

Presidential obstruction of the agenda in Chile's Congress

Work in progress

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What is the urgency authority?

The executive can **interfere with legislative scheduling** at will
(Carey&Shugart 1998, Morgenstern 2002)

When a bill declared **urgent**:

- Colombia: it takes precedence over other legislative business immediately
- Brazil: assembly must act in 45 days, else it takes precedence
Since 2001, all *medidas provisórias* are urgent
- Mexico: must be scheduled for floor vote within 30 days
4 bills/year only
- Chile: chamber must act in less than 30 days
- Uruguay: must act in a pre-specified, short period,
inaction turns bill into law

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- Any bill at any stage can be declared urgent
- Chamber urged must “discuss and vote” before 30 days
- Law sets the breadth of the interference
 - 1 act now (*discusión inmediata*, 6 days)
 - 2 two weeks notice (*urgencia suma*, 15 days)
 - 3 four weeks notice (*urgencia simple*, 30 days)
- Can retire the urgency, with immediate effects
- Non-compliance: reversionary schedule/policy indetermined

“... can have **dramatic effects** on ex.-leg. relations, legislative organization, and policy...”

(Morgenstern 2002)

Or perhaps **irrelevant** in the face of opposition:
schedule now \neq passage

Under-investigated (Chile only?):

- 60 % exec. proposals 1990–94 urgent (Siavelis 2002)
- Speed of consideration: urgent 29.0 weeks rest 29.7
- Strongly associated with likelihood of passage (Alemán&Navia 2009)
- Methodological obstacles: right censoring, selection bias...

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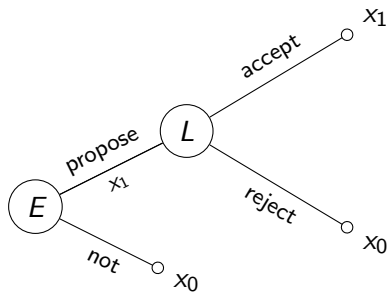
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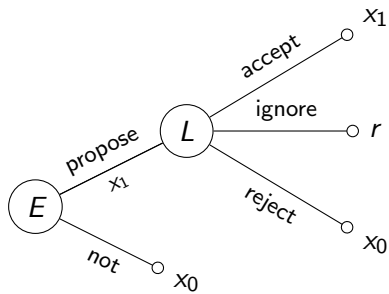
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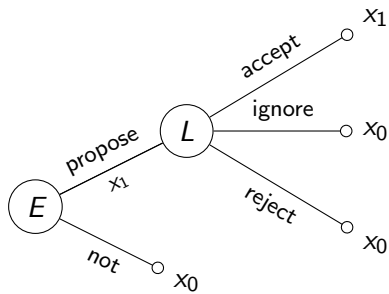
Reversionary policy and scarce time



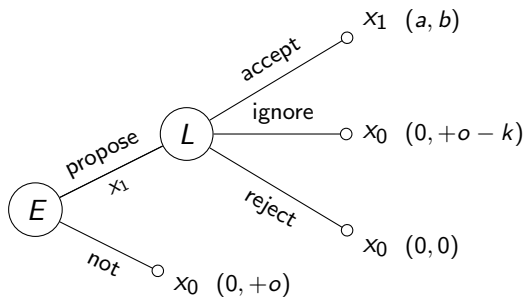
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Parentheses are gains v. status quo

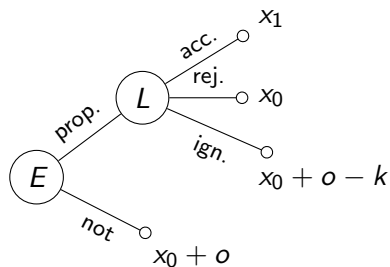
o = opportunity cost

k = obstruction cost (Brazil)

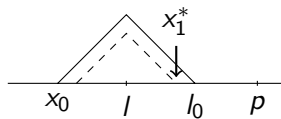
= persuasion cost (Chile)

Inconsequential urgency power?

Chile



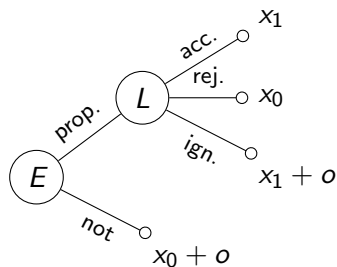
Case 1: $o > k$



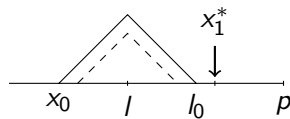
Case 2: $o \leq k$



Uruguay



Case 3: $k \equiv 0$



Neustadt (1954): Presidential power is ability to **persuade** others that it is in their interest to cooperate (despite no institutional consequences)

Declaring urgency

- Signals priority ('Act now' > '2 week' > '4 week')
- Media attention, nurtures public debate
- Enough for $k > o$?

