Seniority and the Electoral Performance of U.S. House Incumbents In Response to Redistricting

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Abstract

Past studies of U.S. House redistricting have given relatively short shrift to the question of what differentiates members in terms of their ability to overcome the potentially adverse effects of district boundary change. In this study, we find that veteran incumbents in states finalizing redistricting plans early receive less benefit from having a campaign spending advantage over the challenger. In contrast, however, veterans benefit from their capacity to blunt the threat posed by gaining large numbers of new constituents. Falloff in veterans' vote margins, as the central finding emerging from the analysis, responds much less strongly to growing numbers of constituent newcomers than does falloff in the margins of first-termers. Furthermore, even among veterans themselves, higher levels of seniority help provide insulation against vote losses associated with new constituent addition. The new constituents whose voting decisions are most swayed by member seniority are non-identifiers with the incumbent's party; this is likely a consequence of their susceptibility to elements of the incumbent's "personal vote," which are more readily transferred across district lines by a veteran than by a first-term member.

Most studies of congressional redistricting have focused on how the voting behavior of constituents changes when they are switched between incumbent districts. At the most basic level, these constituents are less likely to cast a pro-incumbent ballot because of the withering of the "personal vote" component of their voting decision. Less name recognition of the new incumbent, combined with reduced awareness of his or her service activities like pork barreling and casework, means voting decisions that resemble those in open seat districts where incumbency by definition cannot be a factor (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2000, 26; Rush 2000, 55; Petrocik and Desposato 2004, 365; McKee 2008b, 968-71; Hayes and McKee 2009, 1010-11; Hood and McKee 2010, 351-54). Switched voters also are particularly swayed by partisan tides, such as the southern anti-Democratic tide in 1992 or the national anti-Democratic tide in 2002 (Desposato and Petrocik 2005, 47-48; McKee 2008a, 127-29; Hood and McKee 2013, 207-09; McKee 2013, 635-39; Seabrook 2017, 20). Campaign-level contextual effects further have been found to affect switched voters more than retained voters; e.g., disparity between campaign spending by the two candidates or the presence of a quality opposition party challenger on the ballot (Desposato and Petrocik 2003, 26-28; Hayes and McKee 2009, 1011).[1]

There has been less concern, however, with the matter of how incumbents' behavior itself changes in response to redistricting-induced alterations in the constituents they represent. Of course, members at the outset of the redistricting process ordinarily will try to maintain the intactness of their districts, in order to avoid the extra work necessary to curry favor with new constituents and the uncertainty surrounding whether these efforts will succeed.[2] In general, belonging to the state legislative party in charge of redistricting, as well as representing a district undergoing population growth rather than decline, will provide members with more leverage over the lines that eventually get drawn (McDonald 2004, 379-80; Forgette and Platt 2005, 946).

But when substantial new territory is appended to the district, previous research has identified a limited range of activities employed to win over new voters. The ideology represented by members' roll call voting has been found to be responsive to liberal or conservative shifts in district ideology (Boatright 2004, 440-42; Crespin 2010, 854-55), as well as the emphasis placed on particular issues of concern to key groups of new constituents like health care or Social Security (Hayes, Hibbing, and Sulkin 2010, 99-103). Furthermore, more fundraising will be undertaken when constituency composition is altered dramatically (Boatright 2004, 442-43).

For the most part, however, members' pre-election responses to altered district lines seem to emphasize focusing personal attention upon the new areas. Unlike the case with roll call voting, issue emphasis, and fundraising, the evidence here is impressionistic rather than statistical, given the paucity of quantitative data. Within the new areas, members may schedule frequent visitations, set up additional campaign offices, and coordinate casework with the soon-to-be-displaced current representative (Desposato and Petrocik 2003, 24; Boatright 2004, 447-50; Desposato and Petrocik 2005, 52; McKee 2008b, 973). Less commonly, part of the campaign apparatus of a member losing territory may be put at the disposal of a fellow party member whose district has been extended into this terrain. (Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart 2000, 26).

Little attention has been given, however, to the question of *which* kinds of members are more able to overcome the prospective electoral damage engendered by redistricting. Most fundamentally, members' length of tenure has not been considered. Those with higher seniority might be expected to have greater success in transferring their personal vote popularity in the old district into positive evaluations among new constituents. With regard to currently represented constituents, member seniority, aside from its general effect in enhancing incumbent familiarity (Niemi, Powell and Bicknell 1986, 191; McKee 2008b, 974), has been found specifically to

increase the likelihood that constituents will recall a project the member has brought into the district (Bowen 2010, 189-90). This is an obvious function of the greater number of projects members have been able to obtain as a result of their longevity in office, coupled with the attainment of high-ranking committee and subcommittee positions. And with more seniority, media coverage of such incumbent successes, plus successes in other domains such as high profile casework, would have lengthier opportunity to spill across adjoining district lines. Thus, the expectation is that veterans should be more able to limit the electoral damage they experience among new constituents as a result of diminution in the personal vote.

