usually four years long. However, when the constituent assembly was called in 1991 they not only rewrote the constitution, but also disbanded the congress and caused new elections to be held. Thus, instead of one 1990-1994 term there are two terms, one from 1990-1991 and another from 1991-1994.

¹⁶ According to the Reglamento all members are supposed to receive one committee assignment. However, some members who were immediately reelected did not receive a committee assignment. Members who have been elected might not receive a committee assignment because they left the chamber to serve in the executive branch or resigned their seat (allowing the next person on their list to fill the seat) after being elected.

Table 2: Patterns of committee membership

	Chamber of Deputies	Senate	Both Chambers
Stay on the same committee all terms	129 (48.7%)	91 (49.7%)	220 (49.1%)
Change to a different committee each term	57 (21.5%)	40 (21.9%)	97 (21.7%)
Change committees but remain on some for more than one term	79 (29.8%)	52 (28.4%)	131 (29.2%)
Totals	265 (100%)	183 (100%)	448 (100%)

Based on Table 2 it is possible to say that when given a chance to change committees, almost half of the congressional representatives in Colombia do not. Instead, 49% of Chamber members and 50% of Senators remained on the same committee during their entire career. The distribution between the deputies who do not is roughly even, with a slightly higher percentage pursuing the combined strategy. Among these deputies it should be noted that some only switch at the beginning of their career and then build a career on their second committee. Given the high personal vote seeking incentives that are present in the Colombian electoral system it is unlikely that members will choose to remain on a committee which is not beneficial to their reelection efforts. Also, while turnover is high in Colombia, it is not clear whether high turnover is caused by low reelection rates or by few incumbents deciding to seek reelection. To the extent that it is the former rather than the later committee service is also probably useful to members in meeting their reelection goals, implying that it is a way to serve their constituents.

These findings are consistent with Crisp's (2000) comparison of Venezuela and Colombia in which he finds that of the 54 senators re-elected in 1986, 69% remained on the same committee. Even after the change to a national district in 1994 (which was supposed to weaken personalistic service patterns), 67% of those re-elected chose to remain on the same committee. This is in sharp contrast to Venezuela where only 36% of those re-elected kept the same committee assignment.¹⁷

This begs the question, whether all committees equally useful or are some committees preferable to others? Recall that in the United States Bullock and Sprague (1969), Munger (1988) and Stewart (1992) all found that the consistently most desirable committees and the ones on which members served the longest terms were Appropriations and Ways and Means. These are in essence the committees which control expenditures by the government and control what legislation will come to the floor and under what conditions. The most appropriate equivalent to Ways and Means in Colombia is the *Mesa Directiva* of the Chamber. Membership on the *Mesa Directiva* does not impact a member's ability to serve on the other permanent committees. Moreover, while the *Mesa Directiva* is powerful in scheduling bills for debate, its membership is closely fused with the party leadership making it different from Ways and Means. The closest Appropriations and Budget equivalent the fourth committee—Budget & Industry.

¹⁷ The comparison is somewhat complicated by the fact that committee membership assignments are made yearly in Venezuela which means that during a 5 year term members have 5 opportunities to switch committees. Additionally, in Venezuela deputies can be members of more than one committee.

Table 3A: Transfers Among Committees (Chamber of Deputies)

	<i>Transfers to the Committee</i>	<i>Transfers from the Committee</i>	<i>Number who stayed on the Committee</i>	<i>Net Transfers (To – From)</i>	<i>Ratio of Stayed: Left</i>
Constitutional Issues	20	35	41	-15	2.1:1
Foreign Affairs & Defense	20	24	13	-4	1:1.5
Treasury & Public Finance	17	21	39	-4	2.3:1
Budget & Industry	38	45	59	-7	1.6:1
Agriculture & Environment	26	16	11	10	1:2.4
Public Services	26	16	14	10	1:1.7
Social Services	17	14	10	3	1:1.7
Special Committees	19	9	6	10	1:3.2

Table 3B: Transfers Among Committees (Senate)

