
Congressional Oversight Overlooked or Just Over?

The House Appropriations Committee Surveys & Investigations Staff and the Arc of Congressional Competence

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Abstract

This article follows the arc of congressional competence through the development and decline of the House Appropriations Committee (HAC) Surveys & Investigations (S&I) staff, an enduring oversight unit whose investigations were unobserved by design. S&I was quietly reorganized out of existence in December 2024. Why? Using committee reports, archival documents, and interviews this article shows how Chairman Clarence Cannon's 1943 design for S&I shaped its distinctive nonpartisan, under-the-radar oversight; filling a once-powerful niche made untenable in recent decades by partisan conflict. Time-series analysis of S&I study titles from 1975 to 2024 shows that the interplay of subcommittee chair-ranking disagreement and divided government constrained bipartisan S&I oversight. The conclusion situates S&I's history in research on congressional oversight, grounding abstract models, tracing institutional change, and revealing unexpected consequences.

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1. Introduction

The House Appropriations Committee has long maintained a reputation as, “the most powerful committee in Congress,” a “closed corporation,” famous for, “hard work, specialization, and unity.”² Woodrow Wilson’s *Congressional Government* (Wilson 2017: 87) describes appropriators as, “white button mandarins,” “clothed with extraordinary privileges,” empowered to balance the dual imperatives of state-building and institutional maintenance. In *The Power of the Purse*, Richard Fenno (1966: 16) explains, “...*some* institution must protect the federal treasury against the excessive claims made upon it by the manifold special interests in American society.” In *Congressmen in Committees*, Fenno (Fenno 1973: 49) reasons that the Appropriations Committee was created to pull the metaphorical purse string and, “an effective purse string is a tight purse string.”

House Appropriators cultivated a distinctive budget cutting ethos, integrating famously independent subcommittee “cardinals” around a shared sense of mission and a powerful corporate metaphor. John Kingdon (Kingdon 1966: 70-71) observes, “Committee members come to perceive their role as protector of the taxpayer and maintainer of the fiscal well-being of the entire nation.” They used facts to uncover and root out government waste. Fenno (1966) writes;

They believe that hard work will inevitably produce ‘the facts.’ If you ‘get the facts,’ you will usually uncover waste in the bureaucracy. And the revelation of waste will be followed by cutting the budget. Therefore, according to Committee syllogism, hard work will result in cutting the budget.³

² Member descriptions quoted in Fenno (1966: 202; 1973: 3; 196-7).

³ Fenno (1966: 105-7) lists verbs used by members to illustrate the committee’s budgeting-cutting zeal, such as: cut, carve, slice, prune, whittle, squeeze, wring, trim, lop off, chop, slash, pare, shave, fry, and whack.

The Committee's unique jurisdictional autonomy and its reputation for expert budgetary discipline were of a piece. "By keeping resources scarce, they magnify their allocative power. By denying, limiting, or withholding funds, they keep environmental groups more mindful of them," Fenno (1973: 49) explains. This "negative posture" was a reputational resource in institutional bargaining. Members were buffered by a shared confidence that, "he knows a great deal more about the agencies for which he appropriates than other members of the House - indeed, more than the entire Congress" (Fenno 1966: 202; 345).

This article is about how House Appropriators knew more: with the assistance of investigators, auditors, analysts and agency experts on detail who identified unused and wasted spending, investigated programs, agencies, and individuals, and watchdogged committee turf. The arc of 20th Century congressional competence is embodied in the evolution of the House Appropriations Committee Surveys & Investigations (S&I) staff, which served the committee from 1943 to 2024, providing the facts appropriators used to pull Congress's metaphorical purse strings.⁴ **Figure 1** depicts the number of S&I study titles reported from the 94th to the 118th Congress (1975-2024). At the peak of its productivity, S&I completed more than 100 study titles per congressional term, staffed by a rotating cadre of 100 or more investigators detailed from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), General Accounting Office (GAO), and 10 or more federal agencies. S&I filled a powerful niche as HAC's investigative arm, operating almost entirely outside of public view. In recent decades, however, growing partisanship and shifting power in the House transformed committee politics and strained S&I's tradition of nonpartisan,

⁴ This article contributes to longstanding empirical research highlighting staff as the "invisible force" behind Congress (Dittmar 2023; Fox and Hammond 1977; Ommundsen 2023) and staff expertise as a factor in committee influence (Curry 2019; Fagan and McGee 2022; Fong, Lowande, and Rauh 2025; LaPira, Drutman, and Kosar, eds. 2021; Romzek and Utter 1997).

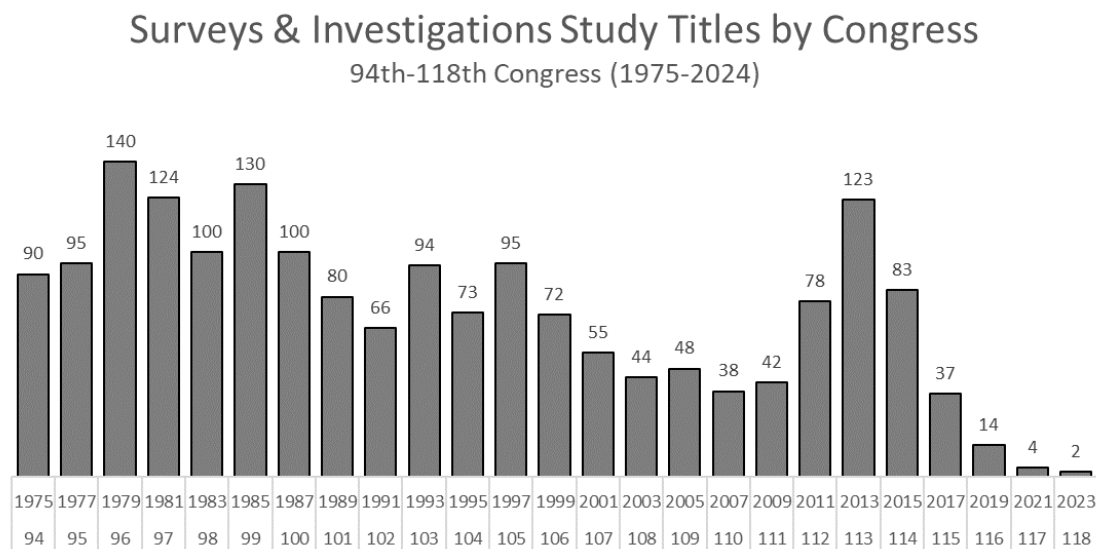
under-the-radar investigations. S&I study titles declined sharply from the 114th through 118th Congress, its staff dwindled, and, in December 2024, the S&I staff was quietly reorganized out of existence by Chairman Tom Cole. No press release was issued. There were no articles in *Roll Call* or *The Hill*. A venerated staff institution is gone and no one wrote its obituary.

S&I's quiet demise defies singular explanation and much of its history remains shrouded in secrecy. Drawing from committee reports, archival documents, and research interviews, this article assembles stories of S&I's development and decline in search of explanations. Four sections follow. Section 2 describes S&I's creation and design set out by institutional architect Chairman Clarence Cannon around four organizing pillars: the S&I staff were meant to be invisible, ad hoc, impersonal, nonpartisan agents of the committee. Section 3 shows that, as S&I evolved into a distinctive and enduring institutional resource, the imprint of Cannon's design insulated its investigations and shaped its adaptation to a changing environment. Characters and events reconstructed around Cannon's pillars - No Publicity, Staffing on Detail, Anonymity, and Neutrality - reveal evidence of persistence, but also the unexpected, incongruous, and hidden. S&I generally produced no publicity, but dramatic exceptions reveal its latent power. Cannon said S&I was designed for flexibility and to avoid favoritism; but in practice he used S&I to secure a decades-long alliance that empowered J. Edgar Hoover's FBI. And, while S&I's independence and neutrality were vital pillars of its authoritative oversight, under the pressure of increasingly divided committee politics, its model of neutrality arguably proved its undoing.

S&I's decline is commonly attributed to partisan conflict. One former staffer explained, "S&I was an important part of congressional oversight. But like with most other things in our

nation and certainly in Congress, partisanship killed S&I over time.”⁵ Was growing partisan conflict associated with declining S&I studies? Section 4 tests this proposition using multivariate time-series analysis of S&I study titles across subcommittees from 1975 through 2024. Finally, Section 5 summarizes findings from the study’s mixed qualitative and quantitative methods and reflects on what S&I’s history of oversight out of sight means for scholarship on congressional oversight. Building on sociologist Andrew Abbott’s (2004:146) *Methods of Discovery*, four narrative heuristics are described: S&I’s history reveals unexpected consequences, infuses change into static models, contextualizes abstraction, and promotes counterfactual inference.

Figure 1: S&I Investigations, 94th-118th Congress (1975-2024)



Source: House Appropriations Committee, *Report of Committee Activities*, 94th to 118th Congress.

⁵ Appendix D describes research interviews.

2. Chairman Clarence Cannon: S&I's Institutional Architect

On January 21, 1943, at the first HAC meeting of the 78th Congress, Chairman Clarence Cannon proposed the creation of an ad hoc staff of committee investigators for the, “examination of the organization of any executive department of government programs...as the committee may deem necessary to assist in connection with the determination of matters within its jurisdiction.” Cannon’s resolution was approved the following day by the full House (U.S. House of Representatives 1943). For noted Congress scholar Arthur McMahon, Cannon’s new staff of investigators exemplified the assertion of Article I powers through ongoing scrutiny. “A new stress is rising in crescendo in the Congress of 1943,” McMahon announced (1943a; 1943b). Appropriators supervised unprecedented wartime spending as guardians of the public purse with a stature buttressed by Chairman Cannon’s knowledge and experience.⁶ The authority of the Appropriations Committee depended on its expert staff, MacMahon (1943a: 161-3, 182; 1943b) observed, and Cannon’s initiative was a model for building congressional capacity.