While the power of seniority to blunt the negative impact of new voter addition to one's district is of primary importance in this study, also relevant from the standpoint of identifying which members are better able to cultivate new constituents is the length of time between finalization of a state's redistricting plan and Election Day. Yoshinaka and Murphy (2011, 443) have found that for the 2002 cycle of line drawing, members in states finishing their plans earlier, despite the extra time available to solicit support from the new areas, did no better in the ensuing election than those in states with later completion dates. They do not consider the possibility, however, that the time-before-election variable may interact with other variables. This seems particularly plausible in the case of candidate spending. Perhaps an incumbent's spending advantage over the challenger has lesser electoral impact when the challenger has a longer time frame during which to compensate for this advantage with organizational development and active on-the-ground campaigning. Even were this interaction insignificant for members in the aggregate, it still is possible that there will be significance when analysis is performed separately within the ranks of first-term or veteran incumbents. If the efficacy of the personal vote is greater for veterans than for first-termers, even, as hypothesized above, with

regard to new constituents, then extra campaign time for challengers to attempt to overcome a veteran incumbent's financial edge may be especially important.

Data and Methods

The redistricting cycles to be studied are 1991-92, 2001-02, and 2011-12. Earlier cycles are not amenable to our analysis, because data from the Missouri Census Data Center's Geographic Correspondence Engine, which permit calculations of the proportions of each new district made up of retained and transplanted constituents, do not exist for previous decades.[3] The dependent variable in the analysis is inter-election change in House incumbents' proportion of the two-party vote, from the immediate pre-redistricting election to the election immediately following the redrawing of lines. Not included in the analysis are members lacking major party opposition in either election of the pair, as well as those facing off against another incumbent in the latter election as a result of line drawers' merging of districts.[4] Nor are those in states with only a single House district, where redistricting is not a possibility. Utilizing inter-election change as the dependent variable is necessary to capture the central phenomenon we are interested in; i.e., how change in election margins is affected by the interaction of members' seniority with *change* in district composition.

The list of independent variables is as follows:

Retained Constituents (proportion of constituents in new district who were previously represented by incumbent on the ballot)

Seniority (1 for incumbent with more than one term of seniority at time of post-redistricting election; 0 for first-term incumbent)

Partisanship Change (proportion of two-party vote in most recent pre-redistricting presidential election for presidential candidate of House member's party,

subtracted from this presidential candidate's two-party vote proportion reconfigured to correspond to new district lines)

Timing of Redistricting Plan (ln of number of days between finalization of redistricting plan in incumbent's state and date of general election)

Change in Incumbent vs. Challenger Spending {ln(incumbent spending) – ln(challenger spending) in post-redistricting election, minus ln(incumbent's previous spending) – ln(previous challenger's spending) in pre-redistricting election}[5]

Change in Challenger Quality (1 if incumbent faced quality challenger in pre-redistricting election but not in post-redistricting election; 0 if quality challenger, or non-quality challenger, is present in both elections; -1 if there is quality challenger in post-redistricting election but not in pre-redistricting election)[6]

Change in Constituency Committee Assignments (1 if majority of first-term incumbent's committee assignments are on constituency committees, or if veteran incumbent has moved from less than majority of assignments on constituency committees to majority across Congresses; 0 if less than majority of first-term incumbent's assignments are on constituency committees, or if veteran incumbent continues to have non-majority or majority of constituency committee assignments across Congresses; -1 if veteran incumbent moves from majority of assignments on constituency committees to non-majority across Congresses)[7]

Incumbent Party (1 if incumbent is Republican; 0 if Democrat).

Change in District Partisanship is gauged, as is standard in redistricting studies, in terms of the two-party presidential vote, because of the availability of this variable plus the robust relationship between voters' party identification and their presidential ballot. Thus, as an