	<i>Transfers to the Committee</i>	<i>Transfers from the Committee</i>	<i>Number who stayed on the Committee</i>	<i>Net Transfers (To – From)</i>	<i>Ratio of Stayed: Left</i>
Constitutional Issues	12	17	32	-5	2.7:1
Foreign Affairs & Defense	11	19	8	-8	1:1.4
Treasury & Public Finance	27	18	22	9	1:1.2
Budget & Industry	18	17	28	1	1.6:1
Agriculture & Environment	15	15	13	0	1:1.2
Public Services	14	17	11	-3	1:1.3
Social Services	13	14	11	-1	1:1.2
Special Committees	16	9	7	7	1:2.3

Tables 3A and 3B present data on transfers among committees similar to that computed by Munger (1988). The last two columns in each table present the net transfers to and from the committee. Committees with positive net transfers are cases where more members went to the committee than left the committee. Thus, committees with a positive net transfer ratio are viewed as more desirable than those with a negative net transfer ratio. Surprisingly in the chamber of deputies more people left the Budget & Industry committee than went to the committee. Among

both Senators and Deputies who left the Budget & Industry committee, the most common new committee assignment was Foreign Affairs & Defense.

The net transfer ratio, however, ignores people who were happy on and did not move. Consequently, the last column in Tables 3A and 3B compares the number of members who chose to stay on the committee versus the number who left the committee. The rationale for using this as a measure is that after having had experience on the committee, deputies can directly assess the utility of a committee for their personal reelection needs. In both chambers the ratio of members who stayed to left the Budget & Industry committee is 1.6:1, which means that over 50% more members decided the committee was useful enough to them to remain on the committee than to leave it. In the Chamber, Treasury & Public Finance was useful enough that twice as many members chose to stay on the committee as to move to a different committee. Of the 18 Senators who left Treasury & Public Finance the most frequent destination (for 6) was Foreign Affairs & Defense. The same is true in the Chamber of Deputies as eight of the 38 departures were also to Foreign Affairs & Defense. In both the Chamber and the Senate members chose to stay on the Constitutional Issues committee by a better than 2:1 margin. Among the 12 Senators who left, four chose to move to Foreign Affairs and Defense. The 20 departing members of the Chamber were most commonly (five deputies) bound for Treasury & Public Finance, but Foreign Affairs & Defense and Budget & Industry were also popular choices (4 each). This provides some limited evidence that members, universally, chose to stay on useful committees and that broadly speaking Budget & Industry and Constitutional Issues (which affects the organization and distribution of powers in the state) are useful for many members as they are universally preferred committees.

However, all else is rarely equal and it is quite likely that members who opt to remain on a committee do so for varying reasons. Even taking into account the fact that members do vary in the numbers of terms they serve, certain committees do seem to produce longer patterns of service than others. The number of consecutive terms a member remains on a committee for both chambers is presented in Table 4. In addition to the committees identified as desirable for building a long career using the Stay:Leave ratio—which were Constitutional Issues and Budget & Industry—Treasury & Public Finance also emerges as a committee upon which members will chose to build a career. In fact, three senators served seven consecutive terms on this committee.

Table 4: Committees on which members build careers

	2 terms		3 terms		4 terms		5 terms		6 terms		7 terms	
	C	S	C	S	C	S	C	S	C	S	C	S
Constitutional Issues	28	18	10	7	3	4		2				1
Foreign Affairs & Defense	10	5	3	1		2						
Treasury & Public Finance	31	10	7	4	1	6		1				3
Budget & Industry	41	14	10	7	4	4	1	3	4			
Agriculture & Environment	8	10	3	3								
Public Services	11	7	3	2		2						
Social Services	7	6	2	3	1	2						
Special Committees	6	6		1								

The relatively long patterns of committee service which emerge in Table 4 also provide some support for legislative expertise developing among members of the Colombian congress. A long term of service upon a particular committee, allows a member to develop expertise with regard to legislation in that area. Additionally, since committee jurisdictions are clearly defined that makes it easier for the committee to protect its turf. This allows members to have an area in which they can be considered an expert. Also, since changing committees during a congressional term is rare, the four-year legislative period helps give deputies a chance to become familiar with their committee's jurisdiction as well.