Speaking on the House floor in December 1943, Chairman Cannon reported that, in its first year, S&I investigations yielded “invaluable results” for taxpayers. Cannon pronounced:

Mr. Speaker, sound legislation is based on sound information. Too often faulty legislation is the result of inaccurate or inadequate information. From the beginning of the Congress, committees have been handicapped by lack of essential data and have sought practical methods of supplying the deficiency. As early as 1792, a special committee on investigation was appointed and from that time down to the present, thousands of investigations have been authorized and millions of dollars expended in conducting them, the larger part of which may be said to have been utterly wasted.

The Committee on Appropriations has especially felt the need of an agency for research and investigation which could be relied upon to supply data to supplement that submitted

⁶ King (1997: 96-7) describes Cannon’s role in the development of the House parliamentarian. Cannon famously authored a text on parliamentary procedure. Fenno (1966: 125) quotes one member saying, “He wrote the book.”

by the departments in their annual hearings on the general appropriations bills. It is an old problem and one to which a great amount of thought has been given (Cannon 1943a).

The S&I staff were meant to strengthen the exercise Congress's institutional prerogative - to tighten the purse strings - without waste and favoritism. To accomplish this, Cannon outlined four design principles that left an indelible imprint on S&I in the decades that followed.

First, Cannon explained that "tasking letters" required to initiate S&I studies must be co-signed by the chairmen and ranking minority members of both the full committee and the responsible subcommittee. Requiring bipartisan approval, "precludes any attempt to use the agency for personal or political purposes," Cannon reasoned, noting "...As a matter of fact, there has never been any suggestion or intimation of politics or partisanship in any of these investigations" (Cannon 1943: 10995). S&I was designed for partisan neutrality.

Second, S&I's studies were not released without committee approval. Consequently, few people outside of the relevant subcommittees saw the results of its investigations. Secrecy and neutrality were tightly coupled in Cannon's design, insulating S&I investigators from political interference. Cannon argued:

The system cannot be used for the publicizing or aggrandizement of the chairman or any member of the committee. Requests submitted by the subcommittees are for facts. Opinions are not admitted. The investigators receive written assignments and make written reports, and from those facts reported the members of the committee deduce their own opinions. Results of the investigations are not released to the newspapers. The Department which has been investigated does not itself know what the investigator has reported and as a result must be on its toes ready for any development when its representatives appear before the committee in the hearings on the Budget estimates (Cannon 1943: 10995).

Third, relations between committee members and S&I investigators were “wholly impersonal.” S&I staff were located in separate offices and generally did not interact with committee staff. “I have never been in the office and no member of the staff has ever been in my office,” Cannon (1943) continued, “I would not know one of them if I should meet him in the street.” The S&I staff was designed for impersonalism to insulate its experts from political interference.

Fourth, S&I’s investigators occupied temporary appointments - many on detail. Cannon reasoned that staffing with short-term contracts would enable the committee flexibility to hire experts for specific investigations, while avoiding the favoritism and influence engendered by permanent committee staff. Experts from FBI, GAO, the Secret Service, and other agencies would staff S&I investigations on detail, and, “As soon as the assignment is completed he is returned to the department and goes off the House roll back to his original roll” (Cannon 1943: 10995).

The S&I staff would be nonpartisan, impersonal, under-the-radar, and temporary. Calling Cannon’s design “ingenious,” the American Accounting Association’s Eric Kohler (1945) praised his floor speech, noting, “His exposition of the safeguards that should accompany legislative investigations of executive agencies is both able and forthright; his insistence on arm's-length relationships qualifies him as a first-rate auditor” (Kohler 1945: 37). The next section looks at the enduring imprint of Cannon’s design on S&I’s development. For 80 years, with notable exceptions, the S&I staff served as nonpartisan, invisible investigators on detail.

3. Cannon's Design and S&I's Development

S&I's growth and institutionalization during the 1950's and 1960's and a decade of peak investigative activity between roughly 1976 and 1986 were followed by retrenchment and adaptation amidst growing volatility in the 1990's and 2000's, a brief period of renewal in the 2010's, and, ultimately, in December 2024 it closed shop.⁷ Over eight decades through transformational changes, Cannon's imprint persisted in S&I's formal structure, roles, routines, and organizational identity. This section traces the persistence of Chairman Cannon's four founding pillars in the S&I staff's development (Becker 2025). S&I conducted invisible, impersonal, nonpartisan investigations on demand much as Cannon envisioned.

The four subsections that follow - No Publicity, Staffing on Detail, Anonymity, and Neutrality - use stories of Cannon's imprint to bring forward four narrative heuristics for scholarship on congressional oversight. The first subsection, No Publicity, shows that while S&I was mostly invisible, a few exceptions reveal it as a powerful latent factor in committee oversight. The second subsection, Staffing on Detail, shows that while Cannon described S&I's design as instilling change and avoiding favoritism, its staff was dominated for decades by FBI agents under the personal authority of Director J. Edgar Hoover. When S&I's alliance with the FBI drew scrutiny, its staffing model enabled S&I to adapt and develop an alliance with GAO and to change staffing again after that relationship dissolved. The third subsection, Anonymity, shows that Cannon's imprint instilled in the S&I staff a distinctive character that shaped its adaptation to a changing environment and ultimately inhibited its resilience. Finally, Neutrality, describes how Cannon designed S&I for neutrality, and a commitment to neutrality formed a

⁷ Appendix E includes a chronological timeline.

central pillar in S&I's institutional identity, until it buckled under a rising tide of partisan institutional conflict. S&I's history reconstructed around the imprint of Cannon's founding design reveals the overlooked and unexpected, infuses static models with movement, contextualizes abstraction, and promotes counterfactual inference.

No Publicity

In January 1943, Chairman Cannon and first S&I Director Hugh Clegg agreed “there should be no publicity” (Stockham 2011: 177-8). Four years later Republican Chairman John Taber assumed the Committee gavel and along with S&I's third Director Robert Emmet Lee emerged center stage at the confluence of anti-New Deal “war on waste” and anti-communist “watchful eye” oversight. Chairman Taber, “lord high executioner of federal budget requests,” waged dramatic battles against government inefficiency and subversion (Reynolds 1948: SM10), making conspicuous use of S&I to recruit private sector auditors and analysts for temporary service rooting out government waste. A *Wall Street Journal* (1947) article headlined, “Taber's ‘Mystery Men’ Snoop for Loopholes In Truman's Budget,” describes faceless investigators on temporary rotation, “As employees of the committee, they go into the various departments of government and ask searching questions: What supplies are on hand? How much money is left from old appropriations?” But their work is secret, the newspaper reports. While the Republican's “chief economizer” Chairman Taber is “keeping mum” about his crack investigators, “Two of the special experts have been assigned to work on the War Department Appropriation bill from which the Republican budgeters hope to pare close to \$1 billion.” His biography observes, “Taber, for a short time at least, became something of a national figure,”

noting, “Several popular magazines featured articles on his hard work, perseverance, personal frugality, and, above all, his iron determination to cut spending” (Henderson 1964).

S&I Director Lee also appeared frequently in newspaper articles, often portrayed as a hero investigator rooting out waste, fraud, and subversion. Citing a few examples: In June 1947, *The Washington Post* credited Lee with exposing waste in the Federal Public Housing agency; in July, Lee revived a probe of DC crime statistics blocked the prior term and the *Post* noted, “lively interest in such an inquiry as Mr. Lee will do;” and, in December, Lee was credited with uncovering the misuse of funds by the Boston “March of Dimes.”⁸ But one S&I study brought Director Lee real notoriety: a wide-ranging 1947 review of State Department administration, including its Division of Security and Investigations. Committee investigators were given access to State Department personnel files.⁹ The January 1948 S&I staff report and the hearings that followed referred to a list of 108 numbered personnel cases compiled by committee investigators. The so-called “Lee list,” containing derogatory information drawn from State Department personnel files, became infamous in February 1950 when it was repurposed by Senator Joseph McCarthy. After McCarthy’s Wheeling speech claiming he had a “list” of State Department subversives captured national headlines, he came into possession of the Lee List, which served as the basis for his speech on the Senate floor.¹⁰ Lee and McCarthy became fast

⁸ (Boston Tax Office Hit by House Group 1947; Police Inquiry 1947; Treasury-P.O. Bill Passed Despite Threat 1948; Strand 1947).

⁹ “They were given desk space in the file room of the Division of Security and Investigations and had unlimited access to all files and to all material in the files.” Congressional Record, 81 (1950) H6111.

<https://www.congress.gov/81/crecb/1950/05/01/GPO-CRECB-1950-pt5-5-2.pdf>

¹⁰ Copies of the January 27, 1948 staff report located in State Department files and in McCarthy’s Office Files do not include the 69-page mimeographed list of 108 cases said to accompany the report. Source: Joseph R. McCarthy Papers, Senate Subject Files, Series 14, Box 5, Folder 21, “Lee Report, 1948, n.d.” Marquette University Archives; Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State, Series: Records Relating to Loyalty and Security Issues, “Lee Report - Investigation of Department” NAID: 117763497. The Tydings Committee report (1950) includes a table comparing McCarthy’s list and the Lee list side by side (S1815–1818, pp. 1771–1809). Haynes (2007) reproduces the list provided by McCarthy to Tydings in 1950. Accounts of the Lee list include: (Evans 2007;

friends and partisan allies.¹¹ In 1953, Eisenhower appointed Lee to the Federal Communications Commission, where he served for almost three decades.¹² In the history of S&I, Director Lee's career trajectory is unmatched, from FBI agent to FCC Commissioner. But the exception reveals S&I's latent potential for publicity and reputation building.¹³

Time and again, S&I studies became vehicles for communicating messages. In 1965, Agriculture Subcommittee Chairman Jamie Whitten tasked the S&I staff with investigating claims of the ill-effects attributed to pesticides in Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. "[T]he current national interest in pesticides can be attributed directly to the alarming statements set forth in 'Silent Spring,'" the study reports, concluding:

The staff was advised by scientists and physicians that the book is superficially scientific in that it marshals a number of accepted scientific facts. However, it is unscientific in (a) drawing incorrect conclusions from unrelated facts, and (b) making implications that are based on possibilities as yet unproved to be actual facts.