example of this calculation, if Barack Obama's actual proportion of the two-party 2008 vote in a Democratic member's district was 0.52, but was 0.54 within the new 2012 district lines, partisan change in the incumbent party direction (i.e., pro-Democratic) would be 0.02. Campaign Spending is measured in terms of 1990 constant dollars. The logarithmic transformation of spending, as with the logarithmic transformation of the time between finalization of a redistricting plan and Election Day, reflects the assumption that extreme values of both measures will have diminishing returns on changes in election margins. Quality Challengers are defined dichotomously, reflecting whether the challenger at election time or any time in the past held elective office at some level.[8] The Change in Challenger Quality variable takes into account whether the incumbent over the two-year period lost (gained) such a challenger, which is expected to increase (decrease) election margin. Finally, constituency committees are defined according to their utility in allowing members to direct goods and services to their district. The operationalization of the committee change variable obviously must be different for first-term members and veterans, since only the latter have had the opportunity to shift committee assignments. First-termers with a majority of assignments on constituency committees are treated as the equivalent of veterans who shift from less than a majority of constituency committee assignments at the time of the first election to a majority afterward. In essence, these first-termers have undergone the equivalent of change, in the sense that they had no constituency committees to bolster election in their initial campaign for Congress, but did in the subsequent campaign. First-termers not sitting on a constituency committee, by the same logic, can be seen as the equivalent of veterans whose status *vis-à-vis* constituency committees remains stable across Congresses. Finally, there is no equivalency between veterans who transition away from service on a majority of constituency committees and first-termers of any kind, so only veterans

are eligible to be assigned the value of -1. The Change in Constituency Committee Assignments variable has been formulated so that, as in the case of the Change in Challenger Quality variable, positive parameters are expected.

Data from all of the election periods will be combined together. Multilevel regression is used for the estimation, given that the data are at three different levels. Individual congressional districts, at the lowest level, are nested within states, and states are nested within the election periods. Fixed effects for intercept and slope coefficients are calculated at the district level, while random effects variances for the intercepts are calculated at the two higher, contextual levels. Simply entering the contextual and individual-level variables together in a single level analysis would bias downward the standard errors of the parameters, because of the lack of independence among cases in a higher level group caused by the contextual variables' common effect (Steenbergen and Jones 2002, 220; Bickel 2007, 9-12). A further problem with single-level analysis is that degrees of freedom for significance testing of the contextual variables would be incorrectly based on the total number of individual cases, rather than the number of groups (Bickel 2007, 110). Estimation is performed with the multilevel mixed-effects generalized linear model of Stata.

How Members' Electoral Performance in Response to Redistricting Varies as a Function of First-Term or Veteran Status and the Interaction between Timing of Redistricting Plan and Campaign Spending

In the initial analysis, a variable for the interaction of Retained Constituents and Seniority is entered into the equation to determine whether there are differences in the electoral responsiveness of first-termers and veterans to the addition of new constituents. This initial model, estimated in Column 1, reveals a significant negative interaction term, meaning that, as

hypothesized, shifts in constituency composition are of greater electoral importance to members in their first term. The Retained Constituents parameter for first-termers

Table 1 The Effects of Redistricting on Inter-Election Vote Shifts of House Incumbents

	Fixed Effects	
Retained Constituents	.074*** (.024)	.074*** (.024)
Seniority	.038* (.024)	.039* (.024)
(Retained Constituents)*Seniority	-.064** (.030)	-.064** (.030)
Partisan Change	.837*** (.106)	.838*** (.105)
Timing of Redistricting Plan	.003 (.007)	.004 (.007)
Change in Incumbent vs. Challenger Spending	.013*** (.001)	.027** (.013)
(Timing of Redistricting Plan)*(Change in Incumbent vs. Challenger Spending)	- - -	-.002 (.002)
Change in Challenger Quality	.013** (.007)	.013** (.008)
Change in Constituent Assignments	.010** (.005)	.010** (.005)
Incumbent Party	-.016 (.035)	-.017 (.035)
Constant	-.060*** (.019)	-.063*** (.019)
	Variances of Random Effects Intercepts	
State Level	.0002** (.0001)	.0002** (.0001)
Election Period Level	.015 (.025)	.031 (.020)
Log Pseudolikelihood	1192.568	1193.033
N of Incumbent Contests	806	806

Note: Entries are multilevel regression coefficients and robust standard errors. One-tail tests used to determine significance of all coefficients, except for Incumbent party and Constant where two-tail tests apply.
***Significant at .01 level; **significant at .05 level; *significant at .10 level.

is 0.074, while the impact of this variable for veterans is only 0.010 (i.e., 0.074-0.064). Of course, the potential damage posed to first-termers by their greater susceptibility to the effects of

new constituents would be mitigated were their districts, on average, to be left more intact than veteran districts by line drawers. The reality, however, is that first-termer and veteran districts are treated very similarly: mean intactness for the former is 0.759, and 0.747 for the latter.[9]

All other variables in the initial model, in addition, have significant effects, with two exceptions. As Yoshinaka and Murphy found in their own study, the amount of time available for campaigning after a redrawing plan is finalized has no effect. Likewise making no difference is the party of the incumbent seeking reelection, where no direction of relationship was hypothesized. Finally, estimates of the variances of the intercepts at the higher, contextual levels are provided by the two random effects parameters. Random effects calculated at the state level are significant, indicating that even with all fixed level effects taken into account, inter-election vote swings for incumbents still vary among states. But random effects calculated at the third, election period level are insignificant.

