

**Rising To Leadership in an Era of Political Change:
Bob Michel and the 1970s House Minority Party**

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Abstract:

The 1970s represent an inflection point for House Republicans as the conference responded to changes in House rules and the political context—as well as the short-term challenge of Watergate and the aftermath of the 1974 election. Bob Michel’s first two forays into elected party leadership, as NRCC chair and minority whip, took place in this context, and the story of the NRCC and Republican whip organizations under Michel provide a window into the minority party’s responses to these changes. Using archived documents and some quantitative data, I discuss the NRCC’s struggles in the Watergate election of 1974 and highlight efforts under Michel to protect the interests of the congressional party. I analyze Michel’s successful election as whip and describe his whip organization’s responses to new pressures, including a more professionalized staff, a more streamlined floor operation, and the use of whip actions to support legislating, obstructing, and messaging tactics. Michel’s initial experiences as an elected leader show him to be a transitional leader in a party conference grappling with the early stages of major changes.

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Congressional observers recognize the 1970s as a time of reform and change in the House of Representatives. Within the majority party, younger and more liberal members sought to limit the dominance of conservative committee chairs, bringing about more decentralized committee control. At the same time, Democrats gradually began to strengthen the central party leadership, creating new mechanisms for the Speaker to lead from the center as well as new opportunities for the Democrats to participate in the stronger caucus's activity (Rohde 1991, 20-27). Some consequences of these majority-party reforms arrived gradually (Aldrich and Rohde 2000), but other House changes in the 1970s had more immediate impact. The advent of recorded votes in the Committee of the Whole and electronic roll-call voting brought about a sharp increase in roll-call votes, particularly on controversial amendments (Roberts and Smith 2003, 308; also Smith 1989, Straus 2012). Other changes followed, including closed-circuit monitoring of roll-calls and, late in the decade, C-SPAN (Straus 2008).

Of course, these changes inside the House were accompanied by—and partly driven by—major upheavals in the broader political system. Watergate roiled presidential and congressional politics and generated an energized House Democratic caucus while enervating the congressional GOP. Energy crises and broader economic woes changed the issue landscape and the legislative agenda. And a new, more activist and ideological brand of politics began to take hold in both parties, with strong reverberations in the House: the liberal Democratic Study Group was at the peak of its influence in the mid-1970s, and a more confrontational breed of conservatives began to make their voices heard in the Republican conference around the same time.¹

This is the political environment in which Robert H. Michel (R-IL) began his rise to leadership of the House Republicans. After building a record of party work as a rank-and-file member in the 1960s and early 1970s, Michel won his first elected leadership post in

1973 as chair of the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC). At the end of 1974, the Republican conference elected Michel as Minority Whip, a post he held until his election as Minority Leader for the 97th Congress (1981). Michel's quick ascent up the elected-leadership ladder was defined by the particular challenges of this era, and this paper has a two-fold focus as a result. The paper's first subject is Bob Michel, as I trace his leadership elections and his work as a rising House leader. But the paper's second subject is the House minority party of the 1970s: I use Michel's experiences as NRCC chair and as whip to examine the changing strategies, tactics, and institutions of the House GOP.

In each of his two first leadership roles, Michel took over from a predecessor who had held the position for an unusually long time. Taking the reins of the NRCC and the whip organization in quick succession, Michel oversaw changes that responded to the needs of a minority party at an inflection point. With the political changes of the 1970s, the conditions for minority party legislative influence (Clark 2015) were declining, and the party's electoral and policy goals demanded changes in some tactics, particularly in electioneering and legislating (Green 2015). As I will show, some of these changes, particularly for the NRCC, involved renewed autonomy for the House with less reliance on the White House and the RNC. In other instances, House Republicans developed new abilities to respond more rapidly to the floor majority through legislative tactics.

The paper proceeds in several steps. I very briefly introduce some key conceptual ideas about the roles of the House minority party generally and about House party organizations in particular. Then, I consider Bob Michel's first elected leadership role at the NRCC in the 1974 election cycle, discussing how the unfolding Watergate scandal affected Michel and the congressional campaign and providing a picture of the NRCC's role in this period. I then assess Michel's election to the minority whip post, the changes he brought to the Republican whip organization over three Congresses, and examples of the

whip system's activity in the Michel era. I conclude with observations about context, constraints, and Michel's leadership of House party organizations.

The House Minority Party: Tactics, Organization, and Influence

Although legislative minority parties have usually received little attention,² several recent accounts provide a framework for thinking about the House minority. Matthew Green, for example, focuses on the collective goals of the party, which he identifies as winning the majority and influencing policy as well as advancing both the procedural rights of the minority and the party's presidential prospects (Green 2015, 10-15). The balance of these objectives can change over time—and can create serious intraparty conflict for the minority (Green 2015, 17). In service of these objectives, minority party actors seek broadly to build party unity, and they employ a set of tactics that includes electioneering, legislating, obstructing, and messaging (Green 2015, 19-29). The latter tactic illustrates the minority's shifting approaches as political circumstances change. Lee (2016) has carefully documented the effect of rising congressional party competition on party tactics since about 1980. She shows that the parties have heavily prioritized the collective goal of gaining (or maintaining) the majority, and that they have pursued that goal primarily through messaging, broadly defined to include PR activity as well as legislative actions directed at messages rather than shaping policy.

Clark's research (2015) provides further insight on this shift away from legislative influence and toward electoral/message politics. In her thorough study of minority parties in Congress and the 100 U.S. state legislatures, Clark demonstrates that "the minority party's capacity to influence legislative decision-making may be enhanced or diminished depending on key features of the legislative and political context" (2015, 147). Specifically, she finds that minority influence is diminished with higher levels of polarization and with

the reduced uncertainty that comes from greater legislative resources and centralization of “institutional prerogatives” (Clark 2015, 8-9).

Together, these perspectives point toward the 1970s as the start of a major change for the Republican House minority. The weaker majority leadership and depolarization that characterized the House around 1970 afforded a meaningful measure of GOP influence in the legislative process (Jones 1970) that was threatened by the major changes in and outside of the House, as described above. These changes would become more pronounced in the heightened electoral competition and greater polarization of the 1980s, with a more organized effort to push the GOP toward confrontation (e.g., Newt Gingrich’s Conservative Opportunity Society of the early 1980s; see Green and Crouch 2017, Strahan 2007, 138-139). But we can see in the 1970s an inflection point at which the House GOP began to engage the trade-off between backroom legislative cooperation and a more electorally oriented set of tactics combining legislating, messaging, and obstruction.³

The House Minority’s Leadership Organizations

In this 1970s context, Bob Michel led two important elements of the House Republican party, two among several participatory organizations that are crucial for the minority party’s efforts. In my work on Republican and Democratic organizations (Meinke 2016), I show that structures like the House whip systems prioritize member participation in order to advance collective party goals as well as the goals of individual members. The party leadership gains tools for coordination, persuasion, and external communication, while individual members benefit in their own policy, electoral, and power goals. These organizations have served a distinct role for parties in the minority, providing an outlet for member involvement when other opportunities are limited (see also Connolly and Pitney 1994). The Republican conference, during its long stint in the minority, was ahead of the

Democratic caucus in developing specialized party organizations that substituted for the capacity and resources available to the majority (Meinke 2016, 173-174).