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The president's status in Congress

- Original dataset of bill histories 1998–2014
- Many missing records before 1998
- Covers 3+ presidencies, variance in president's status (coalition unity, Carey 2002, Alemán&Saiegh 2007)

Coalition	1998–02	2002–06	2006–10	2010–14
Cámara de Diputados				
President's	58	53	51	50
Opposition	42	48	47	48
Regional			3	2
Total	100	100	100	100
Senate				
President's	50	50	55	45
Opposition	50	50	45	55
Total	100	100	100	100

Bills, success, and urgency 1998–2014

Bills	by legislators	by president	by either
introduced	5,533	1,469	7,002
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declared urgent	351	1,016	1,367
as %	26	74	100
as % introduced	6	69	20

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as %	26	74	100
as % introduced	6	69	20
declared urgent & passed	167	762	929
as %	18	82	100
as % declared urgent	48	75	68

Determinants of bill urgency

	<i>DV=1 if urgent, else 0</i>	
	(1)	(2)
Member bill	-2.978***	
Member bill, opp.-sponsored		-3.597***
Member bill, mix.-sponsored		-2.517***
Member bill, pres. coal.-sp.		-2.969***
Hacienda	1.761***	1.782***
Senate majority	-0.304***	-0.302***
Introduced Senate	0.184*	0.415***
Pres. term remaining	0.004***	0.004***
Year remaining	0.003	0.003*
Constant	-0.047	-0.113
N	6,987	6,987
LogL	-2,057	-2,029
% predicted correctly	89	89

Message types

	1998–2002	2002–2006	2006–2010	2010–2014	1998–2014
Act now	5	6	3	4	4
2-week notice	16	14	9	23	16
4-week notice	29	22	13	12	17
Shorten deadline	2	2	2	4	3
Extend deadline	29	33	41	43	39
Withdraw (act now)	1	2	2	2	2
Withdraw (2-week)	7	10	14	8	10
Withdraw (4-week)	10	11	17	3	10
Total messages	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	(1,268)	(1,881)	(4,941)	(5,643)	(13,733)

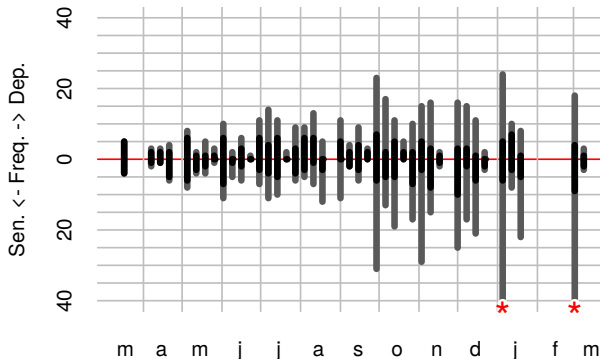
Number of messages	Bill freq. %
1	16
2	18
3	11
4	8
5-10	25
11-20	14
21-71	9
Total	100
(N)	(1,367)

Micro-managing presidents? Look @ message contents

Urgency message incidence

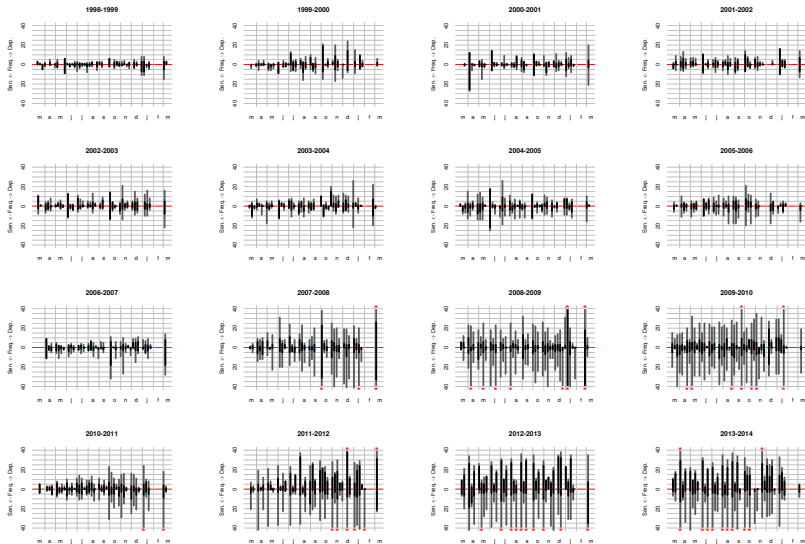
Weekly messages in one legislative year
black = original urgency

2010-2011



(Two histograms: Cámara above, Senate below **zero** line)

When all is urgent...



25 % urgencies were for member bills. Vote trading?

