

If it were not for the increasing partisanship, US Congress would be even more ineffective!



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Legislative Effectiveness Hangs in the Balance

Samir Aref and Zachary Neal

Research Question:
Why is Congress so ineffective at passing legislation?

Political Party Hypothesis:

It is easier to pass bills when the majority party holds a larger majority.

Political Coalition Hypothesis:

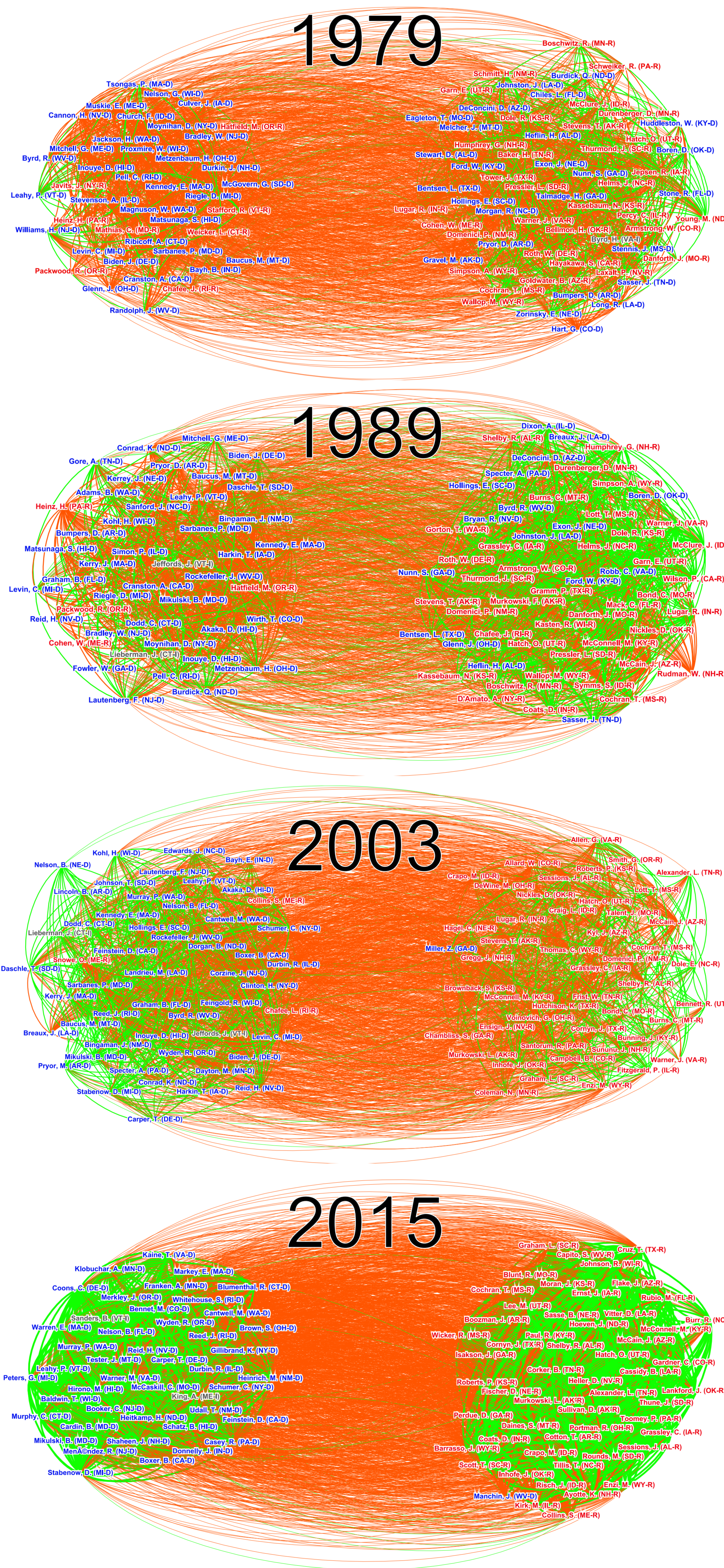
Parties do not matter, but coalitions do. When Congress is polarized into coalitions, it is easier to pass bills when the largest coalition is ideologically unified (i.e. partisan).

Findings:

Over time, the proportion of introduced bills that pass into law (passage rate) has declined.