The National Republican Congressional Committee, the home of Michel's first elected leadership position, stands out as a unique organization in the House Republican system. As Kolodny argues, the congressional campaign committees are distinct in that they "exist to pursue majority status" and to "create an institutional interest" in the collective pursuit of that goal. With their outward focus on fundraising and recruitment, they are a hybrid of "external" and "internal" party organizations (Kolodny 1998, 8-9). This line-straddling mission reflects the origins and purpose of the congressional campaign committees. The oldest of the House leadership organizations (the NRCC dates to 1866), campaign committees were formed to advance the electoral interests of the congressional caucus *independent of* the White House and national party organization (Kolodny 1998, 4-5).⁴

"A Very Untenable Position": Leading the NRCC

If the history of the NRCC has been shaped by House Republican efforts to distinguish their own campaigns from the national party, Bob Michel's election and brief tenure as NRCC chair is a kind of microcosm of that history.⁵ The chair vacancy and Michel's campaign involved controversy about the White House's role in the 1972 cycle and its pressure on the congressional party. As chair, Michel would lead the NRCC in defending its own congressional campaign turf in an increasingly perilous political climate. The 1974 campaign began with the NRCC planning to "pursue majorities" (Kolodny 1998) aggressively after the GOP's big 1972 presidential win, focusing on recruitment and considering how to build a majority by flipping southern districts.⁶ But the NRCC turned toward defending incumbents as White House scandals dominated the election cycle.

At the start of the 93rd Congress (1973), Bob Wilson (R-CA) had chaired the NRCC for a decade, and found himself in conflict with the White House, which apparently wanted to “force Wilson out” (Kolodny 1998, 120). Michel viewed the White House’s public campaign to oust Wilson as “shabby treatment” that belied the administration’s own responsibility for the mediocre House election results in 1972. According to Michel’s recollection, the White House had “shielded” about 66 Democratic seats “because the President was indebted . . . for [members’] support of his policy in prosecuting the [Vietnam] war.”⁷ Under this pressure, Wilson ran again to lead the NRCC, but after winning the post, he stepped aside after a few months.⁸ Having decided on a run for chair, Michel was prepared for Wilson’s announcement, working quietly to cultivate support in early 1973—he had also extracted a promise from RNC chair George Bush to keep the White House out of the contest.⁹

Michel’s race would be against Clarence “Bud” Brown (R-OH). Unlike Michel, who had actively served as a congressional surrogate in GOP presidential campaigns¹⁰ but not on the NRCC, Brown had experience serving on the campaign committee. He had taken charge of candidate recruitment at the start of 1973, and his NRCC chair campaign focused on a detailed recruitment plan.¹¹ Brown pledged distance from the administration, although a *Washington Post* account indicated that he “had been labeled the choice of the White House.”¹² Michel’s campaign took more of a person-to-person approach, building support behind the scenes.¹³ The NRCC in the 1970s was made up of one GOP member from each state, and members selected their chair in a weighted vote, with each NRCC member casting votes equivalent to the number of House Republicans from his or her state. The weighted vote process introduced some uncertainty, since members could choose to divide the votes they cast, but it also made it easier “to get a pretty good count without covering too many bases and thus arousing a lot of talk and possible discussion in the

press,” in Michel’s words.¹⁴ In the balloting on March 21, Michel won overwhelmingly, at least based on his whip counts (final vote totals were not announced), which estimated his solid support at 132 out of the 192 votes.¹⁵ Analysis of the whip count shows that Michel’s votes came from a broad segment of the conference—his support was not defined by region, and his NRCC supporters were not outliers in ideological position (first-dimension DW-Nominate scores) or party voting unity. NRCC members supporting Michel were, however, somewhat more senior than his opponents on average ($p=.06$, one-tailed).

Watergate and the 1974 Congressional Campaign

*“What a time for me to come into the leadership!” --Bob Michel, April 1973*¹⁶

Taking the reins of the NRCC in March 1973, Michel was faced immediately with the growing Watergate scandal. The day after his election as chair, Michel met with Richard Nixon to discuss the 1974 campaign, and he warned Nixon that Watergate “was beginning to have its reverberations out in the hustings, and principally among our own people” on fundraising. Notably, Michel also cautioned Nixon that the House GOP wanted to guard its ability to operate independently of the national committee and the administration in the campaign.¹⁷ Michel would soon meet again with Nixon, this time with the full congressional Republican leadership bearing a sharper message about Watergate. Top GOP leaders met in late March and early April for “free-wheeling” discussions about the scandal, coming to a “general consensus that the President would surely have to be told very clearly . . . that somebody better come clean pretty quickly and take the fall, if that’s what’s necessary. . . . We in the Congress were being placed in a very untenable position.”¹⁸ At one gathering, the leadership met with Vice President Agnew and discussed the difficulty the congressional GOP had in communicating with the president. They heard from Agnew—who spoke frankly about his own frustration—that the problem was in the president’s isolating staff arrangement. The congressional leaders agreed on a

plan to get a wide-ranging, unfiltered meeting with Nixon, and to use it to push the president on Watergate in the course of “confrontation” about other matters. Before that meeting happened, Nixon fired Bob Haldeman and John Erlichman. Michel was relieved about the decision, which he believed followed from Nixon learning that “he wasn’t being told the truth,” but Michel knew it was “not over yet.” Michel again pressed Nixon on his concerns about Watergate and fundraising, as well as the administration’s accessibility to Congress, in a May meeting in Nixon’s Executive Office Building office. At that time, Michel felt that Nixon was “still learning of things that he couldn’t conceive of happening in his own Administration.”¹⁹

On the ground, “Watergate [had] taken its toll” on the GOP congressional campaign even before the scandal took its most dramatic turns in late 1973 and 1974. In April 1973, Michel observed that “the average individual really didn’t care too much about Watergate itself” but that activists were alarmed, and big donors were cutting off funds until the scandal was resolved.²⁰ Documents from the NRCC’s work in the 1974 cycle reveal the scale of the problem. A major fundraising event for House Republican challengers in Washington state was cancelled in November 1973 because “national uncertainties . . . created an undesirable atmosphere to insure responsible attendance,” and four other regional events suffered the same fate. In fall 1973, fundraising for challengers was running at about two-thirds of its normal pace.²¹ RNC and congressional leaders debated whether to hold their major fall fundraising dinner in 1973 given the political climate, eventually choosing to cancel it.²² Along with the head of the RNC and the RSCC, Michel issued an unusual public letter in May noting that these party units had not “been accused of any wrongdoing in their political activities or handling of campaign funds last year.”²³ Ultimately, the consequences for the NRCC’s work were severe. By June of 1974, Michel was writing to an Illinois challenger’s campaign manager to explain that the committee’s

fundraising goals “will not be achieved and that means a decided scaling down from what we would hope to be distributing as a maximum to those targeted districts where we feel we have a chance of picking up a seat.”²⁴ Interviewing potential quality challenger Jim Leach (IA) in December, NRCC executive director Jack Calkins had to explain the same problem.²⁵

Despite the optimism about majority-seeking goals after 1972, realism set in early about the party’s prospects. The NRCC’s executive director warned in summer 1973 that the GOP’s high number of marginals combined with a weakening economy created a difficult playing field in the House, even as he downplayed the likely impact of Watergate.²⁶ The oil crisis, rising inflation and unemployment, and declining economic growth portended a weak year for the White House party in 1974, and Watergate’s effect on fundraising, recruitment, and voters’ views of the party turned a weak year into a historically terrible loss. A relatively high number of House Republicans (21) retired, 13 of these open GOP seats switched hands, and 36 Republican incumbents were defeated, with a net seat loss of 48—a quarter of the Republican conference. Michel himself won reelection with just 54.8% of the vote against an inexperienced Democratic challenger.