As suggested above, however, it is possible that the Timing of Redistricting Plan variable, while not directly affecting members' electoral showing, may still matter by interacting with campaign spending (which here, of course, takes the form of a change variable; i.e., the incumbent's post-redistricting spending relative to that of the challenger, minus the incumbent's pre-redistricting spending relative to that of the previous challenger). The second column of Table 1, therefore, examines this possibility by including the interaction in a second model. While the sign of the interaction term is negative, indicating, as hypothesized, a reduced effect of the spending variable as the time available after finalization of the plan lengthens, the parameter falls short of being significant.

Table 2 employs the Model 1 equation to estimate the magnitude of the electoral effects that can be expected at different levels of constituency intactness for veteran and first-term

members, respectively. To generate these expectations, each case's actual values are maintained on all independent variables except Retained Constituents and Seniority, where differing set values of intactness and seniority are substituted for every case. Thus, for example, by assigning to every case a Retained Constituents value of 0.8 and a Seniority value of 1, the mean electoral change can be simulated were there to have been uniform retention of 80 percent of constituents, and veterans on the ballot in all districts. The figures listed in Table 2 represent population average impacts at intactness intervals varying by 0.1, generated with regard to the prior distribution of the random effects.

Table 2 Predicted Inter-Election Vote Shifts for Veteran and First-Term House Incumbents as a Function of Levels of District Intactness Resulting From Redistricting

Level of District Intactness	Predicted Vote Shift for Veteran Incumbents	Predicted Vote Shift for First-Term Incumbents
1.0	0.004	0.030
0.9	0.003	0.022
0.8	0.002	0.015
0.7	0.001	0.008
0.6	0.000	0.000
0.5	-0.001	-0.007
0.4	-0.002	-0.015
0.3	-0.003	-0.022
0.2	-0.004	-0.029
0.1	-0.005	-0.037
0.0	-0.006	-0.044

Note: Predicted vote shifts are population average impacts generated with regard to prior distribution of the random effects, derived from multilevel regression model in first column of Table 1.

The toll on election safety imposed by each successive reduction in district intactness is, of course, much less for veterans. Each reduction of 0.1 can be expected to make inter-election swings in veterans' margins less positive by only 0.001 (i.e., 0.1 per cent). The same intactness reduction of 0.1 for first-termers, in dramatic contrast, makes inter-election swings less positive by about seven times as much. So across the entire range of possible intactness values, first-termers' swings vary from a 3 per cent gain in completely unaltered districts to a -4.4 per cent

loss when the member is forced to run in a completely new district, contrasted with comparable figures of 0.4 percent and -0.6 per cent for veterans.

Table 2 also shows that both veterans and first-termers are predicted to have no inter-election change in margin when approximately 0.6 of their district is comprised of previously represented constituents. Above this level of intactness, first-termers fare better than their more senior colleagues, reflecting the familiar "sophomore surge" phenomenon. As long as a more pronounced number of constituent newcomers does not exist, therefore, the electoral reward generated by first-termer acquisition of incumbency status between elections will not be negated. But in more substantially transformed districts, the acquisition of incumbency status not only fails to prevent vote losses per se, but, more importantly, even fails to constrain losses to levels below those in veteran districts. So for these first-termers, the sophomore surge effect completely ceases to operate. Fortunately, for first-termers, however, only 21.1 percent of the districts they represent are below the 0.6 intactness threshold, so a clear majority of them will be able to enjoy the sophomore surge.[10]

The fact that veterans and first-termers are affected differently by the addition of new constituents suggests the possibility that there might be other differences between them as well caused by redistricting. We speculated earlier, of course, that the time available for campaigning after finalization of a redistricting plan might interact with campaign spending more strongly for veterans than for first-termers. In Table 3, therefore, we perform separate analysis for each of the two seniority groups, once again using multilevel regression. (The alternative approach of entering all possible interactions of interest into a single equation based on members regardless of seniority has the potential drawback—especially as a result of the three-way interaction

involving seniority, spending, and time before election—of introducing multicollinearity that would impair the interpretability of the estimates.)