In addition to considering committee service patterns, I also considered the effect to which the characteristics of a deputy's district affected the committees on which they chose to build a career. This builds on the study by Adler and Lapinski (1997) of the United States Congress. While the variables used in this analysis are not as numerous as those employed in their analysis, they do capture what we would expect to be some significant differences in the nature and characteristics of a department. The measures used include the contribution of agriculture, mining, and industry to department GDP. Differences in the percent of contribution of agriculture, for instance, tell us something about the dominant economic character of the department.

Table 5: Mean contribution to state level GDP of Agriculture, Mining, and Industry by Committee

<i>Committee</i>	<i>Agriculture</i>	<i>Mining</i>	<i>Industry</i>
Constitutional Issues	28.03 (26.24 - 29.82)	2.79 (2.44 - 3.15)	19.75 (18.49 - 21.01)
Foreign Affairs & Defense	26.34 (23.91 - 28.77)	2.76 (2.20 - 3.33)	21.46 (19.05 - 23.87)
Treasury & Public Finance	27.71 (26.06 - 29.40)	2.53 (2.15 - 2.91)	21.17 (19.79 - 22.55)
Budget & Industry	31.38 (29.79 - 32.98)	4.45 (3.30 - 5.60)	18.75 (17.10 - 20.41)
Agriculture & Environment	27.23 (25.19 - 29.26)	3.64 (2.39 - 4.90)	20.86 (18.66 - 23.07)
Public Services	27.92 (25.59 - 30.25)	4.13 (2.84 - 5.42)	17.35 (15.68 - 19.02)
Social Services	27.23 (24.91 - 29.56)	2.37 (1.99 - 2.74)	19.69 (18.15 - 21.23)

Note: Numbers in parenthesis represent 95% confidence intervals for the data. Discussion of which means are statistically different from each other is contained in the text.

Table 5 provides an overview of the data on the economic characteristics of a department. It begins by considering the average values for these three categories across committees. Numbers in the cells are the mean percent of department GDP contributed to the department by that economic activity for members of that committee. Large numbers mean that members on that committee come from departments where that is an important economic source for the

department. Interestingly the average contribution of agriculture to the department's GDP for a member of the agriculture committee was lower than for any committee other than Foreign Affairs & Defense. The highest mean characterized members of the Budget & Industry committee. This high mean for Budget & Industry members is statistically different from the mean of Foreign Affairs & Defense members and the mean of Treasury & Public Finance committee members based on the Tukey HSD and Bonferroni tests. Variation in the percent contribution of agriculture to department GDP is not statistically different at the .05 level for all other committees.

A similar pattern exists when comparing the means for mining contribution to department GDP. Legislation on mining activities (including petroleum exploration) falls under the jurisdiction of the committee on Agriculture & Environment. While we would expect these deputies, on average, to come from departments where mining activity is more important, we find that they have only the third highest mean value. Moreover, the mean value for members of Agriculture & Environment is not statistically different from the mean value of members of other committees. The only significant differences are between members of Budget & Industry and Constitutional Affairs and Budget & Industry and Treasury & Public Finance based on the Tukey HSD and Bonferroni tests.

The absolute variation in the industrial contribution to department GDP means is much smaller and in fact none of the means are statistically different from each other based on the Tukey HSD or the Bonferroni tests. The most likely reason for the lack of difference in the case of industry is that the "logical" industry committee is also the budget committee. Consequently, the desire to be on the budget aspect of that committee is probably the dominating force making it a useful committee for deputies from industrial and non-industrial departments.

