

# **Civility in the House of Representatives: The 106th Congress**

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## FOREWORD

The Annenberg Public Policy Center was established by publisher and philanthropist Walter Annenberg in 1994 to create a community of scholars within the University of Pennsylvania which would address public policy issues at the local, state and federal levels. Consistent with the mission of the Annenberg School for Communication, the Center has four ongoing foci: Information and Society; Media and the Developing Mind; Media and the Dialogue of Democracy; and Health Communication. Each year, as well, a special area of scholarly and social interest is addressed. The Center supports research and sponsors lectures and conferences in these areas. This series of publications disseminates the work of the Center.

Kathleen Hall Jamieson  
Director

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- By several of our measures, the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress was the most civil of the eight Congresses (99<sup>th</sup> – 106<sup>th</sup>/1985 -- 2000) we have monitored.
- The 106<sup>th</sup> was one of five Congresses since 1985 in which no requests to “take down” went to a ruling and no words were ruled out of order.
- In the 106th Congress, the “taking down” procedure tended to calm rather than aggravate tension.
- The 106th Congress was as good as or better than other recent Congresses on all but one of our word-search measures of civility.
- As the net number of seats to shift between the parties since the preceding Congress increases, civility has tended to decrease.
- As the size of the majority increases, aspersions and use of the phrase “the Member will suspend” has tended to decrease.
- As average experience per Member goes up, aspersions and requests to “take down,” go down, but the vulgarity rate goes up.
- As hours in session increases, civility has tended to decrease.
- In the 106th Congress people associated with the White House were more likely to be called liars than other Members and both were more likely to be given this label than were foreign leaders or nationals.
- References to past Hershey retreats were used to remind Members of the norms of comity, fairness, and bipartisanship.

## BACKGROUND

Prompted by the perception among Members and observers that civility was on the decline during the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Annenberg Public Policy Center of University of Pennsylvania (APPC) began monitoring the quality of discourse in the House. In response to the threat of decreasing civility a bi-partisan retreat was organized during the first session of the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress. Two-hundred Members of the House of Representatives, 165 spouses, and 100 of their children attended the three day gathering in Hershey, Pennsylvania coordinated by The Aspen Institute and funded by a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts. The retreat was organized by the Bipartisan Congressional Planning Committee, consisting of 14 members and co-chaired by Representatives David Skaggs (CO) and Ray LaHood (IL). According to its organizers, the retreat was designed, “[t]o seek a greater degree of civility, mutual respect and, when possible, bipartisanship among Members of the House of Representatives in order to foster an environment in which vigorous debate and mutual respect can coexist.”

APPC prepared a background report for use at the first retreat.<sup>1</sup> In general, the first report found a rise in incivility in the first session of the 104<sup>th</sup> and a drop to historical averages in the second session of that Congress. Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Dean of the Annenberg School and co-author of the report, attributed the spike in incivility to the Republicans’ inexperience as the majority party and the Democrats’ inexperience as the minority.

A second retreat was held in March 1999 during the first session of the 106<sup>th</sup>. The Public Policy Center prepared a report for this retreat as well. A third retreat is scheduled for March of 2001 (first session of the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress). One of the retreat organizers, Rep. Ray LaHood (R-IL) expressed his hope that this year’s retreat would help create an environment in which Members work better together.

Having a relationship with somebody across the aisle really does lead to opportunities to pass legislation and work together. And we’ve proven in the past that these two previous bipartisan retreats have led to friendships and the development of friendships that can really end up helping solve problems in Congress and pass legislation.<sup>2</sup>

With this report, the APPC adds the rhetoric of the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress to our ongoing analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> The Executive Summary of *Civility in the House of Representatives*, March 1997, can be found on the Annenberg Public Policy Center home page at: <http://www.appcpenn.org/pubs.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Interview on National Public Radio, December 6, 2000.

## COMITY

In Congress, comity is based on the norm of reciprocal courtesy and presupposes that the differences between Members and parties are philosophical not personal, that parties to a debate are entitled to the presumption that their views are legitimate even if not correct, and that those on all sides are people of good will and integrity motivated by conviction. Comity in Congress has been an important issue throughout its history with the Rules of the House designed to create a climate that is civil and therefore conducive to deliberation. These rules include prohibitions on engaging in personalities or attacks that impugn the character, integrity, motives, or loyalty of a Member. Members are also prohibited from accusing other Members of lying.

When the rules are broken there are institutionalized procedures for reinstating civility. At some times these procedures are employed more effectively than at others. For example, in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress incivility was met with regular attempts to “take down” the words of the offending Member (a procedure in which the Member’s words are stricken from the record and the Member is prohibited from speaking on the floor for the remainder of that day unless given permission by the majority of Members). Once the taking down process was started, instead of working to remind Members of the norms of comity, the procedure itself turned into a partisan battle often inflaming tempers instead of cooling them.

The 106<sup>th</sup> Congress offers a contrast. In the 106<sup>th</sup> the Members were more likely to caution others by saying they were close to requesting that the words be taken down and when a request was made to take down, the Member whose language was questioned more often voluntarily withdrew the words. Thus the process worked to maintain civility.

## METHODOLOGY

The conclusions in this report are based on word searches of the Congressional Record from the 99th Congress, first session (1985) through the 106th Congress, second session (2000). During this 16-year period we looked for words that would indicate that personal attacks were on the rise and for procedures that indicated comity was threatened.

Of course civility in the House is a composite experience that includes more than what is said on the floor. For example, our data do not capture what occurs in committee meetings, how Members treat each other socially off the floor, what Members say in press releases, or tone of voice. Additionally, through the 103rd Congress, Members were allowed to modify the Record overnight if they had second thoughts about the way they made their point. That practice was officially disallowed in the 104th Congress (though there is some evidence that it has continued).

Because our report is limited to what the Congressional Record, reports what has been said on the floor, we have no doubt missed some evidence of lack of comity and decorum.

We searched each Congress for over 360 words divided into six categories (name-calling, aspersions, lying, non-cooperation, pejoratives for speech, vulgarity). We also searched for the phrases, “The House will be in Order” and “Member Requested to Suspend” (These phrases are parliamentary terms often indicative of disorderly debate). We counted the occurrences of each word or phrase in each session and tallied them according to each category. We then divided the number of times the word occurred by the number of pages in the Congressional Record for that session and multiplied by a thousand to get a feel for how many times different types of words occurred per 1,000 pages of the Congressional Record. This enabled us to make a fair comparison regardless of the length of a session. These word searches were done without regard to context or how the word was used. We examined the lame duck sessions of the 105th and 106th<sup>3</sup> Congresses separately and calculated them the same way (dividing the index totals by the number of pages and multiplying by 1,000). We also examined the Congressional Record to find how many times the taking down procedure was initiated and how it ended. This year for the first time since our original report we also include a section in which we examine each instance of the word “liar” in context. Please see Appendix A for more detail on our methods.