Table 3 The Effects of Redistricting on Inter-Election Vote Shifts of House Incumbents: Members Differentiated According to Seniority

	Fixed Effects			
	Veteran Members	**First-Term Members**	**Veteran Members**	**First-Term Members**
Retained Constituents	0.013	0.029***	0.013	0.029***
	(0.012)	(0.003)	(0.012)	(0.006)
Partisan Change	0.908***	0.326*	0.909***	0.326*
	(0.086)	(0.239)	(0.087)	(0.237)
Timing of Redistricting Plan	0.022	0.010	0.002	0.010
	(0.004)	(0.018)	(0.005)	(0.022)
Change in Incumbent vs. Challenger Spending	0.012***	0.017***	0.028***	0.015
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.011)	(0.035)
(Timing of Redistricting Plan)*(Change in Incumbent vs. Challenger Spending)	- - -	- - -	-0.003	0.000
			(0.002)	(0.006)
Change in Challenger Quality	0.013*	0.015**	0.013*	0.015**
	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.008)
Change in Constituency Committee Assignments	0.010*	0.009***	0.009	0.009***
	(0.007)	(0.003)	(0.007)	(0.004)
Incumbent Party	-0.015	-0.023	-0.015	-0.023
	(0.038)	(0.016)	(0.038)	(0.016)
Constant	-0.018	-0.054	-0.020	-0.052
	(0.030)	(0.105)	(0.031)	(0.136)
	Variances of Random Effects Intercepts			
State Level	0.0002*	0.002***	0.0002*	0.002***
	(0.0001)	(0.001)	(0.0001)	(0.001)
Election Period Level	0.00003	0.0003	0.00002	0.0003
	(0.00003)	(0.0002)	(0.00003)	(0.0002)
Log Pseudolikelihood	996.280	218.132	996.871	218.133
N of Incumbent Contests	664	142	664	142

Note: Entries are multilevel regression coefficients and robust standard errors. One-tail tests used to determine significance of all coefficients, except for Incumbent party and Constant where two-tail tests apply.
***Significant at .01 level; **significant at .05 level; *significant at .10 level.

The first two columns of Table 3, which do not include the interaction between time before election and spending, reiterate that post-redistricting intactness of districts only has a meaningful effect on inter-election vote margins for first-termers. For the most part, the other independent variables have equivalent effects on members of both seniority groups. State level random effects for both seniority groups continue to be significant, while random effects at the election period level are insignificant in both instances. As with the impact of intactness, however, district partisanship change has a disparate impact on first-termers compared to veterans. The variable's parameter for both seniority groups is significantly positive, of course, but considerably smaller for first-term members.[11] Presumably, there is a tradeoff in the relevance of intactness and partisanship change. In districts with a first-termer on the ballot, the strong electoral impact on constituents of whether or not this member has previously represented them elevates the magnitude of the intactness parameter, which, in turn, dulls the impact of change in district partisanship. But in veteran districts, where, as we have noted, transplanted incumbents seem more able to transfer a sense of their electoral worthiness to new constituents and thus mitigate the liability of not having represented them previously, the partisanship change parameter does not suffer this dampening.[12]

The third and fourth columns of Table 3 repeat the separate analyses for veterans and first-termers, this time, however, adding the term for the interaction between the time available for campaigning after finalization of a redistricting plan and campaign spending. For veteran members, but not for first-termers, the interaction term is significant. The negative parameter indicates that, as hypothesized, the longer the period over which the new district boundaries are known, the less the ability of campaign spending to determine the election results. Challengers indeed seem able to blunt the effect of veteran incumbent spending when there is more time

available for campaigning, which is especially important given the greater ability of veterans to generate a personal vote for themselves.

Table 4 The Effects of Redistricting on Inter-Election Vote Shifts of Veteran House Incumbents

	Fixed Effects
Retained Constituents	0.036*** (0.006)
Terms of Service	0.002*** (0.001)
(Retained Constituents)*(Terms of Service)	0.004*** (0.001)
Partisanship Change	0.914*** (0.087)
Timing of Redistricting Plan	0.003 (0.005)
Change in Incumbent vs. Challenger Spending	0.028** (0.012)
(Timing of Redistricting Plan)*(Change in Incumbent vs. Challenger Spending)	-0.003* (0.002)
Change in Challenger Quality	0.013* (0.009)
Change in Constituency Committee Assignments	0.011* (0.007)
Incumbent Party	-0.015 (0.038
Constant	-0.036 (0.024)
	Variances of Random Effects Intercepts
State Level	0.0002* (0.0001)
Election Period Level	0.00003 (0.00003)
Log Pseudolikelihood	996.308
N of Incumbent Contests	664

Note: Entries are multilevel regression coefficients and robust standard errors. One-tail tests used to determine significance of all coefficients, except for Incumbent Party and Constant where two-tail tests apply.
***Significant at .01 level; **significant at .05 level; *significant at .10 level.

The central discovery of the analysis so far that veteran incumbents are able to vitiate the electoral damage caused by increasing numbers of new constituents moved into their districts raises the question of whether this effect becomes even stronger as veterans themselves become more and more senior, thus affording even lengthier opportunity for coverage of their constituency accomplishments to spill across district lines. To address the question, we focus only on veteran members and add to the equation with the significant interaction term in the third column of Table 3 a length of tenure variable (Terms of Service), indicating the number of consecutive terms that have been served as of the time of the post-redistricting election. Terms of Service is interacted with the Retained Constituents variable; a negative interaction would demonstrate that greater tenure makes the electoral impact of new constituents increasingly less consequential. Results of this analysis appear in Table 4. The interaction, of course, is significantly negative, indicating that each additional term of service reduces, overall, the impact of district intactness by 0.004.