The NRCC Under Bob Michel

Setting aside the disastrous political climate of Watergate, Bob Michel’s brief tenure as NRCC chair highlights the role of the NRCC and the changes to party organizations in the 1970s. Taking over as chair, Michel believed that his predecessor had “left so much up to the staff” and took a “limited . . . personal hand” in the operation. He also felt that “the members themselves [had] every right and responsibility to be personally involved” in the core operation of the campaign committee.²⁷ At the same time, the NRCC by the early 1970s was a century-old organization with a substantial permanent staff and an established set of professional services (Kolodny 1998, ch. 4), so the changes during Michel’s

single term are mostly evolutionary, and his well-documented tenure provides a window into how the committee operated in this era through recruitment, member services, and fundraising.

Recruitment. Early in the 1974 cycle, Republican leaders in and out of the House recognized the importance of candidate recruitment to potential GOP gains. At their first meeting in 1973, Richard Nixon counseled that recruitment should be the NRCC's priority—"It's candidate selection, not the dough. The dough will come . . ."—and urged Michel to find a "mean bastard" to put in charge of candidate selection.²⁸ In more mild-mannered terms, Michel's dictated diary from May 1973 observes that "we have got to place more emphasis on this business of candidate recruitment." Avoiding Nixon's specific advice about staffing, Michel chose to build a regional, member-centered recruitment effort that involved more than 20 Republican members.²⁹ In assembling this recruitment system, Michel moved the NRCC in the participatory direction that other party organizations, particularly in the Democratic caucus, were taking in the 1970s (Sinclair 1995; Meinke 2016).³⁰ And he prioritized regional expertise over central control as a way to recruit winning candidates in a still-diverse party. Michel appears to have chosen a middle ground between members who preferred a more heavy-handed approach to recruitment and those who remained squeamish about active national party involvement in candidate selection.³¹

During the 1974 cycle, this decentralized, participatory recruitment system allowed the NRCC to receive input and develop intelligence on districts and candidates from members with local knowledge.³² NRCC staff remained heavily involved in screening candidates, however, and despite the new system, recruitment remained a challenge, particularly in the Watergate context. NRCC staff and participating members had difficulty recruiting, especially in those southern districts that they viewed as top prospects for pickups.³³ As the general election approached, Michel had put "strong emphasis on the

protection of Republican incumbents and the protection of those seats . . . held by retiring Republican colleagues,” according to Jack Kemp (R-NY).³⁴

Member Services and Incumbent Protection. This shift toward incumbent protection in 1973 reflects the NRCC’s ongoing balancing act between supporting races for new GOP members and advancing Republican incumbents’ reelection bids (see Kolodny 1998). As NRCC chair, Michel inherited a well-developed set of services for incumbent members including, among other things, a news bureau, a photo service, and electronic media assistance. These services were in addition to a modest public relations budget provided to each member by the committee.³⁵ Under Michel, these traditions were continued, but the NRCC’s executive director, Jack Calkins, urged a more aggressive approach to incumbent protection; Calkins observed that the “usual policy” had been to provide incumbents with services “but by and large not to meddle in their political or office operations.”³⁶ Members varied in the extent to which they used these advantages of incumbency, and during the 1974 cycle the NRCC undertook a fairly elaborate effort to single out GOP incumbents who needed to do more to reap the benefits of holding office. The committee, with Michel’s strong support,³⁷ initiated a detailed survey of marginal incumbents, drilling them on their work to build on incumbency. The survey’s questions provide a thorough review of the type of activity that Mayhew and Fenno observed in their contemporaneous writings (Fenno 1978; Mayhew 1974), for instance: “Do you send [a] newsletter? . . . Do you send [the] Infant Care book to new parents? . . . Do you have a district luncheon periodically with financial leaders . . . Do you have weekly public service time [on] TV and radio? . . . How often do you return to [the] District?”³⁸ The in-person survey revealed “many marginal incumbents who are deficient in maximizing the many advantages of incumbency,” requiring follow up consultation from the NRCC.³⁹ Although the plan to shore up incumbents was obviously a failure from an election-outcome standpoint, there is a bit of evidence that the committee

was successful under Michel in expanding use of in-house services for strengthening the electoral connection. In particular, the committee's Radio Actualities Service (RAS), which used WATS telephone lines to push members' recorded quotes and commentary to local media, grew rapidly in the 1974 cycle.⁴⁰

Fundraising. In the area of campaign funding, Michel's tenure as NRCC chair coincided with the waning of the pre-reform era in the campaign committees. As Kolodny has explained, the importance of the committees in distributing funds increased as the effects of the 1971 Federal Election Campaign Act and subsequent amendments kicked in. But in the 1974 cycle, the new laws had minimal effect on the committees (Kolodny 1998, 130-135). The NRCC was keeping campaigns informed about compliance with the changing FECA rules,⁴¹ but its fundraising and distribution continued earlier practices. The NRCC executive committee provided funds to incumbents for reelection campaigns, exercising some discretion in allocating its resources to target key races and "cases of special need." Challengers and open-seat candidates were funded separately from incumbents: together with the RSCC, the NRCC operated a "Boosters" program to raise and allocate funds targeted at competitive new candidates. This program, which channeled two-thirds of its resources to House candidates, is a good example of the congressional committees operating independently in the interest of the legislative party.⁴² As noted above, this new-candidate funding was especially hard hit by the GOP's fundraising problems during Watergate.

NRCC records from Michel's tenure provide a glimpse of party connection to a key trend in the 1970s: the rising importance of political action committees after FECA. While PACs had yet to emerge as a central factor in GOP candidacies,⁴³ the NRCC appears to have been attentive to PAC activity on behalf of its candidates. A memo by the NRCC's executive director in early 1973 took note of a new PAC for the health insurance sector, observing, correctly as it turned out, that "by 1974 this should be a good source of

contributions for candidates and incumbents.”⁴⁴ More significantly, a spreadsheet from late in the 1974 cycle tracked not only each GOP incumbent’s allocation from NRCC funds but also contributions from four key PACs.⁴⁵ Although the role of PACs remained limited in the Michel era, the NRCC had begun monitoring incumbents’ access to PAC funds as it compiled the overall fundraising picture.

The NRCC’s records allow for some analysis of how the committee allocated its discretionary funds to incumbents under the constraints of the 1974 cycle. Allocations varied considerably across members, apparently more than in the 1972 cycle.⁴⁶ Members’ 1972 vote share, unsurprisingly, was a very strong predictor of their 1974 allocation ($p < .001$, two-tailed), and seniority was negatively related to members’ NRCC funding ($p < .01$, two-tailed), while party voting unity had no relationship to funding outcomes. This analysis shows that, on average, a vulnerable (50% vote share) freshman would receive about \$5000 from the NRCC, while a secure (80% vote share) ten-term member would receive \$1818.⁴⁷ These general patterns are consistent with what Pearson (2015) has found for party funding in typical recent Congresses, and they reflect the committee’s efforts to direct limited funds where they were most needed to protect GOP seat share, without regard for members’ party support.