(Surveys and Investigations Staff 1965)

Whitten published the report, convened hearings to promote its findings, and subsequently used the research in his book rebutting Carson, entitled *That We May Live*, a book, "conceived and

Fried 1976; Friendly 1950; Griffith 1987; Lee 1997; Reeves 1982; United States Department of State 2011). Buckley (1999: 122) offers an evocative, lightly fictionalized portrayal of McCarthy and the Lee List. Johnson (2023: 23) notes that it was through the Lee list McCarthy identified the two cases of homosexuality mentioned in his Senate speech, helping to ignite the "lavender purge," which ultimately rooted out many more homosexuals from government service than subversives removed during McCarthy period.

¹¹ In 1950, Lee and his wife Rex worked with McCarthy's research assistant and future wife Jean Kerr running a shadow campaign that knocked off McCarthy critic Senator Millard Tydings (Lee 1997; Reeves 1982; Senate Committee on Rules and Administration 1951). Rex Lee was Kerr's matron of honor when she and McCarthy wed in 1953, a major DC event attended by Vice President Nixon and John and Robert Kennedy, among others.

¹² Hill Republicans lobbied to have Lee appointed GAO's Associate Comptroller General, the position he actually sought, but he was passed over and appointed to the FCC instead.

¹³ McCarthy served as the first chairman of the Senate's Subcommittee on Investigations, which became the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, often cited as a Senate analogue of S&I in that both evolved into storied oversight institutions (Bean 2018).

subsidized by pesticide industry officials” (Kotz and Mintz 1971; Mart 2015; Marvin 1967; Summers 2000).

A 1975 S&I report made news when it called the Office of Minority Business Enterprise, “paralyzed,” with “little hope for major improvement” (Levy 1975). A 1979 S&I report criticized the National Endowment for the Arts for being so “deficient in its management policy and practices,” that it, “fails to meet its legislative mandate” (A critical congressional study 1979; Shirley 1979). A 1982 S&I report on government procurement showed, “How one ladder came to cost \$1,676” (Mohr 1982). A blockbuster 1983 report criticized the Interior Department’s lease of government coal reserves at “fire sale” prices, a quote repeated again and again (Lash, Sheridan, and Gillman 1984; Russakoff 1983c, 1983b). A 1992 report criticized FEMA as, “a political dumping ground,” widely viewed as a “a turkey farm, if you will, where numbers of positions exist that can be conveniently filled by political appointment,” a quote that not only helped prompt major changes in the agency but persisted in public discourse (Dvorchak 1992; McAllister 1992a, 1992b; Roberts 2006). S&I reports became authoritative, anonymous, at-a-distance messaging vehicles with the S&I staff always just out of view.

S&I’s investigators embodied, “a passion for anonymity,” in Louis Brownlow’s phrase, extolling the virtues of a neutrally competent public sector professionalism.¹⁴ In Fenno’s (1966) account of the House Appropriations Committee as an integrated social system governed by roles and norms, the invisible committee clerks embodied a similar dedication to service as “anonymous assistants.” Fenno (1966: 184) describes committee clerks as difficult to locate and reluctant to be interviewed, observing, “They try to remain as faceless in the world of

¹⁴ Brownlow (1958: 469), concludes, “The prime requisite of successful administration of any large governmental unit is the devotion and dedication of anonymous persons.”

congressional staffs as their Committee members are in the world of political celebrities. And this behavior makes possible a closer relationship with the subcommittee chairmen whom they serve.” The clerks were renowned for long years of dedicated service (Harris 1964: 79). S&I staff, by contrast, operated on short-term assignments. Like the faceless clerks, the anonymity of S&I investigators and the confidential nature of their investigations bound their work closely to the committee. Unlike the long-tenured committee clerks, however, S&I staff were short-timers, whose visibility was narrowed by the scope of tasking directives. With norms of secrecy and impersonalism marking sharp asymmetries of information at committee boundaries, S&I served a powerful latent function. The following section describes how S&I’s staffing model reinforced the authority of the chairman as a broker of expert, under-the-radar investigations on demand.

Staffing on Detail

The S&I staff was designed to serve on temporary rotation. “If an auditor is needed the General Accounting Office is asked to supply the man. If a chemist, the Bureau of Standards; if a lawyer, the Department of Justice; if a civil-service expert, the Civil Service Commission; if a detective, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or the Secret Service of the Treasury Department; and so forth,” Chairman Cannon envisioned in 1943, “No other system yet suggested will so promptly supply just the exact character of qualification needed for any specific investigation.”¹⁵ By making S&I staff temporary, Cannon sought to avoid the patronage dominating prior staff

¹⁵ S&I’s 1943 creation signifies HAC’s power to “borrow” staff from agencies over which they possessed significant leverage. Dickinson (1996: 64-7) describes how FDR’s White House likewise built capacity from agency experts. In 1943, two thirds of White House staff were agency employees serving on-detail (Dickinson 1996: 64-7).

appointments (Brudnick 2014: 151-2). “What happens when you put men permanently on the staff?” Cannon once asked rhetorically, answering himself, “They get lazy” (Harris 1964: 80).

S&I’s limited-term staffing shortened horizons and reinforced norms of secrecy and impersonalism. Its detailees fit quietly in the, “complex network of relationships,” the “continuing and sometimes almost daily pattern of contacts between the Committee on Appropriations and the executive branch” (Carroll 1966 quoted in Oleszek 2007: 300). Agency detailees were vital sources of policy expertise, interbranch intelligence, and legislative capacity for congressional committees (Mills and Selin 2017). Rather than the permanent subcommittee staff advocated by Republican minority members, the S&I staff became a resource for discrete, problem-oriented sampling supervised by the chairman for the subcommittees.¹⁶

During the two terms Republican Chairman John Taber directed the Appropriations Committee, S&I’s staffing model served wildly different purposes. Chairman Taber made conspicuous use of S&I to recruit accountants and business analysts from industry. In January 1953, Chairman Taber announced the recruitment of industry experts to “hunt” for government waste, including a member of a New York accounting firm, an auditor for Consolidated Edison, assistant treasurer of the United States Rubber Company, and an executive for the Prudential Insurance Company.¹⁷ “The first project for the staff, Mr. Taber announced, would be a study of unspent appropriations,” the *New York Times* (1953) reported. Taber and House Republicans

¹⁶ In 1943, Committee Republican Representative Ben Jensen advocated for establishing permanent staff, reasoning, “I think it is fair to say the Congress does not have the necessary contact, does not have the supervision over the expenditure of funds that we should have, because of the fact that we have no contact, no examining staff, no auditors, no supervision whatever over the funds which we appropriate once a year” (Jensen 1943: 9360). In 1947, under Republican Chairman Taber the committee adopted Jensen’s 1943 proposal establishing a permanent subcommittee staff (U.S. House of Representatives 1943). Debate over whether S&I should be made permanent committee staff remained a point for sustained partisan controversy (Fenno 1966: 107, 154-5; Harris 1964: 81-2).

¹⁷ In all, Taber recruited about 40 investigators in the 80th Congress and 75 in the 83rd Congress (Harris 1964: 81).

envisioned Appropriations committee oversight in sharp contrast to what emerged under decades of control by House Democrats. Under Chairman Taber, S&I hunted security risks, recruited business experts, and communicated partisan messages. What emerged under House Democrats was not only different, but suggests Cannon's design for S&I's staffing structure served unarticulated purposes at the intersection of an institutional alliance with J. Edgar Hoover's FBI.

Chairman Cannon's 1943 exposition of S&I's design and creation contrasts with this alternative account retold by former FBI Special Agent and S&I investigator Richard Ash:

It is said that on one occasion in the early 1940's the Honorable Clarence Cannon (D) of Missouri, then Chairman of the Appropriations Committee was seated next to Director J. Edgar Hoover at some function at the Mayflower Hotel. Representative Cannon, after complimenting Mr. Hoover for the successes of the FBI and its complement of Special Agents, said he wished he had a similar group to help him with the committee's oversight responsibilities. Mr. Hoover is said to have replied, "How many do you want?" (Ash N.D.)

Director Hoover had already arranged to "lend" FBI agents to organize and staff the committee's new investigative unit prior to Cannon's January committee proposal. In a January 2, 1943 memo obtained by Aaron Stockham (2011; 2013), FBI Director Hoover informed Attorney General Francis Biddle that Chairman Cannon, "had decided that it was necessary to establish some sort of check and investigation of requests for appropriations which came before his Committee," and requested Hoover, "effect arrangements whereby Special Agents of the Bureau might be made available to the House Appropriations Committee to make such checks."¹⁸ Attorney General Biddle objected that detailing FBI agents to the committee would put the Justice Department in an "impossible position" by assigning personnel from a subordinate agency as its monitors.

¹⁸ Memo for the Attorney General from Hoover, 2 January 1943. Quoted in Stockham (2013: 503).