Table 5 displays how inter-election change in veterans' electoral margins varies in response to specific combinations of district intactness and terms of service. The analogous procedure as in Table 2 is followed. For each case, actual values are retained on all variables except intactness and terms of service, where differing set values are inserted for all members. The identical range of intactness values as before is included, ranging from 1.0 to 0.0. Three different values of terms of service are used: two, five, and eight terms. With two terms of service, reductions in intactness from 1.0 to 0.0 cause expected inter-election vote swings to shift from a 0.005 gain to a -0.023 loss, an overall decline of -0.028. At eight terms of service, by way of contrast, inter-election swings are almost completely unresponsive to variation in the proportion of new constituents. Vote loss in an entirely intact district is expected to be -0.004,

only marginally less than the -0.009 loss expected in an entirely new district. So in districts with a large influx of new constituents, the greater ability of more senior members to neutralize the potential threat posed by these newcomers confers important reelection benefits.

Table 5 Predicted Inter-Election Vote Shifts For Veteran House Incumbents as a Function of Terms of Service and Levels of District Intactness Resulting from Redistricting

Level of District Intactness	Predicted Vote Shift for Two-Term Incumbents	Predicted Vote Shift for Five-Term Incumbents	Predicted Vote Shift for Eight-Term Incumbents
1.0	0.005	0.001	-0.004
0.9	0.002	-0.001	-0.004
0.8	-0.000	-0.003	-0.005
0.7	-0.003	-0.004	-0.005
0.6	-0.006	-0.006	-0.006
0.5	-0.009	-0.008	-0.006
0.4	-0.012	-0.009	-0.007
0.3	-0.015	-0.011	-0.007
0.2	-0.017	-0.013	-0.008
0.1	-0.020	-0.014	-0.008
0.0	-0.023	-0.016	-0.009

Note: Predicted vote shifts are population average impacts generated with regard to prior distribution of the random effects, derived from multilevel regression model in first column of Table 4.

Determining Individual-Level Responsibility for the Veteran Incumbent Advantage in Winning over New Constituents

In this final analysis, we shift focus to the question of just which new constituents are most responsible for the falloff in support for first-term incumbents. Here, of necessity, the analysis switches from the aggregate data we have been employing to ANES survey data. Of the three surveys done in the immediate post-redistricting election years that are considered in this study, only the 2012 Time Series Study contains sufficient numbers of transplanted constituents in both veteran and first-term member districts to permit confidence in the interpretation of the results. (The forthcoming 2012 analysis includes among transplanted constituents 555 voters with a veteran member running for reelection and 140 with a first-termer; the corresponding numbers are only 54 and 19 in 1992, and only 77 and 5 in 2002.)

The two kinds of transplanted voters will be compared with regard to the likelihood of voting for the incumbent running in their new district.[13] If veteran members are, in fact, more able than first-termers to transfer their personal vote popularity earned through name recognition, pork barreling, and casework to the evaluations made by new voters, then it is expected that they will be favored with greater electoral support. Only new constituents casting votes in districts with two-party competition and where two opposite party incumbents are not facing off against one another are considered.[14]

The independent variables used to account for voting decisions in this basic model are the following:

Seniority (1 for voters with veteran member on the ballot; 0 if member is first-termer)

Opposition Party Identification (1 for voters who are strong or weak identifiers with non-incumbent party, or who are independents leaning in this direction; 0 otherwise)

Independent Identification (1 for voters who are pure independents; 0 otherwise)

Incumbent Party (1 if member is Republican; 0 if Democrat).

The dependent variable is coded 1 for a pro-incumbent vote, and 0 for an opposition party vote. Here, Stata's Multilevel mixed effects probit regression generates the estimates. The lower level is comprised of individual voters, while the higher, contextual level consists of the congressional districts in which they are nested.