Kolodny observes that campaign committees are “pulled constantly between pursuing majorities and protecting incumbents . . .” and that parties “struggle internally to determine the maximal common strategy” (1998, 11-12). In the 1974 cycle, the GOP began with hopes of a robust effort to pursue both objectives. New House-centered recruitment efforts joined well-established mechanisms of fundraising and services to incumbents. But as recruitment floundered⁴⁸ and fundraising fell dramatically short in the midst of

Watergate, protecting vulnerable incumbents took priority. In the end, of course, it was not enough.

Bob Michel as Minority Whip

“Would you believe after that disastrous record for me as the chairman of the [NRCC], when the House met after the election, they elected me as their whip?”

--Bob Michel, 2007⁴⁹

The Republican conference elected Bob Michel as minority whip in late 1974 as they prepared for the overwhelmingly Democratic 94th Congress; he would continue in this position until his election as minority leader in 1980. During these three Congresses, the GOP whip organization responded to the two broad sets of changes outlined in the introduction: major changes that transformed House politics, especially on the floor, and long-term shifts in intra- and interparty politics that began to realign the role of the minority. With responsibility for coordinating Republican efforts on the floor and building coalitions of support or opposition in the conference, the Michel whip organization was at the center of Republican efforts to advance party policy and electoral goals with some of the smallest House Republican contingents since the Great Depression.

The Whip Election

Although Michel would marvel at his election as whip in his aw-shucks manner three decades later (see the quotation above), he acknowledged in more contemporaneous comments that “no one seemed to blame me specifically for the disastrous [1974] results . . . everybody recognized it was simply a product of the times.”⁵⁰ Former member William Springer (R-IL) expressed this sentiment to Michel in a December letter: “You did a good job as [NRCC] Chairman . . . we were lucky not to lose more than we did.”⁵¹ With members judging him based on that counterfactual, and with more than a decade of experience as an appointed assistant whip, Michel jumped immediately into the race for the whip post

vacated by retiring Les Arends (R-IL), who had been Republican whip since 1943.⁵² Letters announcing Michel’s certain or possible interest (he chose different wording for different members) were ready to go the day after Election Day.⁵³

Only sparse records exist of the 1974 whip contest, and it received little national reporting. The tight race for conference chair, in which moderate incumbent John Anderson (R-IL) defeated conservative challenger Charles Wiggins (R-CA), attracted more press attention as an ideological struggle within the party.⁵⁴ The whip race was not as close, but the result belied the narrative of a liberal victory in the House GOP as Michel—who was slightly more conservative than Wiggins—easily beat party centrist Jerry Pettis (R-CA) and fellow Illinoisan John Erlenborn.⁵⁵ In their campaigns, both Pettis and Erlenborn emphasized the need for faster and more frequent communications as well as the importance of ready accessibility for the whip on the floor.⁵⁶ Pettis emphasized the “eastern tilt” of the leadership and the need for west-coast representation.⁵⁷ Michel’s message, at least so far as surviving materials demonstrate, focused more on personal experience and connections, following the approach he took in his NRCC chair campaign.⁵⁸

[Table 1 about here]

The descriptive data in Table 1 shows that Michel (75 votes) had much more House experience than Pettis (38 votes) or Erlenborn (22 votes) and that he was more party-loyal and more conservative than both opponents. (Michel, in fact, was in the most conservative quartile of the Republican conference in the 93rd Congress.) Although the whip balloting was secret, records of Michel’s own count prior to the vote allow for some analysis of his support. Like Green and Harris (2015a, 2015b), I use the archived records to construct a variable for members’ votes. In contrast to some of Green and Harris’ work, the records here are limited, with only one undated count from at least several days before the vote⁵⁹ and no outside sources to fill in gaps. In addition, the Michel records are consistent only in

recording his committed support; they do not always note which candidate nonsupporters favored. Still, the totals from my data, which exclude the few newly elected GOP freshmen, are roughly in line with the final outcome, slightly overestimating Michel's final support at 81 returning members and underestimating his opposition at 46 returning members. Based on this data, the logit model in Table 2 predicts Michel support based on conservatism (first-dimension DW-Nominate score), seniority (terms in the House), electoral security (1972 two-party vote share), age, and region (indicators for Northeast and Pacific states).⁶⁰ The results tell a fairly clear story. More conservative Republicans were significantly more likely to support Michel, while members from the Northeast and the Pacific states were less supportive compared with members from interior sections of the country. In contrast to the conference chair race on the same day, which pitted a losing confrontational leader⁶¹ (Wiggins) against a consensus-builder (Anderson), the whip race went easily to the ideologically conservative but stylistically centrist Michel on a vote that followed traditional ideological and regional divisions in the conference.

[Table 2 here]

Role of the Whips

Michel's election as whip had a strong parallel to his election as NRCC chair less than two years before: he took charge of a party organization that had experienced an exceptionally long period of stable leadership with little change in structure or function. Les Arends' 32-year tenure as Republican whip was (and remains) unmatched in the history of either party's whips. According to Michel, Arends ran the organization "out of his rear pocket," relying on "personal contact."⁶² As Michel prepared to take over, a staffer briefed him on the whip office and organization, concluding that Michel could "just about run things any way you choose."⁶³ His choice was to maintain a similar structure for the

whip organization but to move away from the “pocket” operation and rely more heavily on the network of appointed whips to manage new challenges on the House floor.

In the mid-1970s, the majority Democrats were involving more leadership-appointed members in their increasingly sophisticated whip organization (Meinke 2016, 42). Taking over as whip, Michel broadened member participation in the Republican organization, which had long involved a small hierarchy of regional whips appointed from three regions.⁶⁴ Michel added a deputy whip at the top,⁶⁵ and he expanded the existing system somewhat by adding a fourth whip region.⁶⁶ More generally, Michel’s whip system joined the participatory trend by making more use of trusted appointees to gather and share information. Electronic roll-call voting and recorded votes in the Committee of the Whole changed the dynamics on the floor as recorded votes became much more common and floor processes moved faster. As Smith observed, “the House not only made more discrete amendment decisions, but also reserved less time, on average, for each decision” (1989, 32). With members arriving and leaving quickly to cast recorded votes, Michel’s team put more whips on the floor and positioned them strategically to align the right whip with the types of members who would likely be passing through different entrances to the floor. With timely information becoming more important for the minority’s coordination efforts, the whip also increased the volume of written information going to all GOP offices and began some early use of electronic notification systems. To make this more sophisticated operation run, Michel hired a more specialized whip staff, including a whip floor assistant and a staffer in charge of press, in an early move toward professionalizing party communications.⁶⁷ In short, Michel took charge of a whip system that was personal rather than institutionalized and revamped its operation and staffing to meet the new coordination and persuasion needs of the mid-1970s party. These reforms responded to demand in the conference for better and faster connections (as evidenced by the platforms

of Michel's opponents in the 1974 whip race) as well as to the needs of the leadership in a changing floor environment.

Whipping to Support a Minority Party Strategy

Of course, there is only so much that even a modernized whip system can do in the House minority, and the Michel whips faced not only significant floor process changes but several other major challenges. First, Republican efforts to legislate or obstruct from the minority were constrained by their historically small numbers, compounded by the weak Republican president and, after 1976, the loss of the White House. Second, gradually changing partisan politics began to change expectations about what the minority could and should do. Conditions for minority influence on legislative substance (Clark 2015) had begun to decline somewhat, particularly as the Democratic caucus moved to weaken conservative committee chairs and gradually empower party leaders. Groups of more activist Republicans hoped for a more aggressive strategy, and the leadership used some of the new tools at their disposal—including the easily recorded amendment vote—to pursue strategies of messaging and obstruction. But the majority, in turn, began to use control over the rules to limit these opportunities for the minority by the latter part of Michel's tenure as whip (Smith 1989). All of this represented the first waves of the rising House partisanship that would characterize the 1980s and 1990s.