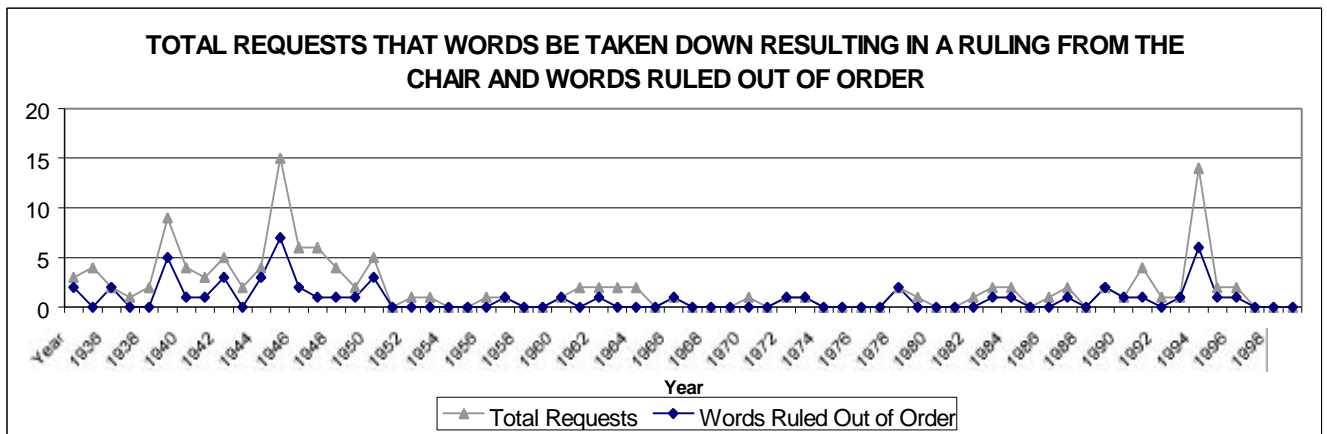
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<sup>3</sup> We broke the session into before December 4 and after December 3, 2000.

# FINDINGS

## Taking Down

Taking down is the standard procedure employed when someone says something outside the bounds of civility prescribed by the Rules of the House. In the 106th there was one request in the first session and two requests in the second session. This is better than average on a per session basis (average = 6, for the 99<sup>th</sup> through the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress). It is also better than average on a per-page basis (.08/1,000 pages in the 1st, .17 in the 2nd, .50 on average). In none of the requests during the 106th Congress was the words ruled out of order (something that happens .07 times per 1,000 pages or about once per session on average). The 106th was one of five Congresses since 1985 in which there were no requests to take down that went to a ruling by the presiding officer, and there were no words ruled out of order.



Detail on Taking Down. In both sessions of the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress when Members made comments perceived to be outside the norms of comity and were called on it, the process tended to de-escalate and not escalate tensions. The following are examples of Members using the institutionalized process to maintain and not undermine civility.

### 1. In two of the three cases when formal demands were made, the offending words were withdrawn.

#### Case 1: Session 1

**X:** I demand the gentleman's words be taken down. The gentleman said the gentleman was trying to mislead this body.

**Y:** I ask unanimous consent to retract the word "misleading . . . I apologize for claiming that the gentleman is misleading the House. What I meant to say was the gentleman is confusing the issue on my amendment by offering this information. My amendment has nothing, has nothing to do with . . ."

**Case 2: Session 2**

**X:** Mr. Speaker, I demand that the words of the gentleman from Y be taken down. The gentleman has accused Z of making an ethnic slur.

**Y:** Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw my words with regard to the attribution of ethnic slur.

**2. In one case when a demand was made, it was withdrawn.**

**Case 1: Session 2**

**X:** Mr. Chairman, I demand that the words be taken down.

**CHAIR:** The Clerk will report the words objected to. Does the gentleman insist on his demand?

**X:** Mr. Chairman, I have seen the transcript, which uses the word "some" people. Obviously, I feel strongly the gentleman Y was directly referencing another Member of the House, me. Perhaps he was not. If he is not, then I will remove the objection at this point in time.

**3. In three cases a demand for words to be taken down was mentioned, but only as a caution.**

**Case 1: Session 1**

**X:** I will not demand the words be taken down, but I would ask the gentleman not to characterize.

**Y:** Mr. Chairman, if I have offended anybody, I apologize. But as a Member of this Congress, I recognize the fact that politics is played within the House floor, and I recognize that this particular resolution does undermine the administration's efforts at this point in time.

**Case 2: Session 2**

**X:** Mr. Speaker, . . . the accusation of legislative terrorists cannot go unanswered. That is so far out of the realm of what is right, it is just not even something we should consider. But it was said. We did not demand that the words be taken down because we are trying to keep some comity here. We are trying to keep this on a basis that we are doing the people's business and not out here accusing and calling names.

**Case 3: Session 2**

**X:** Mr. Chairman, I am concerned about the insinuation of this. What is the direction of the Chair in terms of words being appropriate? I am trying, Mr. Chairman, if you will indulge me, and the House will, I am trying not to go to have the gentleman's words taken down, but I would like Y maybe to rethink what he says.

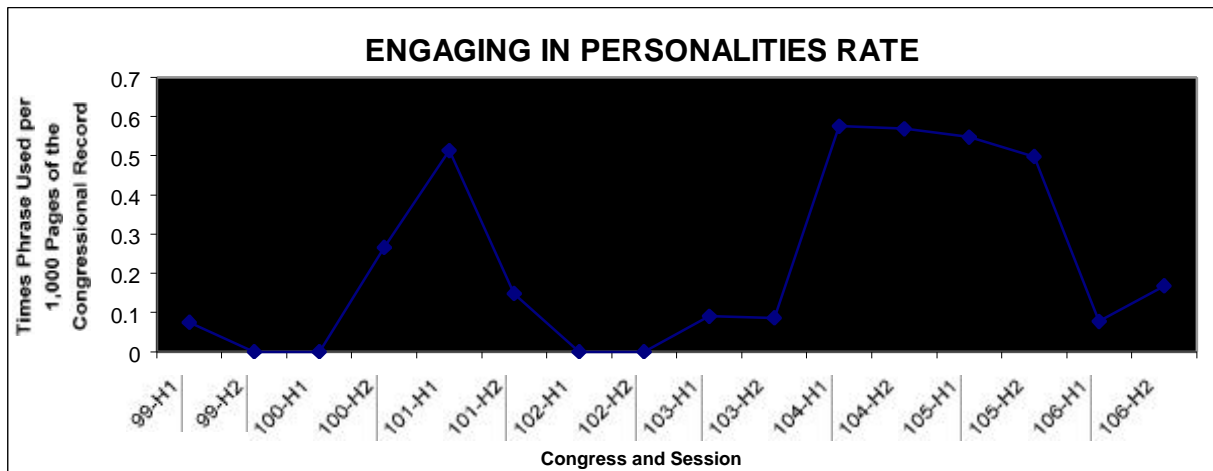
**Y:** Mr. Chairman, I am very interested in a good relationship. Reclaiming my time, I am very interested in maintaining good relationships. I am very interested in maintaining comity. I am very interested in maintaining respect. I am also very interested in maintaining respect for the work of our Members of the House. And I mean no personal attack in any way on the gentleman who offered the amendment. However, I believe that there is an insincere result that comes about as a result of it . . .