Table 6 shows in the first column that the parameter of the seniority variable has the hypothesized positive sign, but falls shy of significance. It cannot be concluded, therefore, that new voters in general see veteran members in a more favorable light than first-termers. But perhaps the overall relationship has been weakened by those new constituents who identify with the incumbent party, mainly relying upon their partisanship in deciding how to vote regardless

Table 6 The Effects of Member Seniority on Transplanted Constituents' Likelihood of Casting a Pro-Incumbent Vote

	Fixed Effects	
Seniority	0.191 (0.211)	0.075 (0.380)
Opposition Party Identification	-2.984*** (0.223)	- - -
Independent Identification	-1633*** (0.299)	- - -
Non-Incumbent Party Identification	- - -	-3.272*** (0.421)
Seniority*(Non-Incumbent Party Identification)	- - -	0.631* (0.456)
Incumbent Party	0.032 (0.181)	-0.035 (0.189)
Constant	1.543*** (0.214)	1.844*** (0.355)
	Variances of Random Effects Intercepts	
Congressional District Level	0.301** (0.183)	0.423** (0.233)
Log Pseudolikelihood	-206.827	-220.657
N of Respondents	695	695
	Constituent Odds of Casting Pro-Incumbent Vote	
Incumbent Party Identifier with Veteran Member	0.929	
Incumbent Party Identifier with First-Term Member	0.937	
Non-Incumbent Party Identifier with Veteran Member	0.228	
Non-Incumbent Party Identifier with First-Term Member	0.113	

Note: Entries are multilevel probit coefficients and robust standard errors. One-tail tests used to determine significance of all coefficients, except for Incumbent party and Constant where two-tail tests apply. Predicted odds of voting for incumbent are population average impacts generated with regard to prior distribution of the random effects, derived from multilevel probit regression model above.
***Significant at .01 level; **significant at .05 level; *significant at .10 level.

of member seniority. Constituents more susceptible to forming incumbent evaluations based upon personal vote-related considerations are, by definition, not those of the member's party. Thus, non-incumbent party members may be more influenced in their evaluations by the

transplanted personal vote characteristics that should be more closely associated with veteran members. A sizable 45.2 percent of the voters who are included in the analysis here are either pure independents (7.9 percent), or opposite party identifiers/leaners (37.3 percent).

The second column in Table 6, therefore, introduces an interaction term into the equation. Rather than employing separate interaction terms for each of the two kinds of non-incumbent party identifiers, we have chosen to combine the much smaller group of pure independents together with opposition party identifiers/leaners to form a single category (Non-Incumbent Party Identification, with 1 for non-incumbent party identifiers, and 0 otherwise), and to interact this combined category with the seniority variable. A significantly positive term for the combined category interaction is expected, which would mean that non-incumbent party identifiers indeed are more likely to vote for veterans than for first-termers. This, in fact, is exactly what emerges. Incumbent party identifiers, with all other explanatory variables held constant, are unaffected by the seniority of the member (i.e., an insignificant seniority coefficient of only -0.075), whereas non-incumbent party identifiers have a probit coefficient that is 0.706 more positive (i.e., 0.631-(-0.075)).

At the bottom of Table 6, we simulate the odds of casting a pro-incumbent vote for voters classified according to their partisanship and the seniority of the member on the ballot. Voters' actual values on Incumbent Party are retained, while the appropriate set values on the other independent variables are assigned to all voters to simulate the behavior of voters of the incumbent party with a veteran member, etc. Voters identifying with the incumbent party have approximately equal probabilities of supporting the member regardless of whether he or she is a veteran (0.929) or first-termer (0.937). For voters not identifying with the incumbent's party, however, seniority matters considerably. Veterans receive 0.228 support, versus only 0.113

support for first-termers. All in all, therefore, it seems clear that it is these non-incumbent party voters who are responsible for the electoral adversity experienced by first-term members transferred into new districts by redistricting.

Summary and Conclusions

Seniority matters in the congressional redistricting process. Previous research has been shortsighted in assuming that members regardless of seniority are equally affected by the addition of new constituents to their districts. We saw that for the most part, the predictors of inter-election vote swings across the period of redistricting do have similar effects on veterans and first-termers. The exceptions, however, are precisely those predictors that relate to the redistricting process. Veterans in states that finalize their redistricting plans early are more vulnerable than are first-termers to their challengers exploiting the extra time available for campaign-related activities to chip away at incumbent spending advantages. But more fundamentally, veterans in contrast are advantaged *vis-à-vis* first-termers in that they have greater ability to blunt the impact of increasing numbers of new constituents. Each 10 per cent increase in the number of new constituents causes about seven times the electoral damage to first-termers than the same 10 per cent increase causes for veterans. Among members who have more than 40 per cent new constituents, in fact, inter-election vote loss for first-termers exceeds that of veterans, meaning that the vaunted sophomore surge bestowed by the acquisition of incumbency status totally ceases to exist. Additionally, the electoral insulation of veteran members continues to strengthen with growing seniority. Veterans with eight terms of service actually can be expected to lose only minimal shares of the vote as their district shifts from being fully intact to entirely new. The stronger impact that new constituents have on first-termers'

electoral showing, however, seems to weaken the impact on first-termers of partisanship change brought on by redistricting.

