

Presidential obstruction of the agenda in Chile's  
Congress

*Work in progress*

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ITAM

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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  
(but 4 bills/year only)
- Chile: chamber must act in 30 days or less
- 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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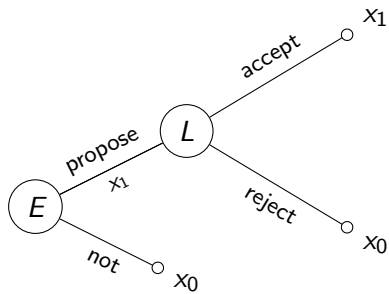
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- 3 Committee reporting
- 4 Where next?

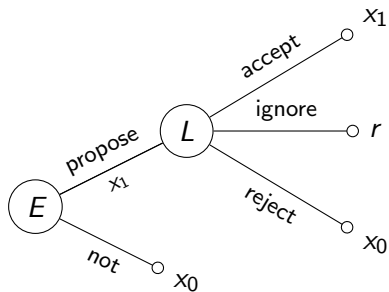
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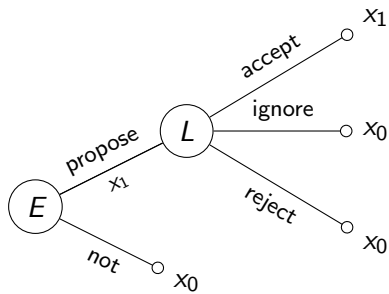
# Reversionary policy and scarce time



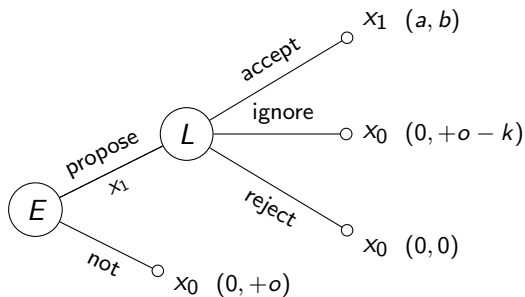
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Parentheses are gains v. status quo

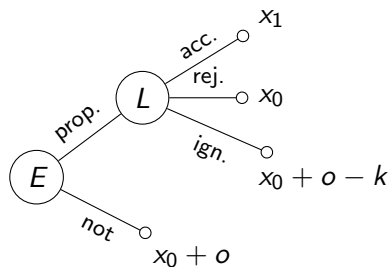
$o$  = opportunity cost

$k$  = obstruction cost (Brazil)

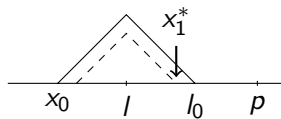
= persuasion cost (Chile)

# Inconsequential urgency power?

Chile



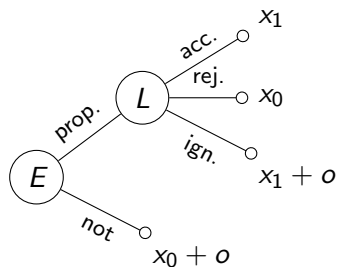
Case 1:  $o > k$



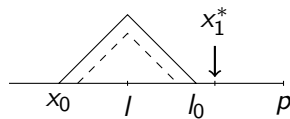
Case 2:  $o \leq k$



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
<b>Cámara de Diputados</b>				
President's	58	53	51	50
Opposition	42	48	47	48
Regional			3	2
Total	100	100	100	100
<b>Senate</b>				
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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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

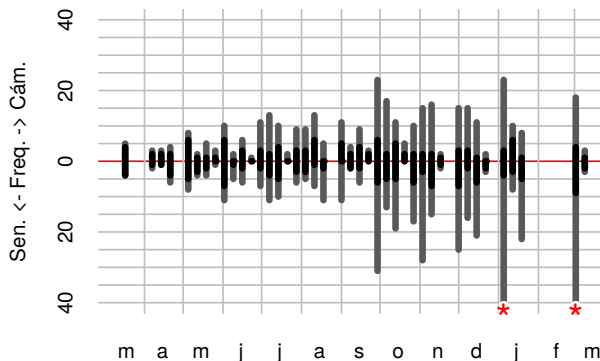
	1998–2002	2002–2006	2006–2010	2010–2014	1998–2014
Act now	5	6	3	4	4
2-week notice	16	14	9	23	16
4-week notice	29	22	13	12	17
Shorten deadline	2	2	2	4	3
Extend deadline	29	33	41	43	39
Withdraw (act now)	1	2	2	2	2
Withdraw (2-week)	7	10	14	8	10
Withdraw (4-week)	10	11	17	3	10
Total messages	100	100	100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