The results presented in Table 5 however, do not take into account the fact that committee choices are not independent of each other, but instead by deciding to seek a seat on Budget & Industry, for example, a member will not get a seat on Foreign Affairs & Defense. Thus, while descriptions of the characteristics of members serving on a committee are useful, what is really needed is a causal model that allows us to compare what determines the committee on which members seek seats. The dependent variable in this case, the committee on which a member serves, has eight possible values which are unordered categories. This implies that the most appropriate means by which to analyze these data is using a multinomial logistic model. This means that the coefficients predicting the probability that a deputy serves on a particular committee are estimated taking into account the probability of serving on other committee as well. This produces more efficient coefficients and standard errors than estimating an equation for each of the committees separately because it makes use of additional information.¹⁸ These results are presented in Table 6.

The variables that were included in the analysis to test whether constituency characteristics determined the committee on which a deputy served include the percentage contribution to department GDP of agriculture, mining, and industry because the economic mode of production was expected to affect the "character" or "nature" of a department and make

¹⁸ Models were estimated using the `mlogit` command in Stata. Standard errors were produced using the `cluster` option which treats observations as being independent across the individuals but not necessarily within an individual's observations. This further implies that the Huber/White/sandwich estimator of variance replaced the standard errors. This is a reasonable assumption since the observations for an individual deputy are clearly related and that deputy cannot be on multiple committees at the same time.

certain committees more salient for some members.¹⁹ The population of a department was also included in the analysis because it was expected that deputies from larger departments might have a greater constituent demand for urban and social services than would deputies from smaller departments. The percentage of seats held by a deputy's party and the total terms served by that deputy are included in the analysis as control variables. Seats on committees are distributed based on the percentage of seats in the chamber controlled by the party. This variable is probably most important in the case of small parties because it may be difficult to obtain a seat on certain committees because of the party's small size. Finally, total terms is included in the model because while there is no formal seniority norm that determines committee assignments in Colombia, it is likely that more senior members will have the experience necessary to get/retain their choice assignments and may receive some deferential treatment by their colleagues in this regard.

The results in Table 6 lend some support to the Adler and Lapinski hypothesis that members will serve on committees which reflect the characteristics of the departments they represent. The probability of serving on the two committees with a national focus: Constitutional Affairs and Foreign Affairs & Defense is not predicted by any of the types of economic activity. This is not surprising given that the jurisdiction of these committees is not tied to a local economic activity.²⁰ Instead these two committees have a broader national level focus and might in fact be most useful for members seeking to "prosecute partisanship" and engage in issue representation rather than local pork-barreling. This explanation is enhanced by the variables which do achieve statistical significance in predicting service on either of these committees. Increases in department population and deputy experience both increased the chances that a member will serve on these committees. When all other variables are set at their mean value, deputies in their first term have an 18% chance of serving on Constitutional Affairs and an 8% chance of serving on Foreign Affairs & Defense. When seniority increases and total terms is set at the maximum observed value (eight) then deputies have a 28% chance of serving on Constitutional Affairs and a 12% chance of serving on Foreign Affairs & Defense.²¹ The significance of department population in this equation is also consistent with claiming these committees have a national programmatic focus. Deputies who come from larger populous may face a greater need to distinguish themselves from their co-partisans because of higher district magnitudes.

¹⁹ Including all these variables in the equation does not present problems of multicollinearity. The highest correlation in the dataset is between agricultural contribution to department GDP and industrial percentage of department GDP and that correlation is only -.699.

²⁰ The only "local" function that can be ascribed to either of these is the fact that responsibility for the peace process and peace settlement with the guerilla groups falls under the jurisdiction of the Constitutional Issues committee and ports fall under the jurisdiction of Foreign Affairs & Defense committee.

²¹ All estimates of predicted probabilities were produced using the Clarify software for Stata developed by Michael Tomz, Jason Wittenberg and Gary King.