## Word Searches

### Engaging In Personalities

The rules prohibit Members from engaging in personalities or making personal attacks on other Members. If a Member does, the chair or another Member will often caution the offending member. To isolate these instances, we searched for the phrase and variants of “engaging in personalities” and found the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress to have fewer than average. The average for the last eight Congresses is .22 times per 1,000 pages of the Congressional Record. In the first session of the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress this phrase was used just .08 times and in the second session .17 times. These numbers indicate less frequent use in the 106<sup>th</sup> than in the four immediately preceding sessions (104-H1 = .57, 104-H2 = .57, 105-H1 = .57, 105-H2 = .50)<sup>4</sup>. However, data since 1985 show four sessions in which the phrase was not used at all.



### Insults

**Name Calling.** This index consists of 92 insulting nouns, such as “weirdo,” “traitor,” and “crackpot.” The average number of name calling words used per session is 40 per 1,000 pages. In this Congress the Members used 36 name calling words per 1,000 pages in the first session, and 33 in the second session making both sessions just slightly more civil than average by this measure. The name-calling rate has been dropping slightly over the last three sessions (105-H2 = 44, 106-H1 = 36, 106-H2 = 33). The session with the least name calling since 1985 was the 100<sup>th</sup> Congress, second session, with 27 name calling words per 1,000 pages of the Congressional Record; the greatest number occurred in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, first session with 79 instances.

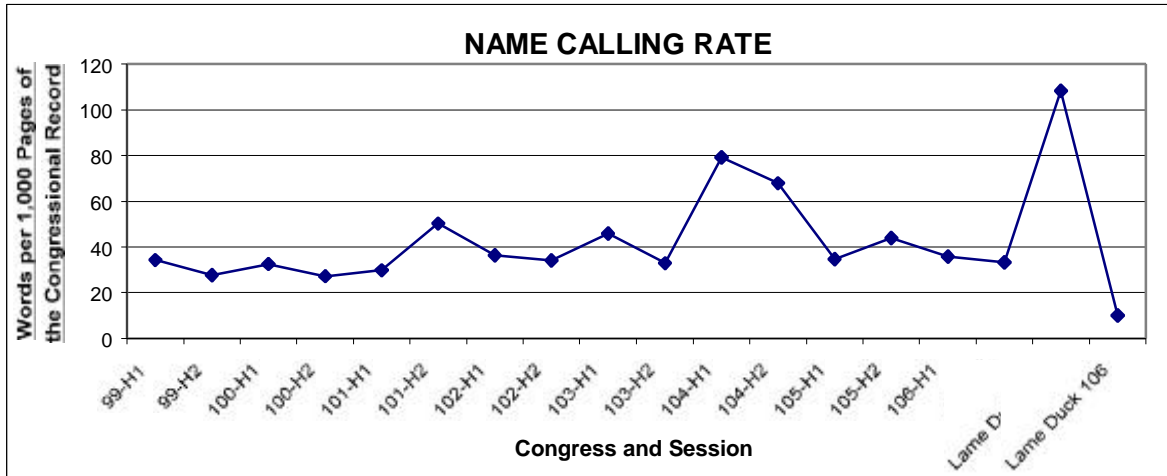
#### Name Calling in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress

While zealots in the Republican Conference drove much of this agenda it is clear that they could not have succeeded without the repeated assistance from dozens of Republican moderates who attempt to portray themselves as friends of education (146 Cong Rec H 10399).

Republican extremists, in their zeal to limit women's rights, left the President no choice but to accept a budget compromise that links the payment of the United Nations dues with restrictions on international family planning. That is wrong (145 Cong Rec H 12797).

<sup>4</sup> The Congress is divided into to branches (House and Senate) and two sessions (each lasting a year). The abbreviation 104-H1 refers to the first session of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress in the House.

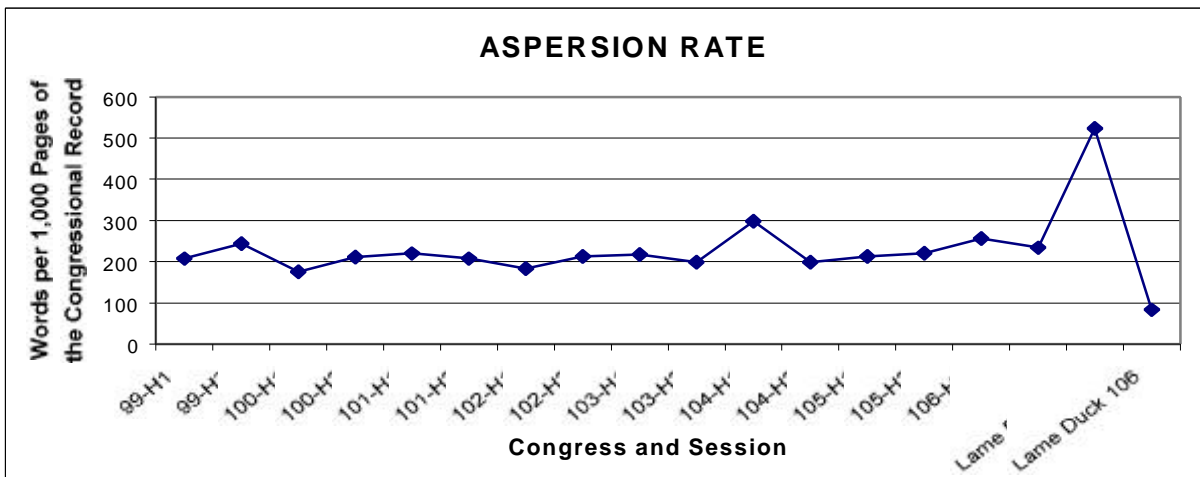
By this measure the lame duck session of the 106<sup>th</sup> was even more civil with just 10 name-calling words per 1,000 pages of the Congressional Record. The December 2000 session of the 106<sup>th</sup> focused on making budget deals, an activity in which productivity and civility go hand in hand. This stands in contrast with the lame duck session of the 105<sup>th</sup> (predominantly the impeachment debate) which was much less civil than average (108 words per 1,000 pages).



**Aspersions.** This index consists of 71 words that insult but do not call names (e.g., “irrational,” “reckless,” and “un-American”). Aspersions were above average (219 words per 1,000 pages) in both sessions of the 106<sup>th</sup> (first = 256, second = 234). Aspersions had been rising since the second session of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress (104-S2 = 198, 105-S1 = 212, 105-S2 = 221, 106-H1 = 256), but that trend reversed in the second session of the 106<sup>th</sup>. The first session of the 106<sup>th</sup> was second only to the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, first session (298), for rate of aspersions. The low for the 16 years we have monitored occurred in the 100<sup>th</sup> Congress, first session with 176 words per 1,000 pages.

**Aspersions in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress**  
 I yield back this Communist, un-American Tax Code by saying to both parties: tax this (146 Cong Rec H 459).