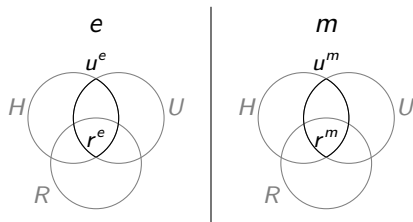
Concertación sponsors	Urgency by Concertación president	
	yes	no
all	39	26
some	40	48
none	21	26
	100	100

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Committee report after an urgency

Message	Report w/i deadline (%)
Act now	63
2-week notice	27
4-week notice	25
Deadline shortened	41
Deadline extended	23
Withdrawn	6
All	27

Three event count models

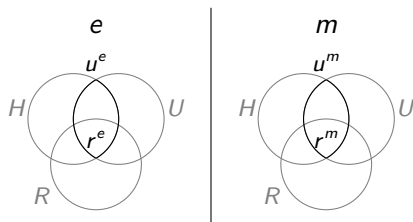


	DepVar	
IndVar	r^e	r^m
u^e	Mod. 1	Mod. 2
u^m		Mod. 3

Weekly counts: $r_t^e = \beta_0 + \beta_1 u_t^e + \beta_2 u_{t-1}^e + \dots$

Negative binomial regression

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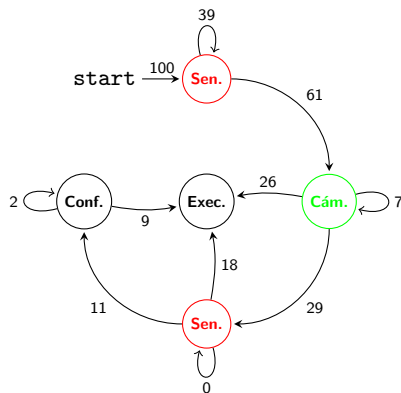
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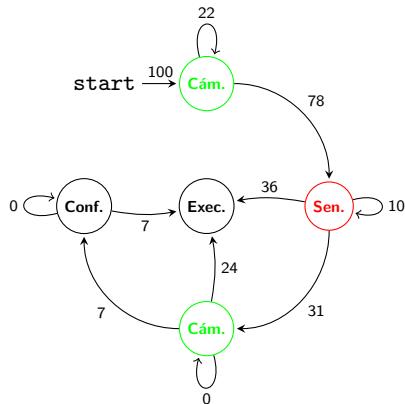
Message effects on Hacienda reports, Cámara

Type	Weekly reports					Weekly reports				
	$t = 0$	1	2	3	4	$t = 0$	1	2	3	4
	$u^e \rightarrow r^e$					$u^e \rightarrow r^m$				
Act Now	++	+	--				++			
2-week notice		++		--		++	-	++		
4-week notice				++	++					
Shorten deadline		++								
	$u^m \rightarrow r^e$					$u^m \rightarrow r^m$				
Act Now						++	++			
2-week notice		(not estimated)							++	++
4-week notice										
Shorten deadline										

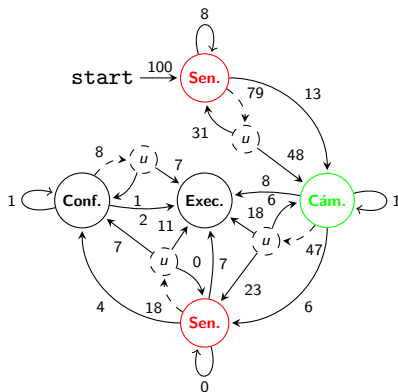
Sent to Senate ($N = 90$)



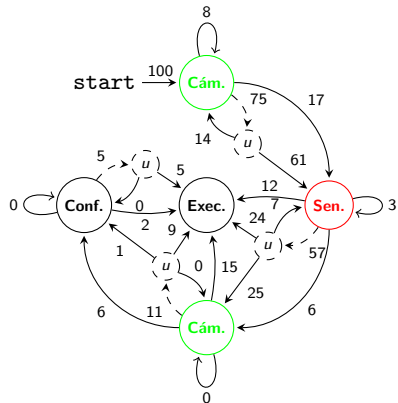
Sent to Cámara ($N = 314$)



Sent to Senate ($N = 90$)



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schedule now \neq passage
certainly, but

- 1 Imperfect negative agenda control
 - Committee gatekeeping \rightarrow silent death (Weingast&Marshall 1988)
 - Could majority cartel operate? Must include president (Cox&McCubbins 2005)
- 2 Dilatory tactics
 - Worsen legislative bottleneck (Cox 1987)
 - Exploit impatience of those next in line (Wawro&Schickler 2007)

- Chile's urgency auth. consequential iff $k > o$
- $\text{Corr}(\text{degree}, k) > 0$, '4 week' freq. puzzling
- Urgency triggers timely reports
- 2/5 messages extend deadline, 1/5 withdraw urgency
 - 1 Which exec. proposals not urgent?
 - 2 How do member proposals become urgent? Vote trading?
- Better identification for selection problems

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