Table 6: Determinants of Committee membership

	Constitutional Issues	Foreign Affairs & Defense	Treasury and Public Finance	Budget & Industry	Agriculture & Environment	Public Services	Social Services
% Dept. GDP resulting from agriculture	.041 (.024)	.037 (.034)	.050* (.021)	.037 (.022)	.076** (.026)	.005 (.025)	.025 (.027)
% Dept. GDP resulting from mining	.091 (.057)	.070 (.065)	.038 (.063)	.117* (.058)	.103 (.061)	.090 (.061)	-.050 (.086)
% Dept. GDP resulting from Industry	.016 (.021)	.020 (.036)	.048* (.019)	.022 (.020)	.068** (.025)	-.058 (.032)	-.013 (.031)
Department Population	2.9 E-7* (1.5 E-7)	3.4 E-7 (1.9 E-7)	2.2 E-7 (1.5 E-7)	-2.2 E-7 (1.5 E-7)	2.5 E-7 (1.8 E-7)	2.9 E-7 (2.1 E-7)	3.8 E-7* (1.6 E-7)
% Seats held by deputy's party	-.014 (.014)	-.007 (.018)	-.010 (.014)	-.013 (.013)	-.024 (.016)	-.025 (.016)	-.008 (.017)
Total terms deputy has served	.485** (.155)	.487** (.170)	.383* (.181)	.441** (.153)	.224 (.172)	.286 (.197)	.348 (.178)
Intercept	-1.64 (1.44)	-2.79 (1.92)	-2.46 (1.32)	-.480 (1.31)	-3.70* (1.65)	.861 (1.512)	-1.46 (1.81)

Coefficients are multinomial logistic regression coefficients for a model predicting the committee on which a deputy will serve. The excluded category is special committees (committee 8). The model was estimated with standard errors clustered on the individual.

N = 943

Log Likelihood = -1758.5

Wald chi-square 89.66 (Prob. of chi-square .0000)

* P > .05

** P > .01

A different set of factors predicts membership on what is probably most clearly a pure constituency service committee: Agriculture & Environment. This committee's jurisdiction makes them responsible for issues which affect people's economic situation. The variable expected to exert the greatest influence in this case (agricultural contribution to department GDP) does in fact achieve statistical significance at the .01 level. Increases in the agricultural percentage of department GDP from the minimum to the maximum increase the chances a deputy serves on the Agriculture & Environmental committee from 2% to 20%, when all other variables are set at their mean. Surprisingly though, while the industrial percentage of department GDP also achieves statistical significance and the effect is in the opposite from expected direction. In this case we would expect that coming from an industrial department would decrease the chances a deputy served on the agricultural committee. However, the coefficient is positive and the effect large, since as industrial percentage of GDP varies from the observed minimum to the observed maximum the chances of serving on the Agriculture & Environment committee increase from 2% to 57%! While a strict reading of the jurisdictions for this committee would seem to imply that this is an illogical choice, perhaps the best explanation for the powerful effect of this variable is that members from industrial districts find this to be a useful committee because it deals with legislation regulating the use of natural resources and that by serving on this committee they can ensure that farming activities do not receive too favored a position. Also, it is interesting to note that this is one of the few committees where the seniority variable does not achieve statistical significance. More senior deputies from agricultural departments find they can just as easily protect their constituent's interests on another committee (like Budget & Industry) as on this committee.

The other two committees on which seniority does not predict service—Public Services and Social Services—can also be classified as committees on which a member can serve his/her constituents. Unfortunately, none of the variables included in the model contributed to a significant chance that the member served on the Public Services committee. While it is disappointing that these variables do not predict service on this committee the most likely explanation is that given the diversity and breadth of the committee's jurisdiction it appeals to a wide variety of members and so no clear "average" member emerges.

In predicting the probability a member served on the Social Services committee the only variable to achieve statistical significance was department population. Issues such as social security, welfare benefits, charity organizations, and housing all fall under the jurisdiction of this committee. Departments with several large urban areas – or one really big urban area – are likely to place disproportionate demands upon these particular services.²² Deputies from the least populous states only have a 4% chance of serving on this committee while deputies from the most populous have an 11% chance.