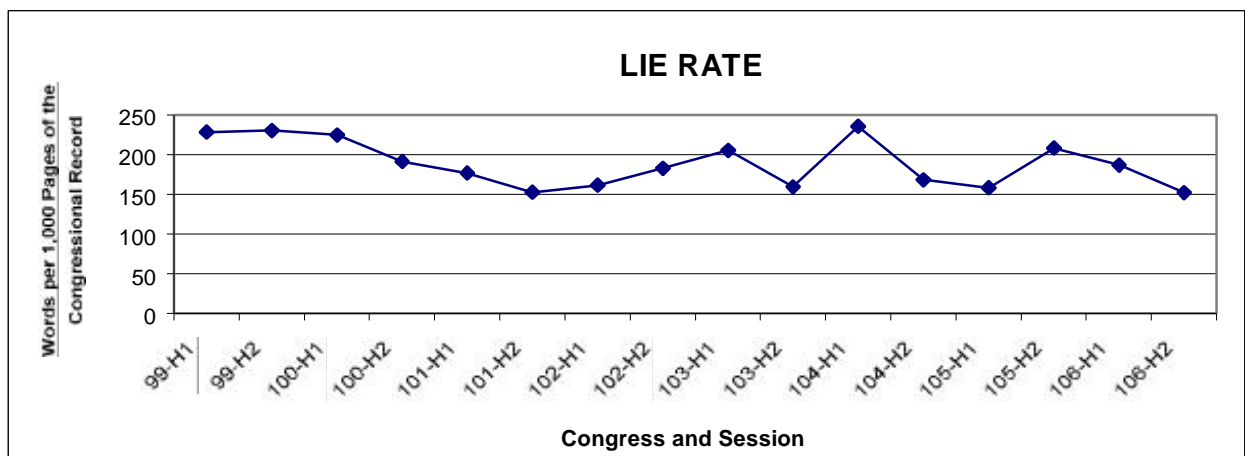
The lame duck session of the 106<sup>th</sup> was below average with just 83 aspersions per 1,000 pages of the Record. The lame duck session of the 105<sup>th</sup> was worse than average with 523 aspersions per 1,000 pages of the Record.



## Lie

This index consists of 58 words for lying, (e.g., “hoax,” “farce,” and “prevaricate”). Synonyms for the word “lie” occurred at just below the average frequency for the first session (187 times per 1,000 pages) and below average (152) for the second session of the 106th Congress. The average is 189 times per 1,000 pages in the Congressional Record. The rate of use for “lie” words has been dropping slowly over the last three sessions (105-H2 = 208, 106-H1 = 187, and 106-H2 = 152). The second session of the 106th recorded the lowest number of such lie words of the past eight Congresses (beating out the 101st Congress, second session by a small fraction). The peak year for “lie” words was the 104th Congress, first session (235).

The pattern for “lie” words in the lame duck sessions of the 105th and 106th sessions is again the same with the December session of the 105th having more “lie” words than average (over 4,000 per 1,000 pages of the Record) and the 106th having less (118).



## Pejoratives for Speech

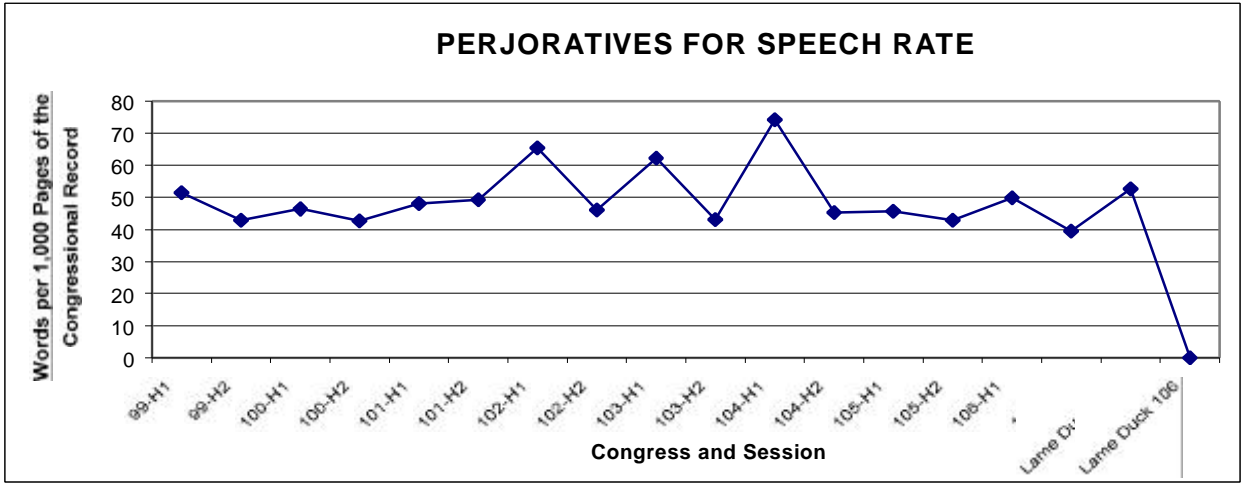
Another indicator of lack of civility is speech by Member deriding another Member’s remarks. To measure this we used our “pejoratives for speech” index. This list consists of 19 words used to derogate speech, such as “bellyache,” “double speak,” and “gibberish.” The first session of the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress employed pejorative words for speech at the average rate (50 per 1,000 pages of the Congressional Record). The second session was better than average with only 39 pejorative for speech words used per 1,000 pages. This was the most infrequent use of these words in any session for which we have data. The most frequent use of these words occurred in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, first session (74).

In the December session of the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress there were slightly more pejoratives for speech than average (53), and there were no instances of pejoratives for speech in the lame duck session of the 106<sup>th</sup>.

### Pejoratives for Speech in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress

I must say, as a Member of the Committee on Ways and Means, I was quite shocked. If Members listened to the entire debate, they would have heard the hand-wringing and moaning and groaning from the other side of the aisle that somehow we were doing a terrible injustice to the United States budget, and that we were somehow going to bankrupt our Nation by providing necessary relief to married couples across this great land of ours (146 Cong Rec H 337).

I have heard nothing but bellyaching from the other side of the aisle that has made me nauseous (146 Cong Rec H 11792).