Weekly messages in one legislative year  
black = original urgency

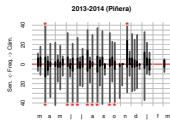
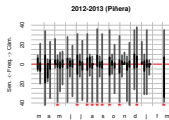
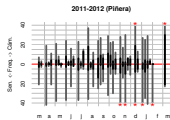
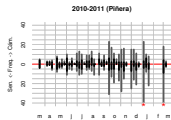
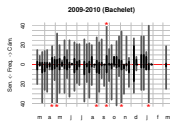
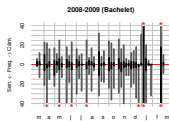
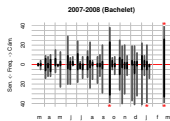
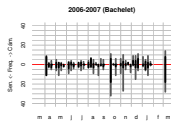
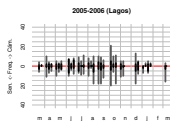
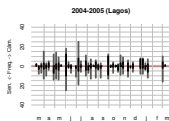
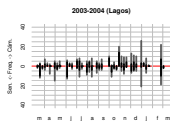
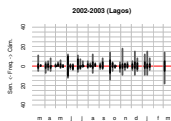
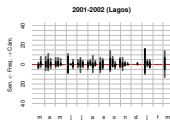
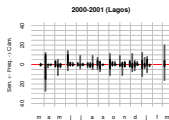
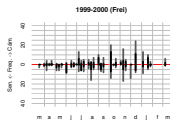
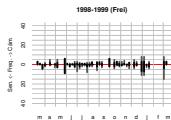
2010-2011 (Piñera)



(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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Except

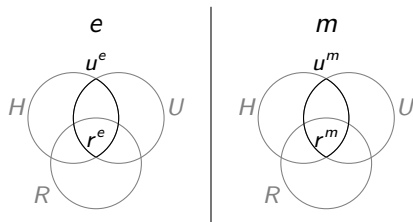
- 1 bills exempt from committee referral
- 2 bills already reported

consequential urgency → committee report follows  
→ report before deadline

- Any authorization **must** be referred to Hacienda committee, no exception
- (2) above favors  $H_0$

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

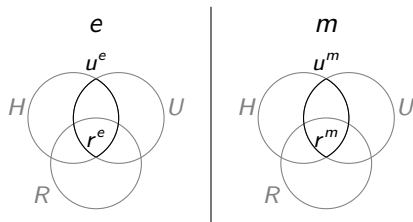


	DepVar	
IndVar	$r^e$	$r^m$
$u^e$	Mod. 1	Mod. 2
$u^m$		Mod. 3

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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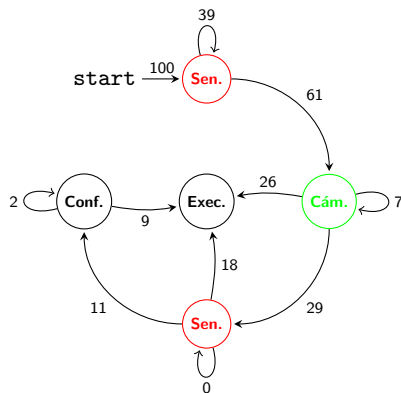
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# Message effects on Hacienda reports, Cámara

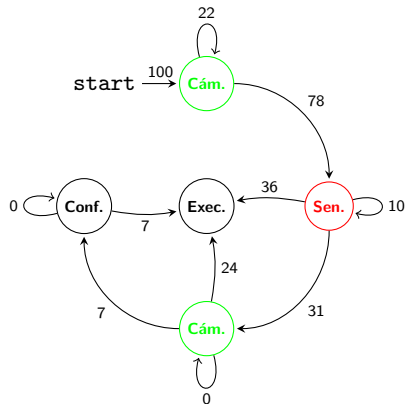
Type	Weekly reports					Weekly reports					
	$t = 0$	1	2	3	4	$t = 0$	1	2	3	4	
		$u^e \rightarrow r^e$					$u^e \rightarrow r^m$				
Act Now	++	+	--				++				
2-week notice		++		--		++	-	++			
4-week notice				++	++						
Shorten deadline		++									
		$u^m \rightarrow r^e$					$u^m \rightarrow r^m$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



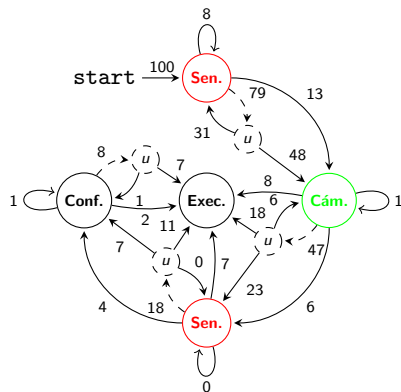
## Sent to Senate ( $N = 90$ )



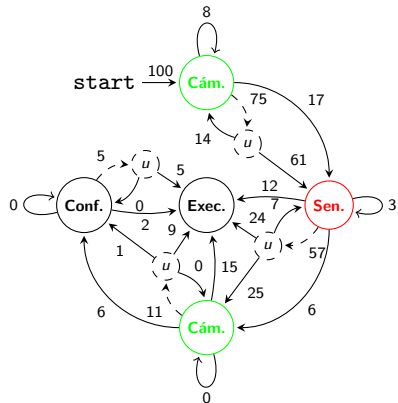
## Sent to Cámara ( $N = 314$ )



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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)

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- $\text{Corr}(\text{degree}, k) > 0$ , '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

Thank you!

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