In this context, in addition to the aggressive floor strategies described above, the Michel whip organization used its regular counting process to support a minority-party strategy with messaging, obstructing, and (sometimes) legislating tactics (Green 2015). The formal process involved conveying a whip poll question to a few regional whips, who in turn posed the question to assistant regional whips under their charge. The assistants gathered responses from their assigned members and reported them back up the chain. This formal process was used, on average, about 25 times per year during the 1975-79

period (Evans 2012). Beyond this procedure, the whip leadership engaged in more informal persuasive and intelligence-gathering work. Prior to or instead of carrying out a formal count, Republican whips often informally polled “bellwethers,” particularly at the liberal end of the conference, to determine where there might be problems in sustaining the party’s position. According to Michel’s floor assistant, William Pitts, the whips frequently started by testing the positions of liberal northeastern members and proceeded from there. The minority whip also maintained a “pipeline to the other side” in the form of members who had connections to the still-sizable contingent of conservative Democrats and could help the minority assess its chances of success with some Democratic votes.⁶⁸

The content of Michel’s whip polls help to tell the story of the minority party’s challenges and tactics in the late 1970s. For the first two years of Michel’s whip tenure (1975-76), Gerald Ford held the White House and used an aggressive veto strategy to battle an energized Democratic Congress. Ford issued 32 regular vetoes in these two years, and Congress attempted an override of 21 (Ragsdale 2014). At the time of the whip election, Michel voiced concern about the emerging veto strategy and a lack of coordination between the president and Congress.⁶⁹ In the subsequent two years, however, the Ford administration and congressional Republicans worked together actively to whip members to sustain the vetoes—a tall task with Republicans holding only about one-third of House seats and with the conference split on the original passage of many vetoed bills (Conley 2002). As Table 3 shows, Republicans conducted whip counts on overrides about as often as on final passage votes during these two years, covering all but a few of the override attempts.⁷⁰ As Conley (2002) has shown, Republicans’ success in sustaining more than a third of Ford’s vetoes in 1975-76 relied on holding and flipping Republican members through whip contacts (see Meinke 2016, 148-152 for examples).

[Table 3 about here]

Ford's loss in the 1976 election swept away the Republicans' last institutional hold on power, and House Republicans saw no improvement in their tiny share of House seats. With the loss of the White House, the minority shifted its organized whip efforts to shape an alternative message and obstruct when possible. After rules changes earlier in the 1970s, Republicans had seized on floor amendments as a useful minority tool; Smith notes that "amending activity and success rates for Republicans . . . shot upward in the 93rd Congress [1973-74] as Republicans disproportionately took advantage of the new voting procedures" (1989, 34). After 1976, the whip organization increased its attention to floor amendments, with about a third of the 1977-79 polls dealing with amendments compared with just a handful of polls during 1975-76 (see Table 3). And although formal whip activity on procedural votes was relatively rare, the Michel whip organization tracked and built support for some procedural moves in the gradually increasing floor conflict of the late 1970s (Bach and Smith 1988; Smith 1989, ch. 3).⁷¹

In one notable 1978 example, Republican whips built support for what became a unanimous Republican vote to defeat a special rule on campaign finance. Congressional Democrats had worked since the early 1970s to include public financing for congressional elections in federal campaign law, and they redoubled their efforts at the start of the Carter administration. After struggling for more than a year, House Democrats tried to pass public financing as part of a PAC-regulation measure in March 1978. A contingent of 69 Democrats opposed the move, and all 140 voting Republicans joined them to defeat the rule on the bill, 198-209.⁷² Republican whips found little opposition to the maneuver, but their initial count found a high level of nonresponse and some undecided votes. By the final vote, the few initial GOP opponents and undecided members all voted against the rule, and this minority-party unity made up the margin of the rule's defeat.⁷³ Republicans helped thwart a subsequent procedural attempt supported by a majority of Democrats to bring the bill to

the floor, and a final effort to revive public financing in 1979 also failed. In this instance, Republican coordination through the whip system facilitated minority party obstruction despite the conference's shrunken size.

Common-Site Picketing: A Case Study of Minority-Party Victory. Although common-site picketing seems like an obscure debate four decades later, the issue was a heated one in 1977, and it represented a “big win” for Michel as whip, according to Michel’s floor assistant William Pitts.⁷⁴ According to a contemporary account in the *Washington Post*, “Republicans had made a test case out of the bill, telling members that stopping this one could determine how the minority party fared against the rest of the Congress.” Organized labor, for its part, “viewed the bill as a test of labor’s clout with the heavily Democratic [95th] Congress it helped elect.”⁷⁵ The vast majority of Republicans joined 88 mostly southern Democrats to narrowly defeat this key measure just two months into the Carter administration after intensive lobbying from inside and outside of the House.

Common-site or “common situs” picketing, which was barred under a 1951 Supreme Court statutory ruling, involves workers with a grievance against one contractor striking against an entire job site.⁷⁶ Construction unions had advocated for reversal of the ruling in Congress, nearly succeeding in 1975 when the House and Senate agreed on a bill permitting common-site pickets. Like all presidents since the court ruling, President Ford had originally supported the action, but he vetoed the bill in January 1976 after “an intense campaign by opposition groups” (*Congress and the Nation* 1981), leading his Secretary of Labor to resign abruptly. Democrats quickly brought a version of the bill to the floor in both chambers at the start of Carter’s term, with the promise that the new president would finally sign the legislation.

Opposition lobbying against the measure was just as strong in 1977, with interest groups using both grassroots and traditional tactics to pressure Republican and Democratic

members. For House Republicans, the vote involved an all-out whip effort, with not only a formal whip count, refined in several stages, but also attention to the positions of conservative Democrats and a particular focus on House freshmen, who did not have recorded prior votes on the issue.⁷⁷ With both sides seeing high stakes and a close vote, the bill went to the floor of the House on March 23. In a maneuver that Michel portrayed as a desperate Democratic tactic,⁷⁸ Democrats and labor supported an amendment from Ronald Sarasin (R-CT), a Republican from the liberal wing of the party. The Sarasin amendment, which passed easily, moderated the bill and moved it closer to the version that Ford vetoed in 1975. But on final passage, the common-site bill failed on a 205-217 vote, with a total of 40 members—including 14 Republicans—who supported the Sarasin amendment voting to defeat the final package. Fourteen total Republicans supported passage.

Press coverage treated the outcome as “something of an upset” and a “smashing defeat,” although the Michel whip counts pointed to very strong GOP unity early in the process. The earliest regional count identified 119 of the 129 Republicans who would ultimately vote no, and the 15 undecideds in the earliest count split eight to seven in the party’s direction. By the final version of the count, Michel had identified the final positions of all the Republicans correctly with the exception of two leaners and one undecided member, and two of those three voted with the party. Although Republican unity seemed relatively easy to come by in this case, the narrow victory and the need to rely on uncertain Democratic numbers put a premium on a very accurate count of Republican positions in getting to the minority party’s goal of defeating majority-party legislation.