Nevertheless, Biddle relented in a January 4 memo telling President Roosevelt he had, “no objection to ‘lending’ one Agent to the Committee to help it set up such an organization.”¹⁹

Two of Hoover’s “top men” were assigned to the committee. Hugh Clegg organized the unit and R.H. Laughlin served as S&I director from 1943 to 1946. Laughlin advocated staffing S&I with Bureau agents, reasoning this would ensure, “close contact and control over an investigative organization making inquiries for the Appropriations Committee.” Reluctant to give up the agents, Hoover nonetheless agreed it was “better for FBI to do it than some other agency.”²⁰ In order to accommodate Attorney General Biddle’s objection to a formal detail, Directors Clegg, Laughlin, and Lee resigned from the FBI while staffing the committee. Ash (N.D.) describes the process, “...in the early years the FBI Agents, when assigned, went off the FBI rolls with only Mr. Hoover’s word that they would return to their Special Agent positions after completing their Congressional assignments. There was nothing in writing to guarantee this.” Director Lee (1997: 99-100) remembers, “I did resign but only after I had an interview with the Director in which he assured me he would welcome me back in the FBI at any time.”²¹ In practice, S&I’s rotating staff of FBI agents on-loan became Director Hoover’s personal footprint on the Appropriations Committee.

Hundreds of FBI agents were detailed to S&I, sustaining an alliance that lasted more than three decades.²² In 1972, almost a third of the HAC salary budget paid for 48 FBI agents detailed

¹⁹ Memo for the President from Francis Biddle, 4 January 1943. Quoted in Stockham (2011: 176).

²⁰ Memo from Laughlin to Hoover, 20 January 1944. Quoted in Stockham (2013: 507).

²¹ Lee remembers this arrangement solved a political problem, “This enabled Congress to avoid press criticism for overspending its budget for salaries and wages while using the services of knowledgeable civil servants.”

²² When Cannon passed the committee gavel in 1964, Chairman George Mahon told Director Hoover the committee would be “very fortunate” to continue the “very excellent arrangement,” established under Chairman Cannon. “I told the Congressman I would be happy to do this if that is his wish,” Hoover (1965) explained. Theoharis and Cox (1988: 212) report, “Thenceforward Mahon contacted Hoover regularly to ask him either to replace an agent whose tenure on the committee was coming to an end or to extend the tenure of certain agents assigned to the staff whose services he particularly valued.” (Hoover 1968, 1969, 1970).

to S&I, as **Figure 2** illustrates.²³ All 25 S&I Directors between 1943 and 1977 were FBI agents on detail.²⁴ Fenno (1966: 374-5) observes, “with FBI men helping to staff the Committee, it is no wonder that Committee members come to look upon the Bureau as having a special relationship,” noting the Appropriations Committee, “appears as the arch support of the FBI within the American political System.” FBI agents dominated S&I staffing into the 1970s, long after the alliance began attracting scrutiny.²⁵ “The Federal Bureau of Investigation holds a unique position among agencies in the federal government,” wrote *The Washington Post*’s Walter Pincus in 1971, “its agents are in charge of investigating their own congressional appropriation.” So, Pincus (1971: A1) observed, there should be little surprise the FBI’s budget requests were never cut. “While the House Appropriations Committee benefited from the expert investigatory skills of Bureau agents,” historian Stockham (2013: 501) writes, noting, “Bureau officials gained unprecedented access to one of the most powerful committees on Capitol Hill, fueling the Cold War growth of the Bureau’s power.”

During the second half of the 1970’s, S&I’s staffing pivoted to GAO, forging an alliance that proved crucial during its most productive period. In 1977, the position of S&I Director began alternating between FBI and GAO staff on rotation and the number of GAO detailees almost doubled. In 1982, GAO detailed 57 employees to S&I, accounting for more than 60 percent of GAO staff detailed to the Hill.²⁶ S&I acquired from GAO more than just personnel.

²³ Figures are based on semiannual committee staffing reports included in the *Congressional Record* under the Legislative Reorganization Act. A 1970 analysis of S&I staff over a six month period found three quarters of S&I detailees were FBI special agents. The analysis found S&I detailees included: 32 FBI agents, 3 NASA, 2 Army Audit Agency, and one each from CIA, USDA, Commerce, Transportation, Veterans, and the Defense Contract Audit Agency. (FBI Agents Investigate for House Committee 1971).

²⁴ Appendix A, Table A1 lists House Surveys and Investigations Staff Directors.

²⁵ (1971 Congressional Quarterly 1971; FBI Agents Investigate for House Committee 1971)

²⁶ Analysis of GAO’s *Annual Report of the Comptroller General*. Volume 2. (1971-2012). In 1982, the committee reported dedicating “an average of 37 investigators for 503 man months (approximately 42 man-years)” to oversight of defense procurement and, “14 investigators for 134 man months (approximately 11 man-years)” investigating the

GAO-trained analysts brought to S&I new discipline and methods modeled on audits and evaluations. GAO had emerged postwar as the government's supreme audit institution. Comptroller General (CG) Joseph Campbell (1954-1965) described GAO as, "the public accounting agency for the Federal Government,"²⁷ and supervised its transformation from a workforce of mostly clerks and a few lawyers before the war to almost 60 percent accountants by the late 1960s (Mosher 1979: 145). During the 1970's and 1980's, GAO was again transforming its workforce as CG Campbell and successor CG Elmer Staats (1966-1981) embraced comprehensive auditing, a term first equated with financial auditing broadened in subsequent decades to include program evaluation and management performance.²⁸ For S&I, GAO veterans introduced analytic practices that better fit the era's informational demands. One former staffer recalls, "...the GAO people generally were picked to be the team leaders... they were the ones who could pull together all the facts and get a report out." GAO staff employed rigorous methods, another staffer observes, "...you had to have good evidence, you had to have convincing evidence that withstood, you know, different people attacking it."

Many aspects of S&I retained the FBI imprint. S&I's instrument for interview write-ups, the Contact Report, which was modeled on the FBI's Form 302, survived into the 2000's. S&I

readiness of U.S. Conventional Forces. Committee on Appropriations, Report of Committee Activities, 97th Congress.

²⁷ As a turning point, Mosher (1979: 95) points to 1943 criticism of GAO's practices from a committee organized by the American Institute for Public Accountants as a turning point. Mosher (1979) and Harris (1964: 145-151) emphasize the influence of the Hoover Commission, which proposed moving responsibility for accounting systems into the executive but failed, prompting 1950 legislation codifying GAO's status as government's authoritative auditor. Mosher (1979: 138) observes CG Campbell, "brought to his office some of the ideology and the ethic of a public accounting firm, examining independently and objectively the honesty, accuracy, and legality of a company's financial condition and statements."

²⁸ (Mosher 1984: 136) GAO's oversight responsibilities were expanded in statute by the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970, which gave the Comptroller General authority to "review and analyze the results of government programs and activities" (Mosher 1979: 176). The growing field of "management audits," and other systematic reviews of business practices also factored (Mosher 1979: 138; McKenna (2006: 221). By 1980, half of GAO reports consisted of program evaluations and policy analyses; about 30 percent were management studies; and only 7 percent consisted of financial auditing (Mosher 1984: 145-6).

staff who served in the 1980's remember investigators were issued FBI-style badges, a practice discontinued as the GAO model took hold.²⁹ "Historically, because the FBI was the founding father," a staffer recalls, "for decades" the term "investigations" was used to describe S&I oversight. S&I staff debated and shifted its nomenclature to "studies." The FBI's investigative routines, its bureaucratic forms, even badges formed the initial conditions patterning S&I oversight practices that persisted decades later.

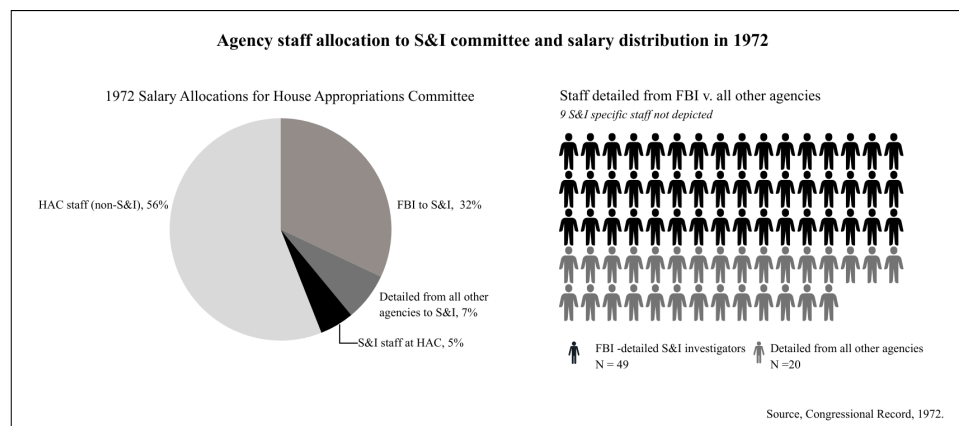
S&I's transformation also shows routines are not static scripts but processual and generative. Anonymous staff on rotation were empowered by routines that stabilized, buffered, and enabled S&I's adaptation. Routines are patterned behavior, "performance programs" (March and Simon 1958) or organizational "genes" and "truces" (Nelson and Winter 1982); but they are also ongoing "effortful accomplishments," sources of improvisation, learning, and endogenous change (Becker et al. 2005; Feldman 2000: 613; Pentland and Rueter 1994). Feldman and Pentland (2003; 2005) describe routines as a dynamic interplay among *ostensive* shared understandings, *artifactual* forms and records, and *performative* enactment of the routine together generating patterns of stability and change. S&I's oversight routines were powerful in part because their aspects, particularly their artifacts, were shielded from public view.

