

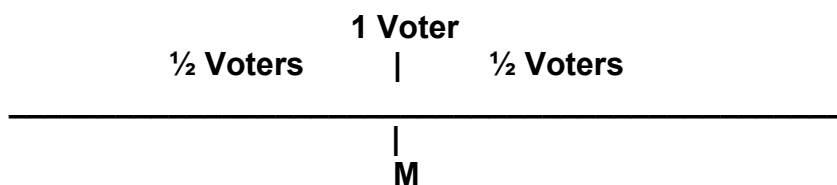
## The Unidimensional Spatial Model

**First Principle—Black’s Median Voter Theorem (S&B definition):**

**“If members of a group have single-peaked preferences, then the ideal point of the median voter has an empty winset.”**

**An *Empty Winset* means: “there exist no alternatives that can defeat the median voter’s ideal point.”**

**Proof (of sorts):**



**In majority voting, a proposal must receive  $(N-1)/2 + 1$  votes (i.e. “50 percent + 1”).**

**If the status quo is to the left *or* to the right of M, it will only receive  $(N-1)/2$  votes.**

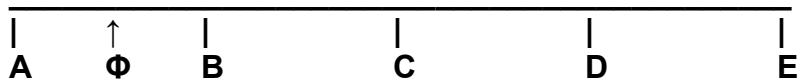
**Why?**

**If M is proposed, that position will get *at least*  $(N-1)/2 + 1$  votes.**

**Why?**

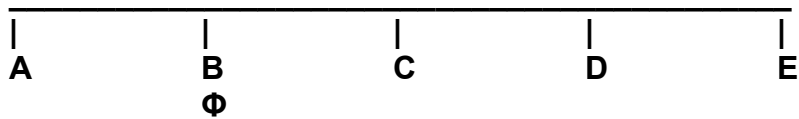
**Note the importance, again, of the **MEDIAN VOTER**: it is a Condorcet Winner.**

**Proposals and Counter Proposals:**



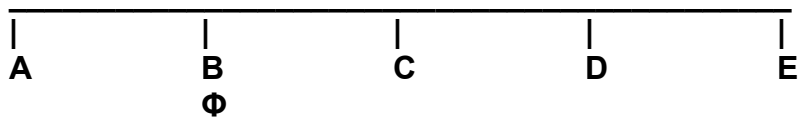
**Round 1: Suppose B makes a motion at her ideal point?**

**What Happens? (B wins; why?)**



**Round 2: Suppose D makes motion at his ideal point?**

**What happens? ( $\Phi$  wins; why? What's going on with C in this round?)**



**Round 3: Suppose C makes a motion at her ideal point?**

**What happens? (C wins; why?)**

**Can you find a position that “beats” C’s ideal point?**

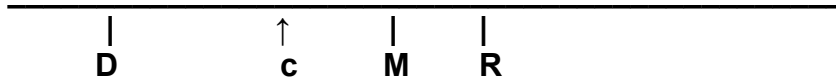
**If not, this means that C’s winset is *empty*.**

**This illustrates the median voter theorem.**

**Convergence: Hotelling and Downs describe spatial convergence.**

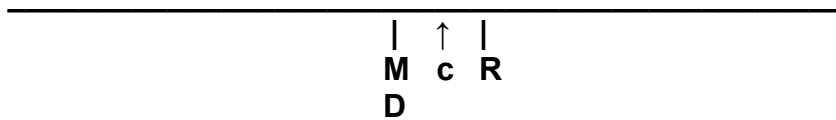
**Prediction: in unidimensional space, political parties, firms, etc., will CONVERGE to the median position.**