Messaging and the Whip Organization. Legislative obstruction was a major focus for the minority and its whip organization, but the whips supported other tactics as well, particularly messaging. For example, a 1977 whip poll checked members’ willingness to

support a message-oriented discharge petition on an early version of the Kemp-Roth tax cut plan:

Republicans are contemplating a major campaign to publicize our consistent position for individual tax cuts. The leadership urges all members to support the attempt. Will you sign the Discharge Petition #4 on HR 8333, the Kemp Tax Reduction Bill, in support of this effort?

The poll found 105 members of the conference prepared to sign the petition—hardly enough to discharge the Ways and Means Committee, even assuming some southern Democratic support. But the polling effort likely helped to coordinate the party around a tax-cut message that the leadership was pushing against the Carter administration.⁷⁹ In another example two years later, the whips used a poll to urge cosponsorship of a similar Republican tax cut package, an ongoing part of the GOP message.⁸⁰

Summing Up: The Minority Whip in the 1970s

From one perspective, the minority party in the Ford and Carter eras was in a historically weak position. Its numbers were decimated by the post-Watergate elections, and conditions for cooperative influence on legislation were declining. At the same time, the whip's activity during Michel's tenure demonstrates the continued relevance of the minority and the role of party organizations in supporting minority strategies. During 1975-76, the Republican whips were crucial to the success of Ford's veto strategy. Subsequently, the minority began to make life more difficult for the majority through amendment and procedural activity, reflected in an uptick in whip attention to those issues. And creative use of whip counts sometimes helped to advance Republican messaging. Still, substantive success in legislating or obstructing—as in the FEC and common situs examples—required significant help from conservative Democrats, and Michel's whips assisted the GOP leadership in gathering intelligence from across the aisle.

Conclusion: Michel and the 1970s GOP

A close look at Bob Michel's rise through the Republican leadership in the 1970s reveals him to be a transitional figure in the rapidly changing House. In his election as NRCC chair and then as minority whip, Michel stepped in to replace long-tenured leaders who had overseen static party organizations. Representing the conservative wing of the conference—but stylistically moderate in approach—Michel enjoyed broad party support in his leadership bids and took important steps to rejuvenate the two organizations for the challenges facing the minority party. At the NRCC, Michel defended the committee's independent efforts to advance the conference's electoral goals and oversaw new House-centered recruitment, addressing points of concern under his predecessor. As whip, Michel professionalized staff and built a floor operation that could respond to the new pressures brought about by the reforms of the '70s, and he used the participatory whip organization to support the congressional minority's changing tactics under Republican and Democratic administrations. As he moved on from these leadership roles, Michel was replaced by leaders who were more conservative (Trent Lott as whip) or confrontational (Guy Vander Jagt as NRCC chair), highlighting Michel's transitional position in a conference that was changing in its ideological and strategic outlook.

Michel's transitional leadership was shaped by the multiple challenges that the House Republicans faced in the 1970s. Presidential scandal, combined with economic woes, shaped a devastating 1974 election cycle and left Republicans with a weakened president. Michel's NRCC leadership and his first years as minority whip were essentially defensive, with these short-term political struggles taking center stage. But political changes in the House and in the political system of the 1970s put pressure on the minority leadership to respond in ways that, in retrospect, are of longer-term significance. New rules and technology were opening up, and speeding up, legislative processes. Majority

caucus rules were beginning to move power away from old-guard committee chairs. New and more assertive partisans were joining both party caucuses with each election through the mid and late 1970s. All of this began to restrict opportunities for cooperative legislating and opened new avenues and demand for minority messaging and obstruction in service of the party's electoral and policy goals. As this paper has shown, Michel's 1970s leadership shows the minority party responding in its organization and its regular activity to these new realities. In these responses, the 1970s appears as an inflection point for House Republicans—the conference was no longer the often-cooperative permanent minority described in Jones' earlier writings, but it was not yet defined by the highly confrontational approach that would increasingly dominate as the 1980s unfolded.

Notes

¹ On the 1970s-1980s rise of confrontational conservatives in Congress, see Lee (2016, ch. 4). On “new breed” House members in the 1970s, see Smith (1989, 8) and Rohde (1991, 122). On the gradually expanding conservative Republican Study Committee in the 1970s, see Rubin (2017, 261-275).

² Earlier exceptions are Jones (1970) and Connelly and Pitney (1994).

³ On the challenges of this trade-off, see Lee (2016, 53-60) and Green (2015, 22).

⁴ See also *One Hundred Years: A History of the National Republican Congressional Committee* (1966), Robert H. Michel Papers, Dirksen Congressional Center, Campaigns and Politics Series, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Chairman’s Bulletin.

⁵ For a more detailed account of the NRCC and the 1974 campaign, see Mackaman (2004).

⁶ On the southern strategy, see dictated notes by Michel, 19 and 20 March 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics Series, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Michel Notes, 1973. On the southern strategy and the path to a majority see David Broder, “Watergate: Little ’74 Effect but Aftershock for Years,” *Washington Post*, 28 May 1973.

⁷ Dictated notes by Michel, 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics Series, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Michel Notes, 1973. Elsewhere in these notes, Michel expresses broader concern about the NRCC’s independence: “. . . We can’t ever again allow our Congressional Campaign Committee to get swallowed up by the National Committee, for when a National Committee gets all involved in a Presidential election, as they do every four years, there’s too much inclination to put all the eggs in the basket of the Presidency and tell the Congress to go to pot.”

⁸ Bob Wilson to Richard Nixon, 14 March 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics Series, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Election to Chairman.

⁹ Dictated notes by Michel, 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics Series, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Michel Notes, 1973.

¹⁰ Michel was a member of Republican “Truth Squads” in 1960, 1964, and 1968, and he was the congressional co-chair of the program in 1964. The Truth Squad program, which dated to 1952, involved rotating groups of House members and senators who tailed the Democratic presidential campaign around the country, holding press conferences to refute the candidates’ claims. For Michel, participation in this electioneering effort—which some members avoided because of potential costs to their individual goals—showed party commitment and built an early political leadership records. Upon his election as NRCC chair in 1973, a committee press release cited his 1960s experience “carrying the party message to voters.” See Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics Series, Box 2, Folder: 1960 Truth Squad, Folder: 1964 Truth Squad, and Folder: 1968 Truth Squad, and see NRCC press release, 21 March 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics Series, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Election to Chairman.

¹¹ Clarence Brown to Harold Collier, 15 March 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics Series, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Election to Chairman.

¹² Richard L. Lyons, “Michel Heads GOP Campaign Unit,” *Washington Post*, 22 March 1973.

¹³ Dictated notes by Michel, 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics Series, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Michel Notes, 1973.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Annotated NRCC roster, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics Series, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Election to Chairman.

¹⁶ Handwritten notes on GOP leadership meeting, 9 April 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics Series, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Michel Notes, 1973.