A succession of reforms anchored by the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 opened up committee oversight activities (Zelizer 2004: 61, 128) amplifying the costs associated with visible congressional staff. "Congressmen, sensitive to charges of unnecessary spending and concerned that a congressional bureaucracy is highly visible, hesitated to vote themselves staff

²⁹ One former staffer remembers the practice was discontinued. "When I left, that was all but considered heresy... When I left, there were no badges issued. It would have been considered counterproductive, to put it diplomatically." The S&I staff concluded agencies would be "more forthcoming if they don't think the cops are there."

assistance,” (Fox and Hammond 1975: 113) explain. Open committee hearings incentivized posturing and partisan messaging (Schickler 2001: 209-212; 226-7). Framed by a cultural antipathy that reaches deep into American society and state institutions (Balogh 2009; Jacobs, Novak, and Zelizer 2009) and a gathering populist distrust of expert professionalism (Barker, Detamble, and Marietta 2022; Brint 1994) committee staffing evolved into a salient electoral issue and bipartisan support for oversight institutions fractured. The 1994 Republican Contract With America promised to reduce congressional bureaucracy by one third, a pledge that ultimately brought about the dissolution of S&I’s alliance with GAO. By the 2010’s, GAO typically detailed zero employees to S&I.³⁰ Its staffing model again enabled its adaptation and resilience, shifting toward greater use of contract investigators, many retired from federal service.³¹

Figure 2: Comparing House Appropriations Committee and S&I Salary Budget, CY 1972



³⁰ Analysis of GAO’s *Annual Report of the Comptroller General*. Volume 2. (1971-2012).

³¹ Author interviews. “A wise tool they would use at S&I...was to bring in either former full time S&I staff who had retired...or they would contract with [people] they needed on a given subject for a particular investigation. So that independent contractor tool was a huge part of S&I personnel when it functioned well.”

Anonymity

For Chairman Cannon, objectivity meant facts on paper. “The investigators receive written assignments and make written reports,” Cannon said of the S&I staff, “no member of the staff has ever been in my office” (Cannon 1943b). A passion for anonymity came to define S&I’s distinctive organizational character, reinforcing boundaries that insulated its authority as a source of nonpartisan, “at-a-distance” intelligence. Amid the “pervasive uncertainty” characterizing oversight of agency expenditures Fenno (1966: 683) observes, “The agencies’ dominant concern seems to be for a high degree of predictability or certainty in their Committee relations,” continuing, “Conversely, the manipulation of uncertainty is a key weapon in the hands of the Committee” (Fenno 1966: 273). One bureau chief is quoted:

They come down here and they are like the Gestapo. We don’t know what they are doing. Then we go to the hearing and they present the evidence. We don’t know what evidence they have against us or what information they have. It’s a Russian-like inquisition (Fenno 1966: 284).

Another official complains, “It’s like a criminal investigation. You are confronted by evidence you can’t see from investigators you don’t know...” (Fenno 1966: 284). S&I’s rotating cadre of faceless investigators shifted the balance of uncertainty, supplying evidence agency officials had not seen from investigators they did not know.³² From the beginning, S&I staff had a reputation for rooting out unspent or misused agency appropriations (Harris 1964; Jensen 1943). S&I staff “scrubbed” budgets for unobligated funds and searched for “soft spots in a budget request.” In 2011, S&I investigators were described making detailed reviews of agency spending in reports

³² Of its secrecy, one former S&I staffer observes, “that was a result of FBI culture... They didn’t want a lot of visibility into the particular investigations they were conducting because people are generally likely to be more forthcoming if something is not in the front page of the newspaper... And that actually worked. Now, having said that, these are people who knew enough to know that it was the appropriations committee looking into it.”

deemed vital to subcommittee members and staff, noting, “their findings that often form the basis of recommended areas to reduce spending, protect spending levels or provide an increase” (Stanton 2011). Yet because secrecy and impersonalism made the S&I staff virtually invisible, the question remains: What did S&I oversight actually look like?

Appendix B describes a digital archive of S&I study titles, tasking directives, reports, and related documents. While documenting only a small fraction of S&I studies, this sample nonetheless reveals their breadth across issues and specializations, from investigations into government land acquisitions and maintenance of military installations to investigations of EEOC; from public welfare programs in DC to pollution control. Collated sets of S&I reports for calendar years 1969 and 1972 were identified and scanned, permitting unique visibility into those years.³³ Of the 36 S&I reports from those two years, about half examine DOD programs, military installations, and land acquisitions. Others examined environmental and public health issues, trade, technology, social policy, and civil rights. To date, 49 other S&I reports have been identified, which were either published under committee rules in the Congressional Record or accessed through archival sources. A 1958 report analyzing ballistic missile testing data was prepared in classified and unclassified sections (S&I Staff 1958). A 1960 S&I study delivers on-the-ground assessments from unnamed sources calling a proposed pier installation, “premature in view of the problem of landslides in the area” (S&I Staff 1960). A 1963 study investigates the importation of livestock and meat products over 10 years (S&I Staff 1963). A number of studies evaluate program design and implementation, like a 2005 study evaluating the

³³ Documents were accessed and scanned into digital files at the National Archives Center for Legislative Archives in Washington, DC. It is not clear why only these years are available. These are “50-year files,” meaning access is restricted for 50-years. Because the front of every S&I report states, “Not for Release Until Authorized th the Committee,” access was granted with approval from the House Clerk’s Office.

FBI's Virtual Case File system (Surveys and Investigations Staff 2005). Others, like a 1984 study compiling reports about DoD procurement practices, look more like a CRS report (S&I Staff 1984). The two constants across reports are a cover page announcing the report is not for release without committee approval and an authoritative, at-a-distance tone, often referencing third-person assessments of "the investigative staff."

S&I's short-term staffing and culture of impersonalism buffered investigators from political distractions and enabled a changing mix of experts, but they also insulated its investigators from feedback. By long-standing policy, S&I reports were not altered after they were delivered. Anecdotally, some studies deemed useless were simply filed in the trash. Some said its investigators fell out-of-step. One former contractor acknowledged S&I had developed a reputation for "make work," noting some people thought, "What they were doing is taking care of old FBI guys" (Dennis 2006). And little countered this narrative. Impersonalism prevented the S&I staff from developing an identity and reputation that reached beyond a few Hill offices. That was Cannon's design. Cannon designed an instrument not an institution. Consequently, amidst growing turbulence, S&I lacked bureaucratic resilience.

Neutrality

For Chairman Cannon, FBI special agents were collectors of authoritative facts whose professional status transcended bureaucracy. "Does the gentleman charge that an FBI man is a bureaucrat?" Cannon once snapped when challenged on the House floor, "Nobody has ever charged that the Director or any of the staff or any of his investigators are bureaucrats" (Fenno

1966: 375).³⁴ Hoover's FBI built a powerful institutional identity by owning facts that solved crimes, made arrests, and demonstrated the Bureau's accomplishments (Wilson 1978: 171, 213; 1989: 62). At the agency's boundaries, Hoover's FBI agents conformed to rigorously defined roles, dressed in "conservative, business-like" attire and conducted themselves, "in an orderly conventional manner" (Wilson 1978: 26). The Bureau's power reached beyond formal authority during the Hoover years, creating an unrivaled degree of jurisdictional autonomy by integrating a well-specified professional role, a strong sense of mission, and a resonant public image (Carpenter 2002; Carpenter and Krause 2012; Wilson 1989). By the time of Hoover's death in 1972, however, waves of revelations had undermined its authority as a neutral arbiter of facts (Powers 1987; Theoharis 2004; Theoharis and Cox 1988). Former FBI Agent Richard Ash later recalled:

[W]e were in an era where people, including the Congress of the United States, started delving into and making issues with a lot of the activities that the FBI had been involved in in the past. Things that they would have never delved into as long as Hoover was there. But there were people who had gripes and were trying to make political hay out of surfacing what they described as misdeeds of the FBI (Ash 2004).

Responding to proposed reforms limiting the FBI's independence, Agent Ash wrote a 1972 letter to Attorney General L. Patrick Gray excerpted below:

The esteem of the FBI and public respect has been attained by our achievements and our record as an unbiased, independent, professional, efficient, apolitical agency. Our strength has been the acceptance of the FBI by the over-all constituency, the grass roots, the heartland of American society. These people expect and want the FBI to continue to serve the American people as hard hitting, indefatigable, efficient, trustworthy group of men. Over the years, in my contacts with the public, it appears there is an overwhelming opinion that the people have hoped and prayed that the FBI will continue as an independent agency. It has long been their fear that after J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI will be manipulated by the forces many of these people fear: intellectuals, academicians, sociologists, politicians and, believe it or not, lawyers (Ash 1972).

³⁴Cannon separately employed the metaphor of a judge in describing the professionalism of both FBI agents and HAC members (Fenno 1966: 375; Fenno 1973: 166).

Agent Ash’s commitment to the Bureau’s integrity echoes mythologies of nonpartisanship and objectivity that permeated 20th Century government administration (Dickinson and Rudalevige 2004; Portillo, Humphrey, and Bearfield 2022; Sweeting and Haupt 2024; West 2005), bounding together organizational commitments and bureaucratic turf (Wilson 1989: 167-8). But, changes in the social and political environment, punctuated by the 1975 investigations of the Church and Pike Committees (Johnson 2004, 2014), complicated the Bureau’s reputation for neutrality.

S&I’s alliance with GAO provided an infusion of neutral expertise at peak demand. More than a staffing resource, GAO became a normative model for studies deemed more rigorous. GAO’s embrace of program evaluation and management performance expanded the scope and impact of its oversight activities. “After a half-century of near anonymity, the General Accounting Office - Congress’s fiscal FBI - has begun to wield enormous influence on the performance of government agencies,” a 1973 *Washington Post* profile reported (Mouat 1973: K2).³⁵ Insulated from political pressure by the CG’s fixed-term, GAO developed a reputation for nonpartisan, fact-based reports (Kennedy 2023).³⁶

GAO veterans remember a stint with S&I offered welcome contrasts. S&I was less hierarchical and more agile. “It’s exactly the same kind of work GAO does, but quicker fuse,” one remembers, noting, “GAO has a very structured system...but S&I was more intimate. You could just go in, talk to people, and get things done.” S&I carried prestige and power. The same former staffer remembers, “your access is much better than GAO...they get resisted all the time,

³⁵ Among those voicing caution about the risks of embracing program budgeting and evaluation was House Appropriations Chairman George Mahon, who worried that to, “drag the GAO into the policy area,” might get it, “tangled and mangled politically,” and erode its reputation for impartial analysis (Rourke 1978: 455).