**Why?**



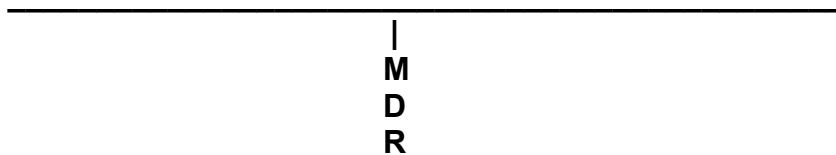
**Who Wins?**

**What Happens?**



**D “moderates” to median position. In an election, who would win?**

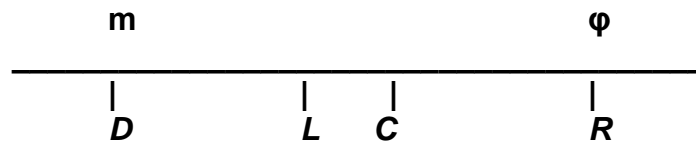
**Knowing this, what would R do?**



**R “moderates” to median position. This *is* convergence in unidimensional space.**

## Congress and American Politics

### The Leader's Problem:



**D** is the Democratic leadership's ideal point and **m** is the motion they prefer; **R** is the Republican leadership's ideal point and  $\phi$  (the status quo) is the position they prefer.

**L** is the ideal point of some DEMOCRATIC legislator and **C** is the ideal point of the MEDIAN VOTER in **L**'s district (or state).

Suppose **m** is proposed.

Unconstrained, what will **L** do? Why?

What can the Democratic leadership do to persuade **L**?

1. Do nothing? (Not wise)
2. Provide "cover". HOW?
3. Provide resources. WHAT KIND?

What can the Republican leadership do to persuade **L**?

1. Log-roll (bargain). HOW?
2. Also provide cover. WHAT KIND?

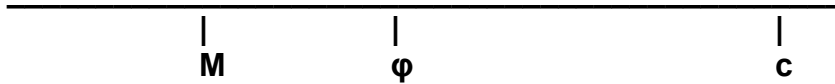
What if **L** defects?

What would YOU do if you were **D**?

What if **L** complies with **D**?

What would YOU do if you were **R**?

## The Power of Committees



“c” is the ideal point on some policy for some committee; M is the ideal point for the chamber as a whole; φ is the status quo position on some policy.

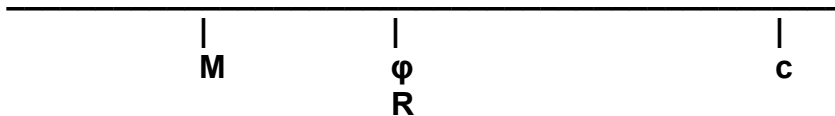
What should the committee do? Why?

What is significant about this action?

What if the committee sends its proposal to the floor?

What is significant about this action?

## The Power of Rules



“R” is the ideal point of the “Rules” committee.

R can do the following: 1) issue “open” rule; 2) issue “closed” rule; 3) do nothing (i.e. no rule is issued).

If 1, where does policy end up?

If 2, where does policy end up?

If 3, where does policy end up?

What would c prefer and why?

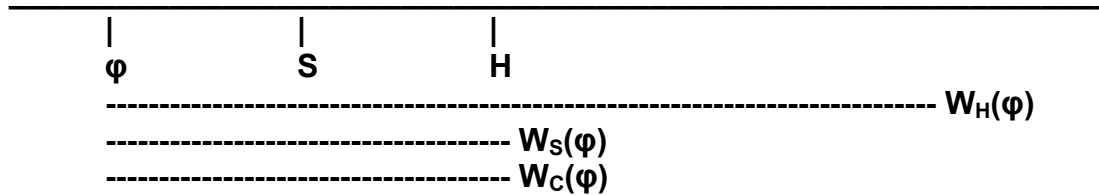
Given c’s ideal point, what strategy would maximize R’s utility?

What is significant about this outcome?

## Bicameralism

Legislation must pass identically in both chambers.

Implication: Bicameralism *limits the policy space or can lead to gridlock.*

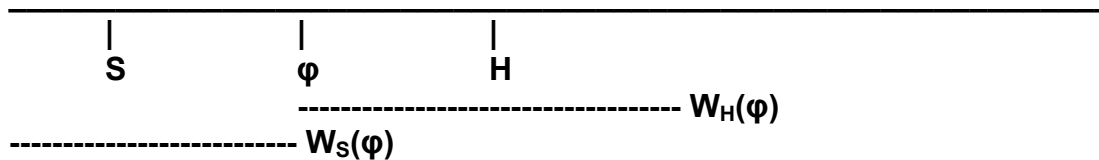


What does this show?