¹⁷ Dictated notes by Michel, 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics Series, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Michel Notes, 1973. Also Richard Nixon White House Tapes, 22 March 1973, Tape 887-7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.* Also Richard Nixon White House Tapes, 9 May 1973, Tape 432-26.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

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- ²¹ John Blume to I. Lee Potter, 2 Nov. 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Meetings. Fall 1973; Jack Calkins to RHM, 7 Sept 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Memos from Executive Director.
- ²² Jack Calkins to RHM, 7 June 1973 and 7 Sept. 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Memos from Executive Director.
- ²³ David Broder, "Nixon Dinner Dips Under \$1 Million," *Washington Post*, 10 May 1973.
- ²⁴ RHM to Charles Young, 10 June 1974, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Recruiting Committee. Midwest Region (1).
- ²⁵ Candidate Interview report on James Leach, 18 Dec. 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Recruiting Committee. Midwest Region (1).
- ²⁶ Jack Calkins to Bryce Harlow, 20 Aug 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Memos from Executive Director.
- ²⁷ Dictated notes by Michel, 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics Series, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Michel Notes, 1973.
- ²⁸ Richard Nixon White House Tapes, 22 March 1973, Tape 887-7.
- ²⁹ Jack Calkins to Bryce Harlow, 20 Aug 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Memos from Executive Director.
- ³⁰ RHM to John Conlan, 13 April 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Candidate Recruitment. "We want everyone who has the time and wants to participate to do so to whatever extent he or she can."
- ³¹ Heavy handed: William Ketchum to RHM (handwritten note on RHM letter dated 13 April 1973), Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Candidate Recruitment. Squeamish: Charles Wiggins to RHM, 20 April 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Candidate Recruitment.
- ³² John Myers to Charles Thone, 11 June 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Recruiting Committee. Midwest Region (2). Jack Kemp to RHM, 29 April 1974, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Recruiting Committee. Northeastern Region.
- ³³ Buddy Bishop to Ed Terrill, 29 March 1974, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Recruiting Committee. Southern Region. RHM to Bobby Richardson, 12 Feb 1974, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Recruiting Committee. Southern Region. Candidate Interview report on Ward Purrington, 3 Dec 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Recruiting Committee. Southern Region.
- ³⁴ Jack Kemp to RHM, 29 April 1974, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Recruiting Committee. Northeastern Region.
- ³⁵ RHM to Colleagues, 6 April 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Chairman's Bulletin.
- ³⁶ Jack Calkins to RHM with attached draft survey, 19 April 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Memos from Executive Director.
- ³⁷ RHM to Jack Calkins, 23 April 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Memos from Michel.
- ³⁸ Jack Calkins to RHM with attached draft survey, 19 April 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Memos from Executive Director. On the use of infant care books for constituency connections, see Cover and Broomberg (1982).
- ³⁹ Jack Calkins to RHM, 22 June 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Memos from Executive Director.
- ⁴⁰ Jack Calkins to Bryce Harlow, 20 Aug 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Memos from Executive Director. Records of members' RAS use in summer and fall 1973 show that a large number of GOP incumbents used the service, with 50 members using it more than five times during those months. A multivariate model of RAS use shows that more junior Republicans used the service more frequently ($p < .01$, two-tailed) and electoral vulnerability had a modest positive effect ($p < .10$, two-tailed). Freshmen members were particularly heavy users of the service, with an average of about eight uses in mid-1973 compared with three for other Republicans.

Analysis based on data in Jack Calkins to RHM, 7 Nov 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Memos from Executive Director.

⁴¹ Ed Terrill to William Young, 30 Oct 1973, Michel papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Recruiting Committee. Midwest Region (2); RHM to Jack Calkins, 8 Aug 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Memos from Michel. Jack Calkins to Ed Terrill, Paul Theis, and Dave Cole. 30 April 1974, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Memos from Executive Director. Also see Kolodny (1998, 130).

⁴² Jack Calkins to Bryce Harlow, 20 Aug 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Memos from Executive Director.

⁴³ PAC money made up a slightly larger portion of House race funding in 1974 than in 1972 (Jacobson 1985), but the explosion of PACs on the campaign-finance scene occurred mostly over the next few cycles (Currinder 2009). 608 PACs were registered for the 1974 cycle, but more than five times that number would be registered by the early 1980s. GOP campaigns received only about a third of all PAC contributions in the 1974 congressional races (Jacobson 1985).

⁴⁴ Jack Calkins to RHM, Ed Terrar, and Ed Terrill, 5 April 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Memos from Executive Director.

⁴⁵ The spreadsheet is undated, but the included incumbent Republicans reflects candidacy decisions and primaries from mid-1974. The tracked PACs included LUPAC (life underwriters), ADPAC (dentists), AMPAC (medical), and BIPAC (business/industry). A document from ADPAC dated 9 Oct 1974 shows that PACs contribution activity was reported directly by the PAC. Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Funding.

⁴⁶ Jack Calkins' NRCC background memo to Bryce Harlow explains a fairly routine set of allocations that is not reflected in the variable allocations in the 1974 spreadsheet. Jack Calkins to Bryce Harlow, 20 Aug 1973, Michel Papers, Campaigns and Politics, Box 36, Folder: NRCC. Memos from Executive Director.

⁴⁷ OLS model of combined NRCC allocations from 1974 spreadsheet (see note above). NRCC total = $8255.31(904.30^{***})\text{Constant} - 61.10(11.04^{***})\text{Vote Share} - 149.93(45.83^{**})\text{Terms served} - 0.75(7.90)\text{Party unity}$, (N=160, R²=0.27, ***p<.01, **p<.05).

⁴⁸ Michel discusses the failings of recruitment in 1974 in his dictated notes from around the time of the 1980 minority leader race. "Prelude to Our Race for Leader (Side B)." Michel Papers, Leadership Series, Box 2, Folder: 96th Congress. 1979-80 Leadership contest, 1980 (1).

⁴⁹ Robert Michel, interview by Fred W. Beuttler, 17 Oct. 2007, transcript, Michel Papers, Post-Congressional, Subjects, Folder: Interviews (2).

⁵⁰ "Prelude to Our Race for Leader (Side B)." Michel Papers, Leadership Series, Box 2, Folder: 96th Congress. 1979-80 Leadership contest, 1980 (1).

⁵¹ William Springer to RHM, 12 Dec 1974, Michel Papers, Leadership Series, Box 1, Folder: 93rd Congress, 1973-74. Whip (1).

⁵² The exact date of Michel's first appointment as an assistant regional whip is not clear. Archived whip materials indicating his participation date to early 1962, in the second session of the 87th Congress (Michel Papers, Leadership Series, Box 1, Folder: 88th Congress. 1963-64. Whip.), and a mid-1961 *CQ* article lists Michel as the Midwest assistant whip for Illinois and Missouri (*Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* 1961). I have not located any Republican whip lists for the 85th or 86th Congresses that would indicate whether Michel was appointed prior to the 87th Congress. Michel's service in Republican leadership organizations also involved several other posts during his first decade in Congress. Michel had been elected as president of his House GOP freshman class in 1957 (Mackaman 2017, 21), a position that apparently came with an ex officio seat on the Republican Policy Committee in that Congress (*CQ Almanac* 1958, 52). In 1965, Michel received another party leadership appointment when he joined Minority Leader Gerald Ford's newly created Committee on Planning and Research (later the Republican Research Committee) (*CQ Almanac* 1965).

⁵³ RHM to various colleagues, 6 Nov 1974, Michel Papers, Leadership Series, Box 1, Folder: 93rd Congress, 1973-74. Whip (2). Some letters signal that Michel is "giving serious consideration to making the race for Whip," while others contain more definitive wording: "I have definitely decided to make a bid for the Whip post."

⁵⁴ Richard D. Lyons, “House Reform Faces Action Today in Party Caucuses,” *New York Times*, 2 Dec 1974. “GOP, Democrats Pick Liberals As Caucus Heads,” *Wall Street Journal*, 3 Dec 1974. Richard L. Lyons, “GOP Re-elects Anderson,” *Washington Post*, 3 Dec 1974.