³⁶ Mosher’s (1983) comparison of GAO and OMB the organizational consequences of the CG’s fixed term is consistent with recent efforts to formalize agency independence (Selin 2015).

and what GAO says is not as consequential. If you went back to the committee, said these guys are not cooperating. That could have a budget effect immediately. And they knew it, so they were very obsequious, so that, when you engage agencies, they're more responsive. In some ways, they're afraid...you know, there's these guys coming in, they could do you some harm."³⁷ Unlike GAO's published reports, S&I's were seen only by subcommittee members. "The report was delivered to the Committee... and that was all you ever heard of it," one staffer remembers.³⁸ Confidentiality generally promoted agency cooperation.

When S&I reports went public that equilibrium was disrupted, sometimes seriously annoying agency officials. S&I's 1983 report critical of Interior's leasing of government coal reserves, was called "a poorly prepared and deceitful political document" that was "replete with factual errors" by an aide to Secretary Watt (Carruthers 1983; Russakoff 1983a, 1983c, 1983b). A 1984 S&I report critical of military readiness prompted Secretary of Defense Weinberger to call a news conference where he claimed it included "serious and potentially dangerous" misstatements (Halloran 1984). In 1985 appropriations committee testimony, FEMA Director Louis Giuffrida responded to an S&I report critical of FEMA training programs, insisting that, "there are items which are not, in fact, correct" in the report and agency analysts took "exception to those figures," saying of one estimate, "we don't know where that number came from." Chair

³⁷ Another remembers, "The GAO credentials, when you went to talk to someone in the executive branch, they could care less about GAO. They didn't give you much respect at all. But when you did work for the House Appropriations Committee, that you really had respect, when you went to talk to these people, they were much more cooperative than they were than if you had come from GAO to do it."

³⁸ One former S&I staffer recalls that for many years the secrecy of S&I reports was protected by strict limits on the number of report copies. "We produced hard copy reports and there was a specific number that was sent to the members. At one point it was only the chair and ranking. Later the subcommittee chair and ranking insisted on getting copies—so four copies. That was it." This was a committee policy without exceptions. "These investigations, these products were for the use and property of the committee...the answer was always the same: no, you don't get to see it. The committee considered the reports internal 'for our use only, period, end of story.'" Another recalls, "The reports were not released. The committee had to choose to release them - and to my knowledge, they never did. I don't think you have a snowball's chance of getting them."

Boland responded, “that is what they all say when they appear before us” (U.S. House of Representatives 1985). When a 1988 S&I report on the Army’s \$700 million VIABLE program leaked, one Army official erupted at “those fools” in Congress and dismissed S&I investigators as “turkeys... hired to vindicate the prejudices of the staffers that sent them” (Bass 1988). Evolved to serve decentralized subcommittees, serving national agendas of increasingly powerful party caucuses increased pressure on S&I’s model of neutral competence.

In 1995, Republicans took the House, having pledged to cut congressional staff by one third, a promise that meant a 39 percent reduction of GAO’s workforce (Kaiser 2007: 14). Service to S&I provided GAO no leverage. To the contrary, Kosar (2020: 138) sees, “political punishment meted out by Republicans,” because GAO had been too useful to Democratic committee chairs. The Gingrich Republicans nationalized congressional reform as a partisan project, portraying House Democrats as unfair and corrupt to demanding procedural changes that centralized power in party leaders (Evans and Oleszek 1997: 27, 33, 35, 43). Term limits for committee chairmen and other rules changes made subcommittees more dependent on party leadership. As cooperation between partisan committee and subcommittee leaders became harder to sustain, S&I’s four-signature tasking system became increasingly untenable.

Partisan conflict over S&I reached a dramatic public crescendo during the single term of Appropriations Chairman Jerry Lewis. In 2005, Republicans selected Lewis to succeed term-limited Chairman Bill Young through a “strenuous vetting process” during which rivals were made to “jump through hoops,” as one aide put it, pitching fellow partisans. His selection represented, “a dramatic consolidation of power in the hands of a few key leadership types,”

according to former committee staffer Scott Lilly. The once independent cardinals were now, “safely under the sway of the House leadership” (Morgan 2005).

From 1999 to 2005, Lewis chaired the defense subcommittee, overseeing a wartime DoD amid rising Democratic criticism. Historically, the defense subcommittee had been the dominant requester of S&I studies, but its use of S&I fell precipitously during his tenure. S&I completed 53 studies for the defense subcommittee, almost 70 percent of all S&I titles during 105th Congress (1997–1999). In Lewis’s final term as chair, the defense subcommittee tasked only 7 studies, accounting for less than 20 percent of S&I titles. Brewing partisan conflict surfaced in 2004, when ranking member Representative David Obey sought to initiate an S&I investigation of the DoD’s “Office of Special Plans.” Having secured the signatures of Republican Committee Chairman Young and subcommittee ranking member John Murtha, Obey’s tasking directive required one additional signature, but Chairman Lewis refused to sign (Cohn 2005; Obey 2005). It was a dispute that carried into the 109th Congress with committee relations already strained.

In April 2005, Chairman Lewis’s term got off to a contentious start when a memo authored by new S&I Staff Director Robert Pearre leaked to the press. “I want impact! I want blood on the floor!” Pearre’s memo exclaimed, continuing:

The first rule is: There aren’t any ‘good’ programs anywhere in this government...They are all chock full of fraud, waste and abuse; frittering away millions in appropriated funds. Believe it, focus on it, find it, and report on it...Second rule is: All program managers should be considered liars...Never buy into their line of BS; never drink the Kool Aid they’re serving (Cohn 2005).

Committee clerk Frank Cushing seemed unfazed by the publication of an internal committee document with such overheated rhetoric, noting, “There was a feeling at the top level that some of the investigators were not pursuing their work with the intensity that has been traditional. It

was meant as a wake-up call, a kick in the pants” (Cohn 2005). One message was clear, Chairman Lewis would seek to expand S&I’s public profile.

In September 2005, Chairman Lewis announced that S&I would initiate a review of federal disaster assistance following Hurricane Katrina and the results would be made public.³⁹ A bold departure from S&I’s tradition, Lewis’s announcement elicited a swift rebuke from ranking member Obey. Labelling Lewis’s assertion, “simply wrong,” Obey’s press statement pointedly revisited Lewis’s decision to block the 2004 S&I investigation of DoD, “despite the fact it had the support of then Committee Chairman Bill Young” (Cohn 2005; Obey 2005). S&I’s system of nonpartisan tasking directives requiring the four signatures of chairmen and ranking minority members began to buckle under the stress of partisan acrimony.

Then, on October 16, 2006, Chairman Lewis dismissed the entire S&I staff en masse. Weeks before the electoral defeat that cost Republicans control of the House, Chairman Lewis’s action brought briefly into public view committee tensions that had been intensifying for years. Details surrounding this unprecedented decision remain ambiguous, but the public response from former S&I staff was not. “It reeks, it really does,” retired FBI agent and former S&I Director Joseph Stehr told *Congressional Quarterly*, “It just amazes me that after 60 some years, that just with the swipe of a pencil the thing could all go away.” Dismissing the S&I staff, “eviscerates the investigatory function. There is little if any ability to do any oversight,” another investigator told *CQ* (Dennis 2006). Committee spokesman John Scofield shrugged off the controversy. “Frankly, the work we’ve been getting as of late has not been that good,” adding, “there is nothing sinister going on.” Scofield continued, “This is the time of year we decide to renew or not renew

³⁹ Its Katrina investigation provoked a rare public dispute over S&I access to agency information. The Committee’s FY2007 DHS appropriations report alleges DHS’s General Counsel had obstructed S&I’s study, warning continued “obfuscation” could have consequences for the office’s budget (H. Rep. 109-476, 2006).

contracts and we are deciding how best to use our resources. We are doing it in full concert with the Democrats.” But even defense subcommittee Chairman Bill Young appeared puzzled, telling reporters had no “inkling” before the announcement. S&I’s investigations save taxpayers, “billions of dollars of Defense budget savings,” each year Chairman Young countered, “I thought they did a good job...They really know what they are doing” (Dennis 2006). Critics cast Lewis’s action as an attempt to obstruct independent oversight.⁴⁰ But Chairman Cannon designed the S&I staff to be easily dismissed. Without “opportunities to establish cordial relations,” Cannon (1943a) said S&I’s staff on rotation would act as, “new faces and new brooms - and they sweep clean.” In 2006, Chairman Lewis swept S&I clean.

In 2007, Committee Chairman David Obey undertook to rebuild S&I. Former staff were rehired and within months were once again working on tasking directives. By 2011, Chairman Hal Rogers told *Roll Call* that S&I was “doing more with less,” still providing vital, “background information,” enabling subcommittee members, “to do their actual work” (Stanton 2011). During the 112th Congress (2011-2012), S&I completed 78 studies tasked by 10 of 12 Appropriations subcommittees with titles including the names of 10 cabinet and more than 20 independent agencies, bureaus, and other government organizations.⁴¹ S&I completed more than 120 study titles during the 113th Congress (2013-14), rivaling any period in half a century.

During this period, S&I staff also initiated what became its most durable work product, general provisions reviews. General provisions are non-funding sections typically at the

⁴⁰ One storyline ties the dismissal to Speaker Hastert’s office. S&I investigators probing Capitol security contracts claimed Hastert’s chief counsel, “hindered” a probe into alleged “bid-rigging and kickbacks” on Capitol Hill security, engaged in “screaming matches,” and ultimately ordered them to “get out of there by sundown” (CREW 2006; Dennis 2006; Lilly 2006).