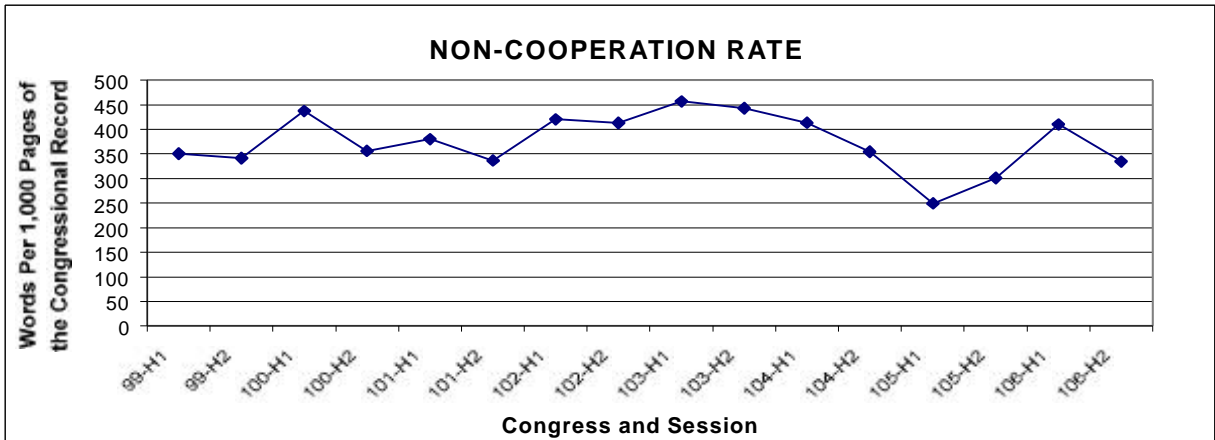


### Non-cooperation

Our study included one measure of non-cooperation. This index consists of 28 words, such as “polarized,” “filibuster,” “inflexible.” The first session of the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress had more words indicative of non-cooperation than average (410 compared to 375 per 1,000 pages of the Record). The second session had less than average (335). The 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, first session, had the lowest rate of non-cooperation words (249). The 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress, first session had the highest (457). The 106<sup>th</sup> Congress produced fewer non-cooperation words in the December session than average (118) and the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress included more (1,480).

**Non-Cooperation in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress**

Mr. Speaker, much has been said on this floor that is simply not true. What is threatening Social Security today? The inaction of the other side of the aisle, the uncooperative spirit, not all Members. I am not speaking to all Members there. But we have reached out to the Democrats time and time again with the Archer-Shaw proposal (146 Cong Reg H 4128).



## Vulgarity

We also include in our measures a vulgarity index. This index consists of 11 taboo words, such as, “damn,” and “shit.” Both sessions of the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress were below average on our vulgarity index. On average about 3.8 vulgar words are used in every 1,000 pages of the Congressional Record. The first session of the 106 had 2.8 and the second 3.3. The lowest rate of vulgar word usage in the last 16 years occurred in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, first session (1.6); the highest rate was in the 102<sup>nd</sup> Congress, first session (6.1).

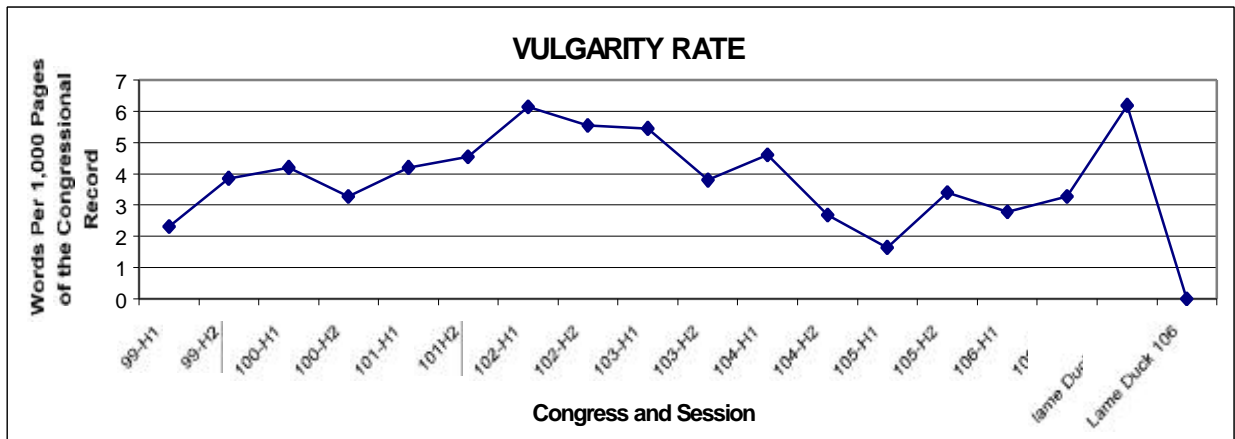
The lame duck session of the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress had more vulgar words than average (6 per 1,000 pages) while that of the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress had fewer than average (zero).

### Vulgarity in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress

I disagree with this illegal immigration. If they want to come into America, damn it, get in line. There are laws. Follow the law. When Congress starts letting people jump the fence and get away with it and then use it for political gain, Congress has failed the American people, and Congress has shredded the Constitution (146 Cong Rec H 11538).

I am here talking about a precedent, a precedent that says, and I do not give a damn what the AFL-CIO says. Quite frankly they did not even support me. If my workers do not know a damn thing about AFL-CIO, they know this. Their parents and their grandparents have problems, and Congress has put off and put off and put off (146 Cong Rec H 11538).

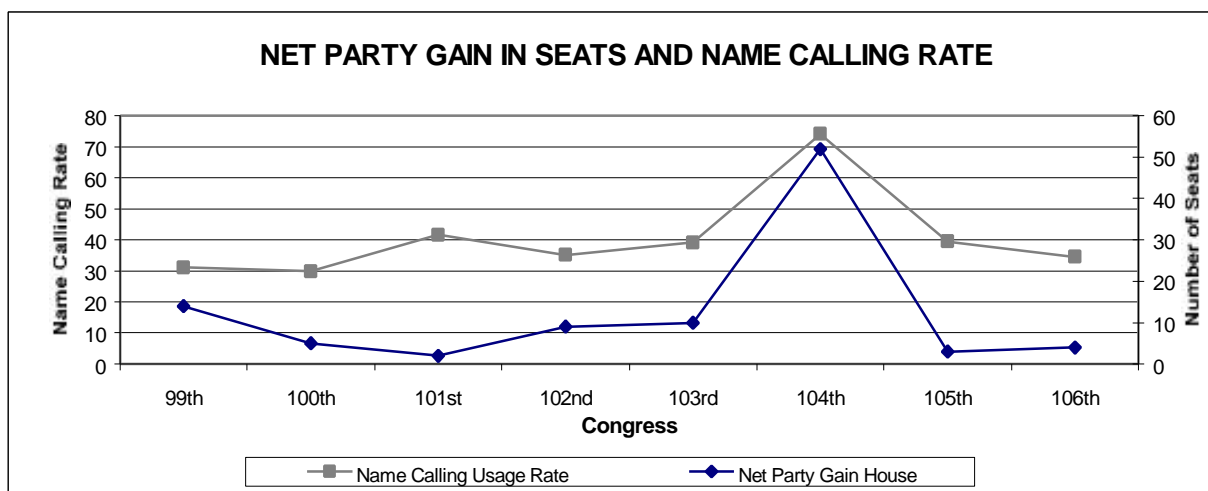
The President has admitted that perhaps the nonbinding, face-saving, political butt-covering side agreements on labor and the environment, which were not binding ... (145 Cong Rec H 11708).