⁵⁵ The *New York Times* reported a “half dozen aspirants” for the whip post on the day of the balloting. In addition to the three with reported final votes, Michel’s whip count includes a few notes on support for John Wydler (R-NY), who withdrew in late November. Paul Findley (R-IL) was also an early candidate for the post. Richard D. Lyons, “House Reform Faces Action Today in Party Caucuses,” *New York Times*, 2 Dec 1974. Whip race whip count, undated, Michel Papers, Leadership Series, Box 1, Folder: 93rd Congress, 1973-74. Whip (1). John Wydler to Jerry Pettis, 27 Nov 1974, Jerry Pettis Congressional Papers, Loma Linda University Heritage Research Center, Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers ’69-’74, Political General/Whip Bid. Paul Findley telegram to Jerry Pettis, 7 Nov 1974, Pettis Papers, Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers ’69-’74, Political General/Whip Bid.

⁵⁶ Dear Colleague letters on whip bid, 18 Nov 1974, Pettis Papers, Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers ’69-’74, Political General/Whip Bid. John Erlenborn to Republican Colleague, 25 November 1974, Pettis Papers, Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers ’69-’74, Political General/Whip Bid.

⁵⁷ Untitled UPI wire report, 18 Nov 1974, Pettis Papers, Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers ’69-’74, Political General/Whip Bid.

⁵⁸ RHM to various colleagues, 6 Nov 1974, Michel Papers, Leadership Series, Box 1, Folder: 93rd Congress, 1973-74. Whip (2).

⁵⁹ The count is undated, but it notes some support for John Wydler, who dropped out of the race officially on Nov. 27.

⁶⁰ Pacific states include CA, OR, WA, AK, and HI.

⁶¹ Wiggins had been “considered one of Nixon’s staunchest defenders” until the very end of the Watergate drama. Eric Pace, “Charles Wiggins, 72, Dies; Led Nixon’s Defense in Hearings,” *New York Times*, 8 March 2000.

⁶² Robert Michel, interview by Fred W. Beuttler, 17 Oct. 2007, transcript, Michel Papers, Post-Congressional, Subjects, Folder: Interviews (2).

⁶³ Unsigned staff memo to RHM, 20 Nov 1974, Michel Papers, Leadership Series, Box 1, Folder: 93rd. 1973-74. Whip (1).

⁶⁴ “New Congress Organizes; No Role for Mills,” *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, 7 Dec 1974.

⁶⁵ Funding for a minority deputy whip was added in the 93rd Congress, but the position was not filled under Les Arends. Jerry Pettis was the first Republican deputy whip in the 94th Congress after losing the whip race to Michel, but Pettis died in an early 1975 plane accident. Republican whip list, undated [94th Congress], Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, Loen and Leppert Files, Box 28, Folder: Presidential Meetings With Congressional Leaders, 1974-76 (2). “Pettis to Confer with Ford as Deputy Whip,” *San Bernardino Press-Enterprise*, undated, Pettis Papers, Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers ’69-’74, Political General/Whip Bid. Unsigned staff memo to RHM, 20 Nov 1974, Michel Papers, Leadership Series, Box 1, Folder: 93rd. 1973-74. Whip (1)..

⁶⁶ “New Congress Organizes; No Role for Mills,” *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, 7 Dec 1974.

⁶⁷ William (Billy) Pitts, interview with the author, 19 June 2017.

⁶⁸ Pitts interview. Pitts suggests that counting of Democratic votes was a fairly common activity, although the minority did not maintain records of these counts as they did for Republican polls.

⁶⁹ “New Congress Organizes; No Role for Mills,” *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, 7 Dec 1974.

⁷⁰ 23 override-related counts were taken on 19 unique measures.

⁷¹ It is important to note that whip activity on amendments and procedural votes was not entirely new to the Michel era, although amendments and procedural votes took on new importance with the changes of the 1970s. The fragmentary existing records of GOP whip counts in the 1960s show that the Arends whip organization conducted some counts on GOP substitutes and on procedural votes. Regional whip count records, Michel Papers, Leadership Series, Box 1, Folder: 89th Congress, 1965-66. Whip.

⁷² Details on the campaign finance episode are from *Congress and the Nation* (1981) and Steven V. Roberts, "House Blocks Plan on Election Funds," *New York Times*, 22 March 1978.

⁷³ Whip analysis based on data from Evans (2012).

⁷⁴ Pitts interview.

⁷⁵ Mary Russell, "House Defeats Bill on Common Site Pickets, 217-205," *Washington Post*, 24 March 1977.

⁷⁶ Issue background from *Congress and the Nation* (1981); Helen Dewar, "Picket Bill Vote Today," *New York Times*, 23 March 1977; Philip Shabecoff, "House Rejects Bill on Picketing Sites by Building Unions," *New York Times*, 24 March 1977; Russell, "House Defeats Bill."

⁷⁷ Pitts interview. Also Pitts post-vote analysis of freshman and Democratic positions on HR 4250 passage and Sarasin amendment, 24 March 1977, Michel Papers, Box 2, Folder: 3/17/77 Common situs picketing.

⁷⁸ Handwritten notes for speech on Sarasin amendment, Michel Papers, Box 2, Folder: 3/17/77 Common situs picketing. See also *Congressional Record*, 24 March 1977.

⁷⁹ E.g., "Immediate Tax Cut Urged by Republicans," *Wall Street Journal*, 6 Oct 1977.

⁸⁰ Whip poll question, 30 July 1979, Michel Papers, Leadership Series, Box 3, Folder: 96th Congress, 1979-80. Whip polls, Tax Cut 7/30/79. On the 1979 tax proposal and Democratic reaction, see "GOP Leaders Ask \$36 Billion Tax Reduction," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 Aug 1979 and Don Irwin, "Carter Stands Firm Against GOP Demands for Tax Cut," *Los Angeles Times*, 7 Aug 1979.

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Table 1. 1974 House Republican Whip Candidates

	Michel (IL)	Erlenborn (IL)	Pettis (CA)	Conference Average
DW-Nominate (first dim.)	.310	.240	.147	.196
Age	51	47	58	48
House terms	9	5	4	3.9
1972 vote share	65%	72	75	66.9
1974 vote share	55%	67	66	59.6
Party unity	78%	64	69	65.9
<i>Total votes for whip</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>38</i>	

Table 2. Michel Support in 1974 House Republican Whip Race

	Michel support
DW-Nominate (1)	0.708* (0.273)
Tenure	-0.001 (0.019)
Northeast	-0.223* (0.107)
Pacific	-0.263* (0.125)
1972 Vote	0.002 (0.004)
Age	0.003 (0.006)
N	127

*p < .05

Note: Logit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable equals 1 for members recorded as Michel supporters in Michel whip count and 0 for all other members. Independent variables based on 93rd Congress data; GOP members elected in November 1974 excluded.

Table 3. House Republican Whip Counts by Type, 1975-1979

	Veto Override	Procedural	Amendment	Passage	General	Total*
1975	12	0	1	12	2	27
1976	11	3	2	12	0	28
1977	0	2	11	12	1	26
1978	1	3	7	9	2	22
1979	0	2	8	10	1	21

*Totals exclude a small number of unclassified open-ended or follow-up questions.
See text for details on classification of counts. Whip count data from Evans (2012).