Primary responsibility for the damage done to first-termers by redistricting lies with new constituents not affiliated with these members' party. New same party voters are no less likely to support a first-termer than they are to support a veteran, owing to the pull of party loyalty. But new independent and opposition party voters, who are potentially persuadable on the basis of personal vote characteristics of incumbents that are autonomous of party label, seem particularly affected by first-termers' relative difficulty in transferring favorable perceptions of such characteristics across district lines.

The lesson for state legislators in charge of line redrawing, therefore, is clear. Conventional wisdom holds that marginal first-termers of the opposition party, regardless of whether the upcoming election is taking place immediately following redistricting, should be prioritized for defeat, before they consolidate a firmer grip on constituents' loyalty. Thus, these first-termers are likely to face especially strong challengers (Murphy and Yoshinaka 2009, 966), who average more than twice the campaign spending of challengers facing veteran incumbents (Jacobson and Carson 2020, 77). But in immediate post-redistricting elections, opposition party first-termers should also be prioritized for major boundary changes to their districts in terms of adding large numbers of new constituents, as many as possible who do not identify with the incumbent's party. As long as more than 40 per cent of their reconstituted district consists of new constituents, first-termers will have a harder time winning them over than would more senior members under identical circumstances. And even though district partisanship change in the aggregate has less impact on first-termers than on veterans, it is still the non-incumbent party identifiers among these new constituents who are especially prone to reject first-termers because

of their difficulty in transferring personal vote popularity developed over just two years of congressional service.

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[1] Hayes and McKee (2009, 1011) caution, however, that their evidence of campaign spending affecting new voters more than old voters should be regarded as suggestive rather than conclusive.
[2] See, for example, the accounting of Massachusetts Democrat Barney Frank's decision to retire in 2012 after viewing his new, considerably altered district map (Jenkins and Pettey, 2013, 166).
[3] The Missouri Census Data Center is a partner in the U.S. Census Bureau's State Data Center network. For each House district in the immediate post-redistricting Congress, the Geographic Correspondence Engine calculates the number of constituents who remain from the previous rendition of that district, plus the number who have been transferred from other districts. The former quantity, divided by the total post-redistricting population, thus is the retained constituent proportion we shall be relying upon in this study. (District numbering sometimes is altered by redistricting, so detailed investigation had to be undertaken to determine which numberings in the old Congress corresponded to the numberings in the new Congress.)
[4] Louisiana's "jungle" elections permit multiple candidates from a party to appear together on the November ballot. A majority of the overall vote is needed to be elected; otherwise, the top two finishers irrespective of party compete in a subsequent December run-off. Cases like this where there is, in either November election of a pair, inter-party competition but multiple candidates from at least one party are excluded from the analysis.
[5] House candidates are only required to report to the FEC expenditures of at least $5,000. Thus, where no expenditures are reported, $5,000 in current spending is assumed, which follows the procedure adopted by Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan (2002, 131) and Jacobson (1990, 338). (The $5,000 is converted into 1990 constant dollars when performing the analysis.)
[6] Data on challenger quality were generously supplied by Gary Jacobson.
[7] The decision to classify members' district focus in terms of whether a majority of committee assignments are on constituency committees is taken from Snyder Jr. and Stromberg (2010, 392-93). Their categorization of constituency committees, which we follow here, includes Agriculture; Armed Services; Interior and Insular Affairs; Merchant Marine and Fisheries; Public Works and Transportation; Science, Space, and Technology; Small Business; and Veterans Affairs for the 1990-92 period. For the 2000-02 and 2010-12 periods, all these committees continue to comprise the constituency category (sometimes with a name change, however), with the exception of Merchant Marine and Fisheries, which was abolished in 1995.
[8] By definition, first termers elected to Congress by defeating an incumbent are classified as having had a quality challenger in the pre-redistricting election.
[9] Along similar lines, Yoshinaka and Murphy find in their study of redistricting for 2002 that seniority had no effect on the percentage of the district population made up of new constituents, the degree to which existing constituents were shifted into new districts, or change in district partisanship (2009, 455).
[10] The number of veterans with districts below the .6 intactness threshold is almost the same as for first-termers; i.e., 22.8 percent.
[11] The difference here between first-termers and veterans is significant, just as in the case of the intactness variable.
[12] The relatively weak impact that partisanship change has on the electoral performance of first termers reduces the advantage accruing to these incumbents from the fact that 60.6 per cent of their districts are made more favorable for their party as a result of redistricting, compared to only 50.3 per cent of veteran districts.
[13] Face-to-face as well as online respondents in the 2012 Time Series Study are included here. Respondents who have been transplanted into a new incumbent's district are identified by comparing their pre- and post-redistricting districts.
[14] As spelled out above in note 4, respondents in any Louisiana district with multiple Republican or multiple Democratic candidates also are not analyzed.