The size of the majority party's majority does not help explain why (no support for H1). But, the partisanship of the largest coalition does (supporting H2).

Over time, the largest coalition has become more partisan, which makes it easier to pass bills.



Method (publicly available):

Extracting signed networks from bill co-sponsorships using *backbone* package

Extracting coalitions by partitioning signed networks of legislators

Materials (publicly available):

Senate sessions 1979-2016

~100 nodes, ~2000-4000 edges

House sessions 1979-2016

~435 nodes, ~50000-80000 edges

Node colors = party affiliation:

Republican (red)

Democrat (blue)

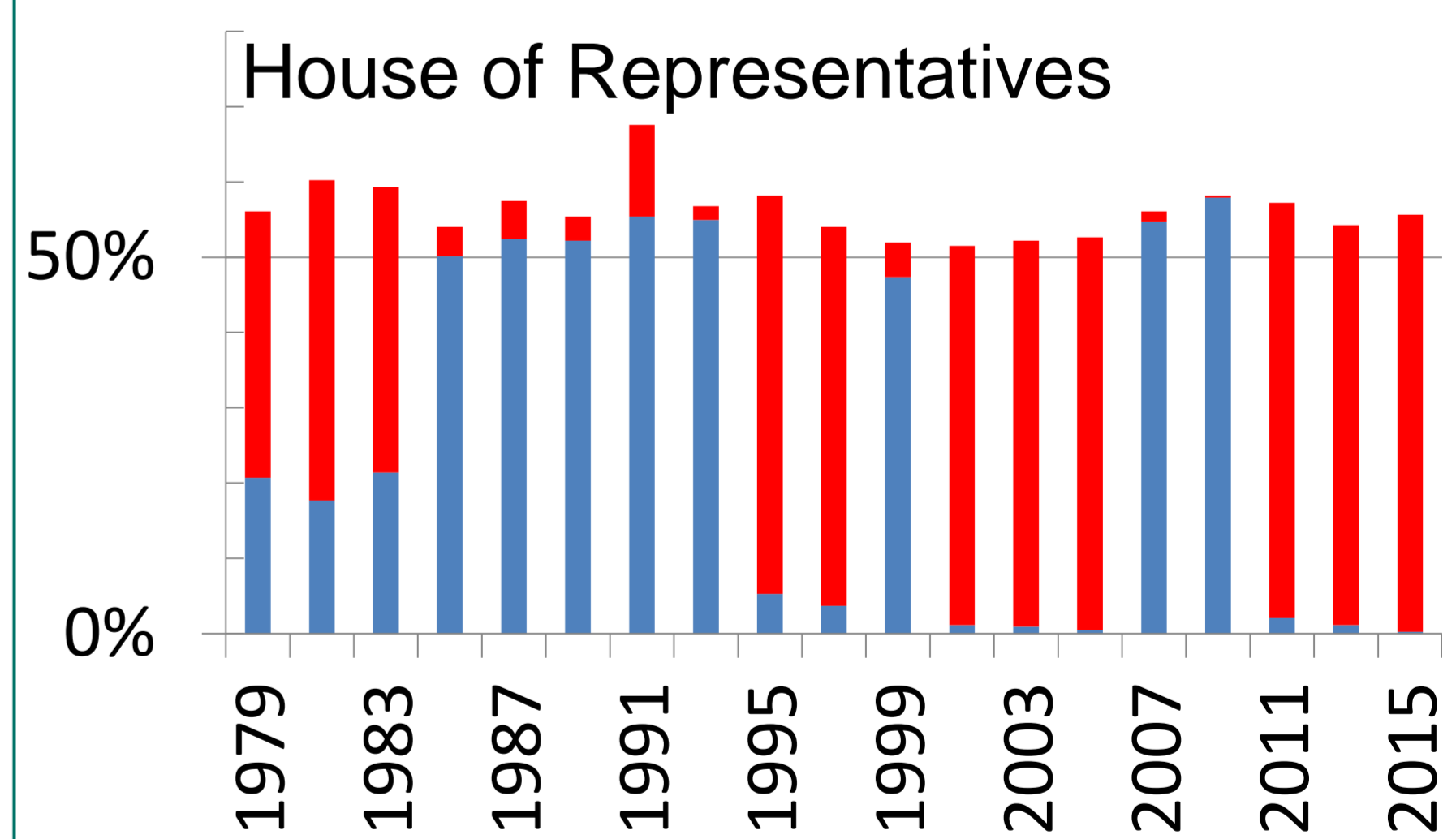
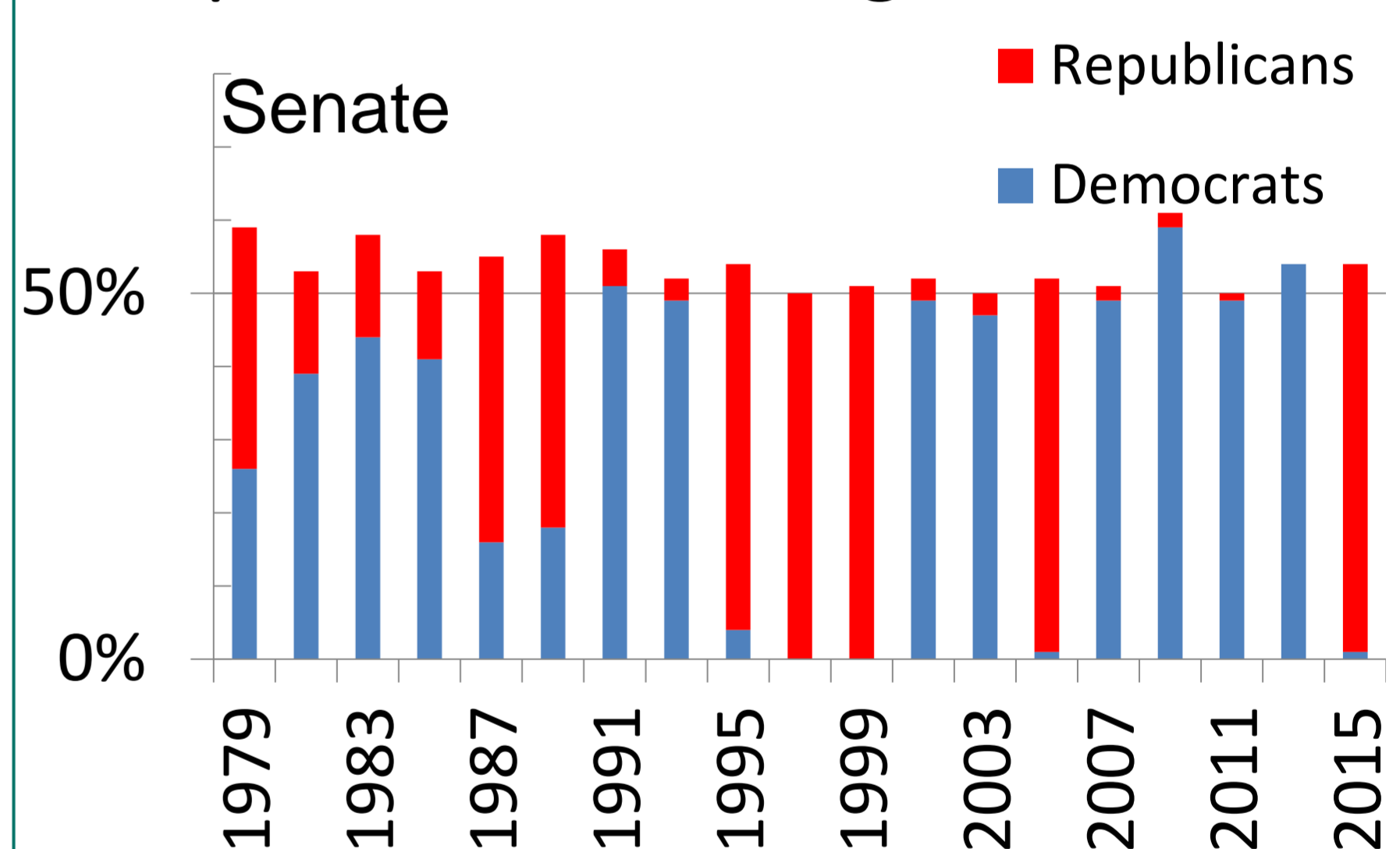
Edge colors:

Many* co-sponsorships (green)

Few* co-sponsorships (orange)

*Compared to a null model

Composition of the largest coalition



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