Different factors determine which deputies have the greatest probability of serving on the two economic committees (Budget & Industry and Treasury & Public Finance). Both of these committees quite clearly have economic and expenditure power. Of the district economic variables both agriculture and industry have a significant positive effect upon the chances that a deputy will serve on the Treasury & Public Finance committee. The chances of serving on this committee increase from 9% to 20% as the percentage of department GDP from agriculture

²² As an aside while we would expect this to be even more true in the case of Public Works than Social Services, however changes in the structure of the state – including the significant devolution of responsibility for public services to the municipalities in the late 1980s may have rendered national involvement less critical and thus participation on this committee less useful.

increases from the minimum to the maximum value. Industrial production exerts an even larger effect, increasing the chances from 8% at the minimum to 29% at the maximum value. Since this committee is responsible for laws regulating and determining the financial structure of the nation it is not surprising that districts that are economic powerhouses (in either agriculture or industry) would be served by representation on this committee. Moreover, given the diversity of finance related issues that fall under their jurisdiction, it would be possible for a member to represent their district on this committee regardless of which of these two types of economic activity was most important.

As is true with the Budget & Industry Committee—and was true with Constitutional Issues and Foreign Affairs & Defense—seniority matters in predicting the probability that a deputy will win a seat upon Treasury & Public Finance. In predicting service on the Budget & Industry committee junior members had a 25% chance while for more senior members that chance increased to 31%. Of the department economic characteristic variables, only mining exerted a statistically significant effect upon the probability that a member served on the Budget & Industry committee. This is ironic since we would have expected this variable to achieve significance in predicting the likelihood a member served on the Agriculture & Environment committee (given that that is the committee charged with considering legislation dealing with mining and energy). As mining contribution to department GDP increased from the minimum to the maximum the probability a member served on the Budget & Industry committee increased from 24% to 78%.

In summary then, in looking at the variables which predict service upon a committee, seniority clearly exerts the most consistent effect across the different committees. The effect of seniority is notable in predicting service on both of the two committees that would be classified as national issues committees and the two committees dealing with the economy and government expenditures. This lends some support to the idea that these four committees are more prestigious, desirable, or powerful than the others. This would be consistent with the descriptive data reported in Tables 3A, 3B, and 4.

The economic variables did indeed matter although the only effect that was completely in line with prior expectations was the importance of agriculture in predicting service upon the agricultural committee. Also, surprisingly industry was not important in predicting service upon the Budget & Industry committee however, as was noted above, this committee was probably more valuable for the budgetary aspect. Also economic regulation issues also fall under the jurisdiction of the Treasury and Public Finance committee and industrial contribution to department GDP was indeed a significant and positive predictor of the likelihood a deputy would serve upon that committee.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the different patterns of committee service among members of the Colombian Chamber of Deputies and Senate between 1974 and 1998. Among the issues considered in this paper is the extent to which members use committees as a method to engage in personal vote seeking activities. The electoral quotient with least remainders electoral law combined with the extremely weak discipline of political parties (party leaders do not control nominations) creates a system with even more incentives to cultivate a personal following and to distinguish oneself from ones colleagues than exists in the United States Congress. This creates the ideal environment to study whether or not given a similar set of incentives deputies do in fact behave in the same way as their North American counterparts.

To a large extent members in Colombia do follow similar patterns. Members tend to prefer a longer career on a committee that is useful to them to experience on a variety of committees. Also, given the relative importance of seniority in only half the committees, some committees appear to be either more useful, more prestigious, or both. This is consistent with findings from the US Congress which demonstrate the members seek to build careers upon high demand or prestige committees (such as Appropriations, Budget, or Ways and Means). While this study looks at different evidence, its findings are similar to other studies of legislative entrepreneurship in Colombia. Passing bills that deliver government money, projects, or benefits to a specific municipality is crucial for reelection. In fact, Crisp (2000) and Crisp *et al* (2000) find a high percentage of the bills initiated in Colombia are locally targeted bills that would fund a construction project frequently in a municipality but at most in a department. This study compliments studies of bill initiation because these bills must go to a committee and Budget & Industry is the most logical. The type of legislation introduced may help to explain why Budget & Industry is so popular.