How is policy constrained?

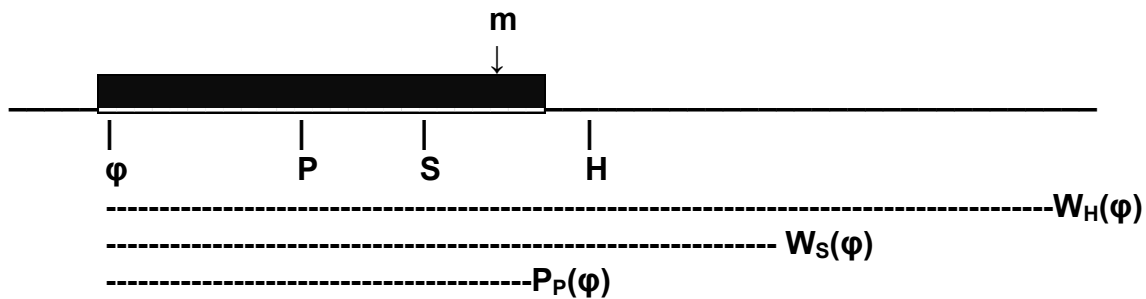
The important feature:  $W_C(\varphi) = W_H(\varphi) \cap W_S(\varphi)$

What about a completely polarized Congress?



What is the implication here?

## The President



“P” is the President’s ideal point; “S” is the Senate’s; “H” is the House’s.  $\varphi$  is the status quo and  $m$  is the proposal to the status quo.

The bold line is:  $W_C(\varphi) = W_H(\varphi) \cap W_S(\varphi) \cap P_P(\varphi)$

Why? What if Congress passes a policy outside of this intersection?

What position does the President *prefer*?

What about the House and Senate?

Where would policy end up being located?

Implication: The President cannot amend legislation but Congress can.

What if the situation were reversed: the President could amend policy but Congress could not.

Where would policy end up being located and why?

This illustrates the power of amending.

What if policy were proposed at H?

Ignoring the President, where would policy be located: H or  $\varphi$ ?

Why?

Not ignoring the President, what would he do?

## The Power of the Veto

President can veto; Congress can override with 2/3 “supermajority”.



$H$  is the median position for the chamber and  $\phi$  is the status quo.  $P$  is the President's preferred position

$H_L$  is the point at which 1/3 of the legislators are to the left; 2/3 to the right.  
 $H_U$  is the point at which 1/3 of the legislators are to the right; 2/3 to the left.

Why are these positions important?

**THESE ARE VETO PIVOTS.**

Suppose policy passes at the median voter ( $H$ ).

What would the President do? VETO!

Why?

If Congress is to override, it needs 2/3rds majority.

In this example, would the veto be overridden or sustained? WHY?

## Pivotal Politics

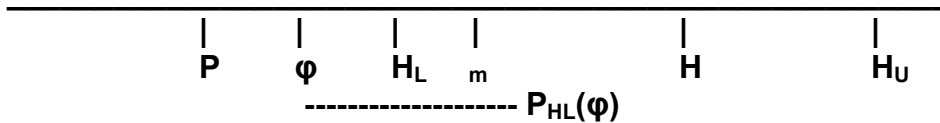


If H won, what would the President do?

Would the veto be overridden?

Why?

Suppose the median voter is strategic. Instead of proposing H, she proposes m:



Now what would happen?

Since m is in H<sub>L</sub>'s "preferred to" set, he would prefer m to the status quo.

Would a veto be overridden or sustained?

**IMPLICATION:**

With vetoes, the median voter's position is **NO LONGER PIVOTAL**. The "pivot" moves to the extremes (1/3 in). This is why H<sub>L</sub> and H<sub>U</sub> are called **VETO PIVOTS!**

Implications?

1. Veto threats are important!
2. President can constrain policy movement.
3. Vetoes change focus from median to pivots.