## Summary of Word Searches

106<sup>th</sup> Congress second session had the lowest rate (in the last eight Congresses) of incivility in two of our six word searches (lie and pejoratives for speech). It was not the highest on any of our word search measures. When we summed both sessions of each Congress to get an overall rate, the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress was average or better than average on all but one of our seven word-search measures (aspersions). It was lower than the 105<sup>th</sup> on two of those six (name calling and lie). There were no word search measures in which the 106<sup>th</sup> was the lowest or the highest of the Congresses we have tracked. However, it was among the higher for the aspersion rate (second only to the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress) and among the lower for the lie and vulgarity indices (second only to the 101<sup>st</sup> for lie and the 105<sup>th</sup> for vulgarity).

## Correlates With Civility



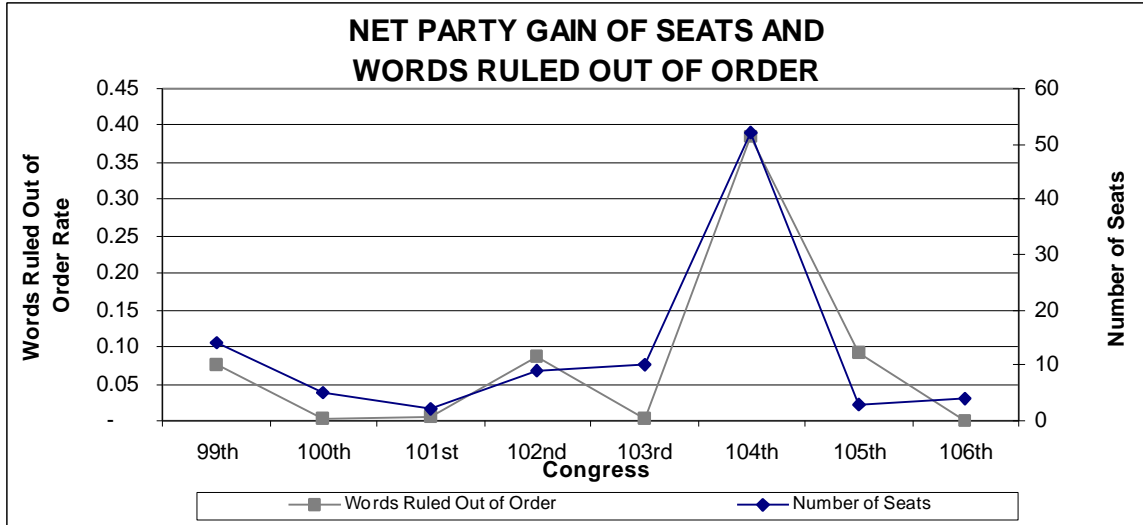
### Party Power

Changes in the power of the two major parties consistently correlate with incivility. Over the past eight Congresses name-calling has been strongly correlated ( $r = .90$ )<sup>5</sup> with the net shift in party seats. It is similarly (though less strongly) correlated with the total number of seats to change hands ( $r = .77$ ). As the magnitude of the change in majority/minority seats increases, civility decreases. One reason that the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress may have been so civil is that the net change in party seats was relatively small from the 105<sup>th</sup> to 106<sup>th</sup> (four seats). The total change of party seats was also relatively small at 17 (the second lowest of the eight Congresses we have tracked).

The pattern found in name calling also holds true for words that are pejorative for speech, use of the phrases “the House will be in order” and “the Member will suspend,” and for the number of times words are ruled out of order. As the net party gain of seats increases so does the use of pejorative words for speech ( $r = .80$ ), use of the phrases the “House will be in order” ( $r = .95$ ) and “the Member will suspend” ( $r = .81$ ), and words ruled out of order. ( $r = .95$ ). The same positive relationship exists, though less strongly, for the total number of seats to change hands (pejorative for speech  $r = .64$ , House will be in order  $r = .69$ , the Member will suspend  $r = .78$ , words ruled out of order =  $.78$ ). Thus, we can expect that in elections where many seats change hands or in which there is a large net gain for one party there will be more name-calling, use of pejoratives for speech, more need to call the house into order, to ask Members to suspend, and more words ruled out of order.

Use of aspersions is related to party power but in this case more strongly to the strength of the majority instead of the total change. Aspersions are negatively correlated with the size of the majority ( $-.78$ ), suggesting that the larger the size of the majority the fewer aspersions. The same is true of use of the phrase the “Member will suspend,” which is negatively correlated with the size of the majority ( $r = .76$ ). In short, by these measures comity is more at greater risk when there is a narrow majority or when there has been a large change in the number of total seats held by each party.

<sup>5</sup> Correlations are measured on a scale of zero to one. The stronger the correlation (denoted by a lower case r) the closer the number is to one.



### Experience

Experience in Congress is also related to civility. As the mean number of terms of the Members rises aspersions fall. Mean number of terms is negatively correlated with aspersions ( $r = -.70$ ). However, as the mean number of terms increases so does the incidence of vulgarity. Vulgarity and mean number of terms are correlated at  $r = .85$ .

The number of defeated incumbents is positively correlated with the number of requests to take down ( $r = .82$ ). This too may be a result of experience. As the number of defeated incumbents rises, so do requests to take down.

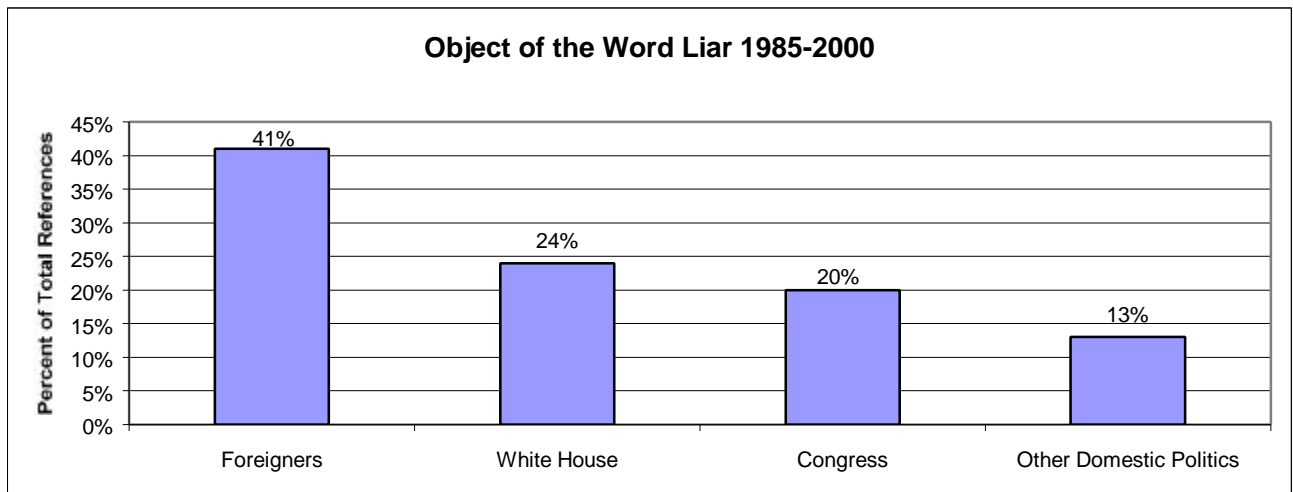
### Hours in Session

We were not able to update our data to include the second session of the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress. However, for the 99<sup>th</sup> Congress through the first session of the 106<sup>th</sup> civility is related to the total hours in session. As the hours increase so does the rate at which name calling words are used ( $r = .71$ ), the rate at which words are ruled out of order ( $r = .76$ ), the rate at which Members are requested to suspend ( $r = .84$ ), and the rate at which requests are made for the house to be in order ( $r = .80$ ). Fatigue is a possible explanation. Alternatively the long hours may reflect an inability to find consensus, or less civility may necessitate longer hours to get work done.