⁴¹ About 15 permanent S&I staff accounted for almost 10 percent of Appropriations Committee staff salaries during the 112th Congress (U.S. House Appropriations Committee 2011). In 2013, the committee recruited for S&I’s Professional Development Program (Rogers and Lowey 2013).

beginning of appropriations bills imposing restrictions on agency spending (CRS, 2010). One former staffer describes general provisions as important but little understood, functioning like quasi-authorization language, “the appropriators become authorizers.” S&I provisions reviews went “line by line in all these general provisions that have been appearing in appropriations bills for decades,” reconstructing their “inception, continuance, edits and changes,” and flagging provisions that were “controversial because the language is so poor...the congressional language is so ambiguous,” or that had been “on the books...for good God 60 years and no longer was applicable.”⁴² Provisions reviews “stuck because the committee was pleased with the quality of the work,” and a standing 2011 full-committee tasking directive meant that “anytime you didn’t have another directive to work on, you could work on that.” But, by 2020, “that was all they were doing,” another former staffer recalls.

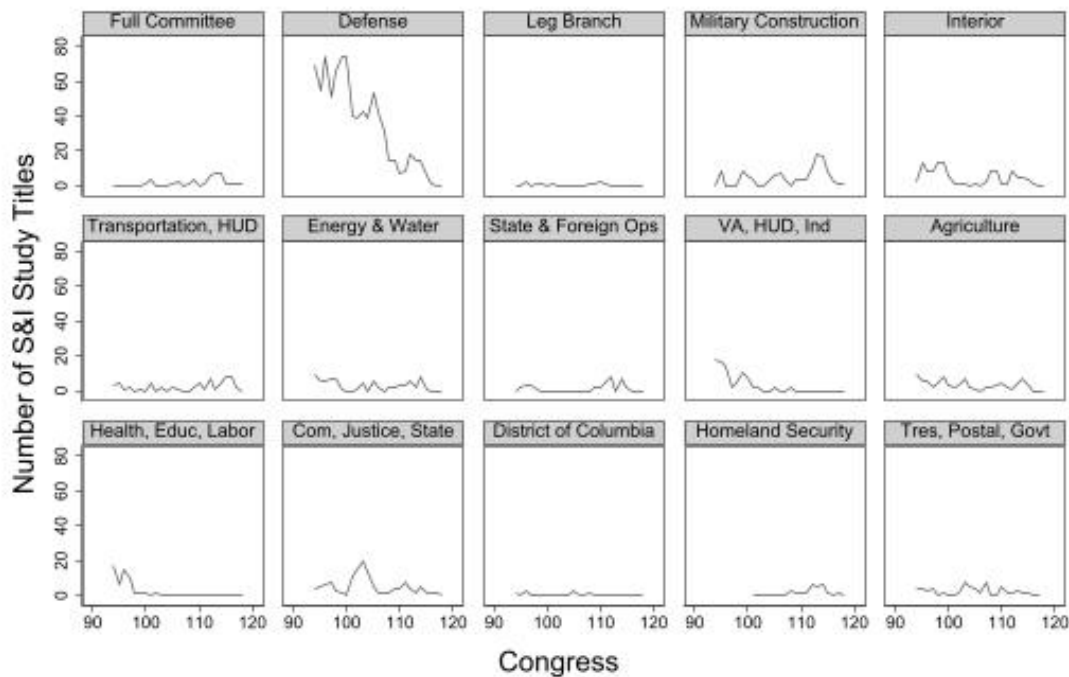
S&I study titles declined dramatically under both Republican Chairs Rogers and Ferlinghuysen and under Democrats Lowey and DeLauro. The committee listed only 2 S&I titles in the 118th (2023-2024). Between 2011 and 2024, S&I staff dropped from 15 to 3. In December 2024, the remaining staff were terminated. No decision to defund S&I was announced.

Anecdotally, however, S&I’s bipartisan tasking directives and nonpartisan oversight were not front office priorities. As power in the House shifted from committees to party caucuses, S&I’s institutional patrons, the subcommittee chairman and ranking members, were transformed into disciplined partisan agents. Diminished subcommittee autonomy and growing party divisions made securing the four bipartisan signatures on S&I tasking letters increasingly difficult. One

⁴² Former staff remember the impetus for the development of general provisions work came from periods when S&I staff waited for new signed directives, recalling that the director went to the committee and proposed that “while we’re waiting for these directives, we can do CRS-style research for things you guys need to take a look into.”

former staffer says bluntly, “When the two parties would no longer sign the directive, that's the end of your investigation. It doesn't start. There is no investigation.”

Figure 3. S&I Investigations by Requesting Subcommittee, 1975-2024



Source: House Appropriations Committee Report of Committee Activities, 94th-118th Congress

4. Analyzing S&I Studies by Appropriations Subcommittee

Did widening partisan divisions hinder bipartisan subcommittee cooperation on S&I tasking directives? Study titles published by the committee permit an empirical test.

Model Variables and Expectations

Table 1 summarizes model variables. The dependent variable, *S&I Study Titles*, is a count of titles listed in the Report of Committee Activities by appropriations subcommittee.⁴³ *Congress* takes the value of the congressional term from 94 to 118. **Figure 3** depicts *Study Titles* by subcommittee by *Congress*, revealing declining S&I activity varied. The Defense, Commerce, and Interior subcommittees initiated dozens of studies, for example, while the last S&I study tasked by the Health, Education, and Labor subcommittee was in 1993. Based on the overall downward trajectory in these figures, *Congress* should negatively correlate with *S&I Titles*.

Chair-Ranking Difference is an index of three variables measuring ideological and behavioral conflict between subcommittee chair and ranking members. *Chair-Ranking Vote Disagreement* is the percent of all recorded roll-call votes when chair and ranking members' votes are different (Lewis et al. 2025). *Chair-Ranking Ideology Difference* is the absolute difference of the first dimension DW NOMINATE ideology scores of the subcommittee chair and ranking member (J. B. Lewis et al. 2025). *Chair-Ranking Presidential Support Difference* is the absolute difference of the presidential support scores of the subcommittee chair and ranking member (J. Lewis 2023). If a growing partisan divide prevented bipartisan subcommittee cooperation on S&I oversight then *Chair-Ranking Difference* should be associated with fewer *S&I Study Titles*.

Divided is a dichotomous variable that equals 1 when party control is divided between House of Representatives and presidency. Divided control activates partisan incentives. The

⁴³ Changing subcommittee names and jurisdictions, particularly subcommittee reorganizations during the 108th-110th Congress, required adjustments (Tollestrup 2013). Policy Agendas Project subcommittee codes were used (Jones et al. 2023).

House majority may prioritize oversight for partisan signaling rather than under-the-radar fact-finding (Kornberg 2023; Kriner and Schickler 2016) and minority subcommittee members may seek to soften confrontational questioning or resist unwelcome scrutiny of co-partisan administration appointees (Eldes, Fong, and Lowande 2024; Lee 2013; Parker and Dull 2013). *Divided* should be associated with fewer *S&I Study Titles*.

Appropriations vs President is the percent difference between the appropriations bill passed by the subcommittee and the president's budget request. If appropriations and oversight are complementary instruments of congressional control (Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991) and S&I studies are used to identify cuts, reallocations, or conditions on spending then greater divergence between the president's request and the subcommittee's bill should be positively associated with *S&I Study Titles*.⁴⁴

Appropriations (z-score) measures the standardized (\$) amount of the subcommittee appropriations legislation reported in the Report of Committee Activities. All else equal, if legislators tend to allocate scarce oversight capacity toward more complex, high-stakes programs (Aberbach 2001; Clinton, Lewis, and Selin 2014; MacDonald and McGrath 2016), subcommittees with larger jurisdictions should positively correlate with S&I oversight.

Subcommittee Sessions is the number of subcommittee hearing sessions by congressional term, drawn from Policy Agendas Project Congressional Hearings data (Jones et al. 2023). If S&I studies operate as complementary oversight instruments (Kennedy 2023; Lewallen 2020; Selin and Moore 2023), hearings should be positively correlated with *S&I Study Titles*.

⁴⁴ Cha and Rogowski (2025) show greater divergence from presidential requests as relevant appropriations subcommittee becomes more ideologically distant from the president.

Estimation

The data are panel structure and the dependent variable is a non-negative count outcome characterized by overdispersion so models are specified using conditional fixed-effects negative binomial regression. Fixed effects for 13 subcommittee and 24 congressional terms absorb cross-sectional and temporal heterogeneity, so these models analyze within-subcommittee changes over time.⁴⁵ Standard errors are clustered by subcommittee.

Model Results

Table 2 reports model results. *Chair-Ranking Difference* is negative as expected in Model 1, but the effect is small and short of statistical significance. *Divided* is associated with a large, negative, statistically significant effect. While on average S&I activity is roughly similar across divided and unified congresses; when comparing within subcommittees over time using *Congress* fixed-effects, divided government is associated with substantially fewer *S&I Titles*.

Covariates *Appropriations vs. President* and *Appropriations (z-score)* are positive as expected but not statistically significant when fixed effects are included. *Subcommittee Sessions* is positively associated with *S&I Study Titles*, as anticipated, meaning S&I's oversight out of sight correlated with public facing oversight activities. Congress fixed effects, which are reported in the appendix, reflect higher S&I activity early in the time series and increasingly negative effects in later terms, mirroring the downward trajectory of S&I Study Titles in Figures 1 and 3.

⁴⁵ Subcommittee fixed effects are incorporated using the conditional estimator, while congressional-term fixed effects are added as indicator variables. Alternative specifications are included in the appendix.