This paper also finds that not all deputies chose to serve on prestige committees. Some in fact seek service (repeatedly in many cases) upon committees in which they can engage in constituency service activities. This was measured by considering whether deputies served on the committee that would seem most logical based on the economic characteristics of their district. There is qualified support that in the most clear-cut of the cases – agriculture – the Agriculture committee was more likely to be composed of deputies whose constituents depended heavily upon agriculture for their economic livelihood.

This paper also challenges the notion that the U.S. Congress is an exception in the importance and power of committees. On the contrary, committees do indeed matter in Colombia. The powers they possess – effectively to kill legislation with a negative report or by refusing to report a bill out of committee – combined with the fact that in Colombia committees do possess staff and office resources, enable them to contribute to the development of information centers and the development of expertise among congressmen in particular areas. When combined with the fact that many members of committees serve lengthy terms on those committees – providing some stable membership – it is possible indeed to argue that in Colombia committees contribute to the development of "legislative experts" who can bring to bear their knowledge and expertise in this area and who can contribute to the drafting and passage of quality legislation. Also, with an eye to inter-branch relations the existence of this expertise in the legislature gives them a better opportunity to challenge the executive and to ensure that their preferred policy outcome (rather than the president's) will be adopted.

What is left to future research is to explore the nature of the relationship between committee service and electoral success. After all it is probably no coincidence that members serving on the budget committee are among those who serve the longest consecutive terms. It is also probably not coincidence that seniority affects service on this committee. Consequently, in addition to saying that it determines on which committee you serve on it is also important to determine the extent to which the committees on which you serve help you to deliver pork back to your district and ultimately help members in winning reelection or election to other or another office.

Appendix 1: Committee Jurisdictions in Colombia²³

First Committee: Constitutional Issues

“Constitutional Reform, statutory laws, territorial organization, rules for organizations of control, general norms regarding administrative contracts, notaries and registries, structure and organization of the central national administration, the rights, guarantees and duties, legislative branch, strategies and policies for peace, intellectual property, variation in the residence of the top national powers, ethnic issues.”²⁴

Second Committee: Foreign Affairs and Defense

“International affairs; national defense and the police force; public treaties; diplomatic and consular careers; foreign trade and economic integration; policies regarding ports; international and supranational parliamentary relations; diplomatic issues not constitutionally reserved to the government; borders; nationality; foreigners; migration; public honors and monuments; military service; free trade zones; international contracts.”

Third Committee: Treasury and Public Finance

“Treasury and public credit; taxes and contributions; tax exemptions; monetary regime; laws regarding the Bank of the Republic; central banking system; laws dealing with monopolies; government loan authorizations; stock market; economic regulation; national planning; exchange regime, financial activity, stock market, insurance and capture of savings.”

Fourth Committee: Budget and Industry

“Organic laws regarding the budget; system of fiscal financial control; disposition and destination of national goods; regulation of the industrial property regime; patents and trademarks; creation, suppression, reform and organization of national public establishments; control of price and quality of administrative contracting.”

Fifth Committee: Agriculture and Environment

“Land-and-cattle and farming regime; ecology; environment and natural resources; adjudication and recuperation of land; hydrological resources and issues of the sea; mines and energy; regional autonomous corporations.”

Sixth Committee: Public Services

“Communication; rates; public calamities; functioning and provision of public services; methods of communication; scientific and technological investigation; electromagnetic spectrum; geosynchronous orbit; digital system of communication and information; aerospace; public works and transportation; tourism and tourist development; education and culture. “

Seventh Committee: Social Services

“Statutes of public servants and self employed workers; salary and service regime for public servants; labor unions; mutual aid societies; social security; welfare fund; benefits; careers in administration and civil service; recreation, sports, health, and community organizations; housing; economic foundations; issues of women and the family.”

²³ Note that while committees in Colombia are almost exclusively referred to by their number, for convenience and clarity I have opted to use names to refer to the committees.

²⁴ Jurisdictions are a direct translation by the author from article 2 of Law 3 of 1992.

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