## Use of the Word Liar in Context

### Addressee

When we looked at how the word “liar” was used and excluded the times when the word was ascribed to no-one in particular, or used disapprovingly<sup>6</sup> foreign nationals were the most likely to be called liars by Members of Congress. For example, in the 99<sup>th</sup> Congress, first session, one Member said, “So when Mr. Gromyko says that is disinformation that the United States is putting out, we know what we are talking about. We know that he is the **liar**” (131 Cong Rec H 8948). Another Member said while discussing the South American Contadora process “Communists are **liars**, stealers, cheaters, and murderers; when are we going to figure this out around here?” (131 Cong Rec H 4115). In fact, forty-one percent of the references from 1985 though 2000 focused on foreign nationals.



People associated with the President (including family, cabinet, and anyone who works in the White House) were labeled as liars second most frequently, with 24% of the references. For example, a Member read this quotation from a newspaper column, “The first thing to keep in mind when evaluating Bill Clinton’s laundry list of promises, made in his state of the Union speech, is that Mr. Clinton is a proven liar” (145 Cong Rec H 401). In a similar instance another Member said “Robert Samuelson, who wrote a Washington Post editorial, called the President a **liar**, said he lied on Medicare and said he did not like using that term, but that the President had so twisted the facts on Medicare that he really felt like there was no other term that fit him” (142 Cong Rec H 2214).

Members of Congress came in third with 20% percent of the references. For example a Member said, “I am not going to call the Speaker a **liar**. But it is a fact that the Speaker has not been telling the media the whole truth about the findings of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct” (142 Cong Rec H 11050). Another example of use of the word liar towards another Member occurred when one Member said, “The gentleman called me a **liar**” (141 Cong Rec H 7307).

<sup>6</sup> Unless otherwise stated negated uses of the word liar and when the word was used toward no one in particular are excluded from all of the following analyses.



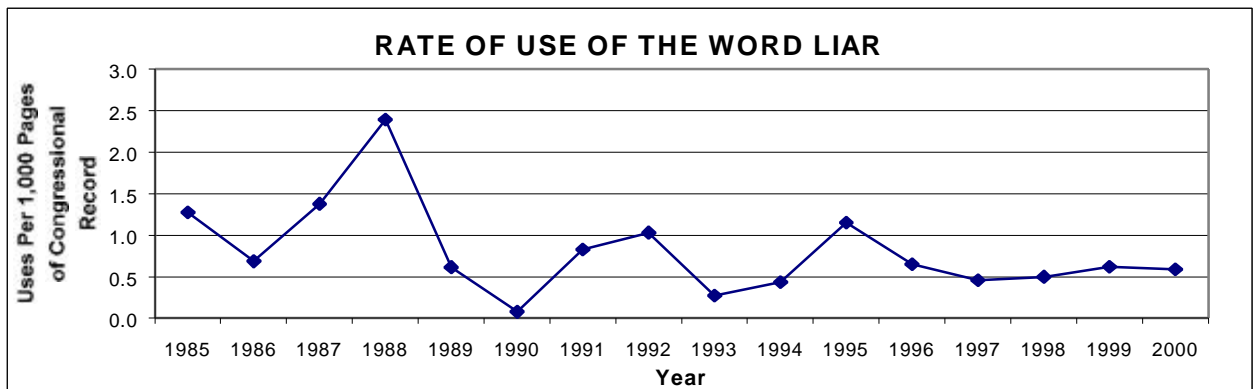
Other in American government or politics (including governors, mayors, and government agencies or anyone working for them) were fourth with 13% of the references. This type of addressee is seen in the following example, “I do not enjoy calling people like our State Department or the UNHCR **liars**, but I have to tell my colleagues when we are talking about truth, when we are talking about justice, when we are talking about people's lives, both of these agencies are misrepresenting the truth” (141 Cong Rec H 5502). Interestingly the media were the subject of less than one percent of the references for liar on the floor of the House making examples such as the following rare, “That sounds strangely out of some manifesto from Karl Marx. But that is Mike Wallace, the revered commentator from 60 Minutes. So there you have it, Mr. Speaker, Mike Wallace’s own words indicting himself as a **liar**” (139 Cong Rec H 5499).

### Sessions

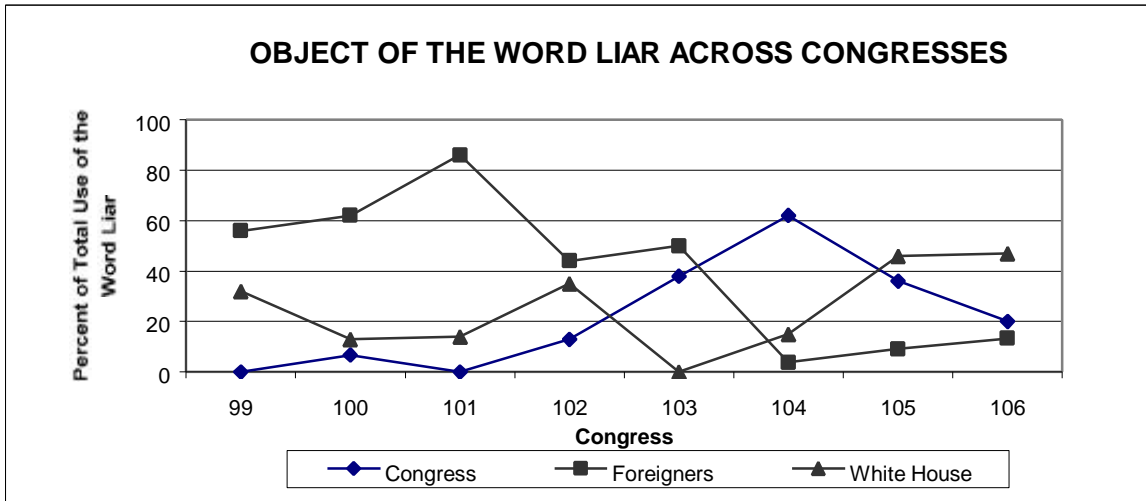
Use of the word “liar” is slightly more likely in first sessions than second (52% to 48%). Members of Congress are far more likely to call each other liars in the first compared to the second session. Seventy-five percent of such depictions are made in first sessions. This suggests a socialization effect. As the Members learn more about comity and about each other their behavior improves. In contrast, calling people affiliated with the President “liar” occurs more often in second sessions (54%) and the same is true for people affiliated in other ways with domestic politics (71%).

### Use of the Word Liar Across Time

The year with the greatest use of the word liar was 1988 (100<sup>th</sup> Congress, second session) with 2.4 cases per 1,000 pages of the Congressional Record. The 106<sup>th</sup> Congress was on the low end of the scale with .50 in the first and .59 in the second. The average is about .81 cases per 1,000 pages. The year with the fewest cases of the word liar was 1990 (101-H2) with only .07 cases per 1,000 pages.



When we compared the object of the word liar across time we found a decline in the use of the word liar to describe foreign nationals from the 101<sup>st</sup> Congress through the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. During that period there was an increase in the use of the word to refer to other Members of Congress. Then from the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress through the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress, the pattern reversed with a steady increase in use of the word liar toward foreign nationals and a corresponding drop in its ascription to other Members of Congress. The 106<sup>th</sup> Congress was just slightly more likely to use the word liar to describe a Member of Congress (20%) than a foreigner (13%). If these trends continue it is probable that in the next session foreigners will again be the more common object of the description liar.



The 106<sup>th</sup> Congress was less civil toward the President than other Congresses. It had the greatest percent of use of the word liar to describe people associated with the White House (47%), a trend that had been on the rise for the last three Congresses (104 = 15%, 105<sup>th</sup> = 46%).

## Retreats

### Hershey

There is some textual evidence that the retreats help in maintaining comity in Congress. Past retreats are invoked in various ways to remind Members of the importance of working together in a civil manner.

**1. Members most commonly refer to Hershey in order to invoke a spirit of bi-partisanship and to encourage the parties to work together.**

- a. "Let me encourage my colleagues in a bipartisan way, in the spirit of Hershey which I participated in. . ."
- b. "I come in the spirit of Hershey and bipartisanship."
- c. "Mr. Speaker, this past weekend in Hershey, many of us implicitly pledged to rise above our party labels and work as one when issues of right and fairness demanded it."
- d. "It is interesting, having gone to the Hershey retreat to uphold and promote bi-partisanship, that yesterday I saw the crumbling edges of bi-partisanship."
- e. "In the spirit of Hershey, I sincerely hope that all of our colleagues will work together to pass in this session a real Patients' Bill of Rights. . ."

**2. References to Hershey were also used to invoke the norm of comity.**

- a. "Mr. Speaker, I truly hope that the spirit of Hershey is not gone already. Last weekend we had the second Congressional bipartisan civility retreat in Hershey, Pennsylvania. We tried, in short, to come together to find a way where we can still disagree on issues without being so disagreeable."
- b. "I am going to yield time. I do want to remind my friends that as somebody who does special orders, never have Republicans received so much time during the Democrat hour, just to say that for a little advertising. And in the spirit of Hershey, let me yield to the distinguished gentleman."

**3. The most frequent references to Hershey in a single discussion occurred in a debate over the funding allocations for committees by party. In this case the references to Hershey argued for structural fairness.**

- a. "I offer the motion, Mr. Speaker, because House Resolution 101 does not treat 212 Members of this body fairly, and, therefore, contravenes all that Hershey symbolizes."
- b. "Mr. Speaker, I really would like to speak to my dear friends and colleagues on the other side of the aisle and state that, in the spirit of Hershey, a one-third/two-thirds split is totally fair, and builds on two votes that were taken on this floor that supported such action."

**4. Members also recalled the retreat as the location at which they had conversations with and had gotten to know other Members.**

- a. "I wanted to thank the Members, especially X, who, on a trip to Hershey, talked to me about how important the history of this institution is and reflecting on her husband . . .; and to Y who, also during that sojourn, talked about its importance, talked about his service with Z. They were enormously helpful."
- b. "What actually piqued my interest on this trip, I heard the gentleman from X at the Hershey retreat a couple years ago during the nondenominational church services describe his experience. It is his story, and I am not going to take it from him. But basically there are three Members of his party that were all involved in this movement at the same time in the 1960s, and they had some differences in points of view . . ."

## APPENDIX A

**Word Rates:** Because the length of Congressional sessions varies, all word counts are reported in rates (i.e., the number of times the words appear per 1000 pages in the Congressional Record). Our word list was generated by coding words actually used in a session of Congress into two categories: uncivil and other. This process produced a list of over 360 words that might indicate incivility. These words were then sorted into several categories by four different coders. Only those categorized in the same way by at least three coders were used. Each word was then searched in an electronic database. The totals were summed by index and session of Congress. The index total for each session was then divided by the number of pages in the Congressional Record for that session and multiplied by a factor of 1,000. This resulted in a word rate that measured the number of times the words in each index were used per 1,000 pages of the Congressional Record. Because these words are decontextualized, the word counts tend to overestimate actual incidents of incivility. For example, “you are a liar” is counted the same as “I did not call the gentlemen a liar.”

**Specific Phrase Searches:** The Congressional Record was electronically searched for the following words and phrases: “Hershey;” “The House will be in order” (not including instances where the House was called to order at the beginning of the session, nor instances in which the House was called to order for purposes of a prayer); “Member” and “Gentle\*” in the same sentence as “will suspend” or “will please suspend” or “will now suspend” or “shall suspend” or “will just suspend;” “Engag\*” with in two words of “personalit\*”; and “tak\* down” within the sentence of “word.”

**Liar Coded in Context:** Each instance of the word liar was examined in 150 words of context by the author and a team of research assistants to find out to whom the word was addressed, whether or not it was used in the negative or possessive, directly or indirectly, and if the subjunctive was used. Reliability tests produced a Krippendorff’s Alpha of .7 or better for all variables.

## APPENDIX B

Members have cautioned that using “the house will be in order” and “the Member will suspend” to measure civility should be done with care since these phrases can have multiple uses.

### **The House Will Be in Order**

One way for the chair to caution Members when the noise level is unusually high is to call for the House to be in order. When the House is lacking in focus the chair may caution the Members, by calling for the House to be in order. We found no cases of this phrase being used in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress. That would make it one of five such sessions since 1985. The average number of times this phrase is used is .17 per 1,000 pages. The 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, first session, occasioned the most frequent use of this phrase (about once every 1,000 pages). The use of this phrase has been on a downward trend since the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, first session (104-H1 = 1.02, 104-H2 = .41, 105-H1 = .09, 105-H2 = .08).

### **Member Requested to Suspend**

When Members speak out of turn, speak after their time has run out, without being allotted time, or on an inappropriate topic, the chair may ask that the Member to suspend. Members were asked to suspend about 1.6 times every 1,000 pages in the first and 1.9 times in the second session in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress. Both of these are slightly above average (1.5). The 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, first session, had the largest rate of these (i.e., instances about five for every 1,000 pages of the Congressional Record). The use of this phrase had been on a downward trend since the first session of the 104<sup>th</sup> but increased slightly in the second session of the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress (104-H1 = 5.0, 104-H2 = 3.8, 105-H1 = 2.8, 105-H2 = 2.3).

This report was prepared by Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Dean of the Annenberg School for Communication and Director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania. The word-based indices were developed by Annenberg doctoral student Erika Falk. Ms. Falk also supervised the process of collecting and analyzing the data. Staff support was provided by Lorie Slass, Natalia Gridina and Nicole Porter. The views expressed in the report are those of the authors.

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