Model 2 incorporates *Difference x Divided*, an interaction between *Chair-Ranking Difference* and *Divided Government* testing the interplay between subcommittee partisan disagreement and partisan alignment of the House and the presidency. *Chair-Ranking Difference* becomes positive and significant when the interaction term is included. During periods of unified party control, differences between subcommittee chair and ranking members are positively associated with *Study Titles*, but that effect is overtaken when partisan control is divided. *Divided* and the interaction term *Difference x Divided* are both significant and negative. *Appropriations (z-score)* and *Appropriations vs. President* remain positive but nonsignificant. *Subcommittee Sessions* again produces a small but statistically significant positive effect, meaning public-facing subcommittee hearings and under-the-radar S&I investigations are correlated. Congress fixed effects again reflect declining S&I oversight over time.

Figure 4 plots predicted *S&I Study Titles* by *Chair-Ranking Difference* under unified and divided partisan control of the House and the presidency, holding other covariates at observed means. Predictions are calculated for the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies subcommittee across values of *Chair–Ranking Difference* two standard deviations below and above the subcommittee mean. Under *Unified* partisan control (blue), the expected number of *Study Titles* rises as disagreement between subcommittee chair and ranking member widens, from about 8 to more than 20 predicted titles. Under divided party control (red line), the pattern reverses: divided government is associated with fewer S&I titles overall and a negative slope, declining from about 4 to 2 titles as disagreement increases. The effect of *Chair–Ranking Difference* is conditioned by partisan institutional alignment between House and the presidency. Under divided party control, in particular, majority members may favor visible forms of

oversight like hearings that are under the unilateral control of the chair, while minority members may wish to shield co-partisans in the executive branch from unwelcome scrutiny.

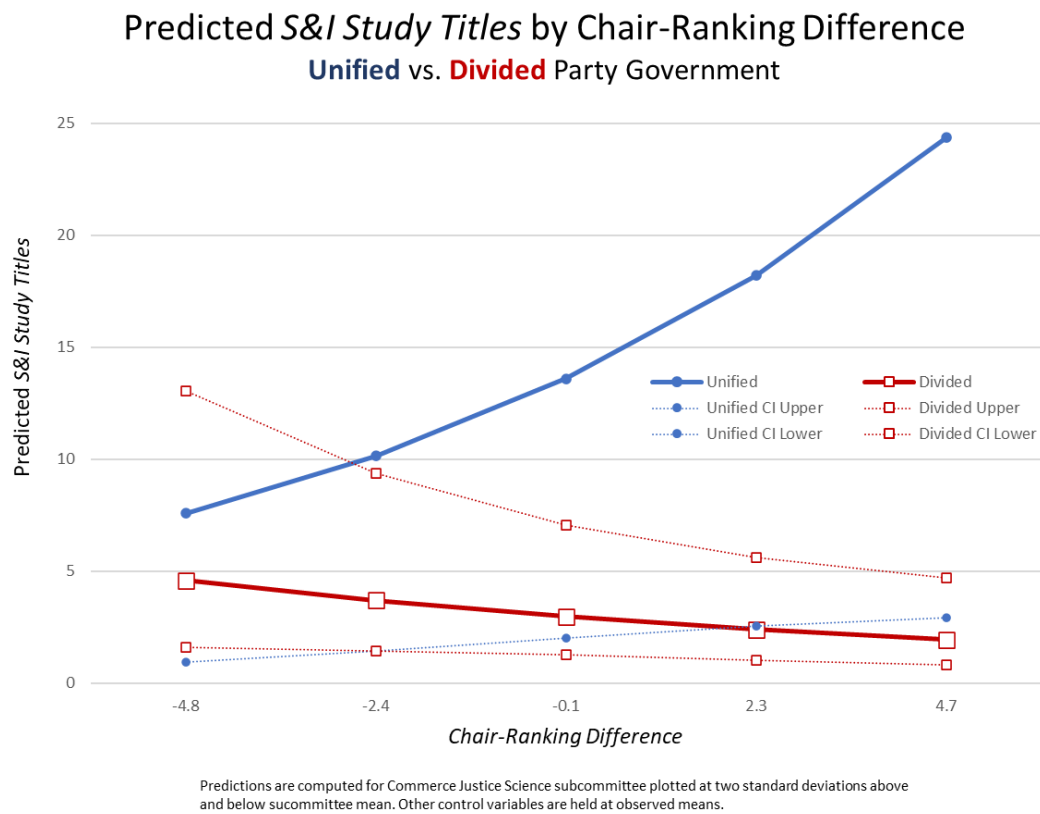
Table 1: Variable Definitions and Descriptive Statistics

Variable Definitions and Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean (SD)	Min Max	Definition
<i>S&I Study Titles</i>	4.69 (10.88)	0 74	Count of S&I study titles listed in the Appropriations Report on Committee Activities, by subcommittee.
<i>Congress</i>	106.16 (7.18)	94 118	Congressional term, count from 94th to 118th Congress.
<i>Congressional Era</i>	2.10 (0.79)	1 3	Categorical variable measuring three time periods (1976-1988=1, 1989-2006=2, 2007-2024=3).
<i>Appropriations (z-score)</i>	-1.91e-07 (.96)	-0.76 3.15	Standard score of the total dollar amount (\$) of the appropriations bill passed by the House subcommittee.
<i>Appropriations vs. President</i>	-.05 (.70)	-12.09 1.21	Percent difference between enacted subcommittee appropriations bill and president's budget request.
<i>Subcommittee Sessions</i>	59.40 (55.97)	0 262	Number of subcommittee hearing sessions (Jones et al. 2023).
<i>Chair-Ranking Difference</i>	-0.51 (9.18)	-35.89 27.61	Index of subcommittee Chair and Ranking member disagreement: difference of first dimension DW NOMINATE ideology score (Lewis et al. 2024), difference of presidential support score (J. Lewis 2023), and percent of roll-call votes that disagree (J. B. Lewis et al. 2025).
<i>Divided</i>	0.60 (0.49)	0 1	Divided party control between House and presidency = 1, Unified party control of House and presidency = 0.

Table 2: Analyzing S&I Study Titles, 1975-2024

Analyzing S&I Study Titles by Subcommittee, 95th-118th Congress (1975-2024)		
	Model 1 Coefficient (SE)	Model 2 Coefficient (SE)
<i>Appropriations (z-score)</i>	0.109 (0.116)	0.106 (0.116)
<i>Appropriations Difference</i>	0.451 (0.351)	0.409 (0.355)
<i>Subcommittee Sessions</i>	0.00449** (0.00198)	0.00405** (0.00196)
<i>Chair-Ranking Difference</i>	-0.0019 (0.0426)	0.132* (0.074)
<i>Divided Government</i>	-1.289** (0.634)	-1.564** (0.632)
<i>Interaction: Difference × Divided</i>	—	-0.204** (0.092)
N	256	256
Log Likelihood	-524.01	-521.58
Dependent variable: <i>S&I Study Titles</i> . Conditional negative binomial estimates with Congress and subcommittee fixed effects. Groups = 13 House Appropriations subcommittees. Observations per group = 9-23. Standard errors in parentheses. * = p < .10, ** = p < .05.		

Figure 4: Predicted S&I Study Titles by Subcommittee Difference: Unified vs Divided Government



5. Conclusion

The House Appropriations Committee Surveys & Investigations staff was quietly reorganized out of existence in December 2024. So what? This article reconstructs events from S&I's mostly forgotten history using qualitative and quantitative data drawn from committee reports, archival documents, and research interviews searching for answers. Section 2 describes Chairman Clarence Cannon's 1943 design for gathering the "sound information" needed by congressional appropriators built on four pillars: S&I staff were invisible, ad hoc, at-a-distance, nonpartisan investigators. Section 3 traces how those pillars shaped S&I's growth and institutionalization. Created to produce no publicity, S&I's work remained largely invisible, yet a few episodes reveal S&I as a powerful latent factor in committee oversight. In 1947, Chairman Taber and Director Lee demonstrated S&I's capacity for public communication. In 2006, Chairman Lewis found its capacity more difficult to leverage. Between spasms of publicity, S&I performed decades of high-stakes, low-visibility investigations. Cannon designed S&I for flexible staffing then used it to secure a decades-long alliance with Hoover's FBI. Impersonalism came to define S&I's distinctive character and reputation, but a culture of facelessness and detachment ultimately reduced its institutional resilience in the face of growing environmental conflict. Many observers believe that its system of tasking directives requiring four signatures from two parties, Cannon's device to ensure nonpartisan investigations, ultimately did S&I in.

Section 4 tests the hypothesis that growing partisan divisions contributed to the decline of S&I studies using time-series analysis of S&I Study Titles across House Appropriations subcommittees from 1975 to 2024. Results suggest shifting partisan alignments condition when subcommittees initiate S&I oversight. Periods of divided government are associated with fewer

S&I Study Titles overall, signalling reduced bipartisan cooperation on S&I tasking directives.

Subcommittee partisan divisions, measured by *Chair-Ranking Difference*, show that while under unified government, greater disagreement is associated with more S&I oversight, under divided government, disagreement is associated with significantly fewer S&I studies. Limitations of the study abound. *S&I Study Titles* are visible but incomplete, and it is clear at least some classified studies were omitted. The time series is also left-truncated, so the models capture late S&I rather than its formative decades. All of the covariates merit refinement, particularly the measure of public-facing oversight *Subcommittee Sessions*. Using a time-series design with many potentially confounding factors, misspecification and omitted variables remain valid concerns.

The House Appropriations Committee is a monument of institutional design built on jurisdictional turf defined by bargaining under uncertainty. The history of the appropriations committees is governed by layering and fragmenting institutional orders, as appropriators wielded authority as agents of the House chamber as a whole, leaders, parties, committees, peers based on a reputation for expert discipline (Caiden 2020; Stith 1988). Appropriations Chairman Cannon and his successors built a bulwark of authoritative facts protecting taxpayers, tightening Congress's purse string, and maintaining the integrity of the House as an institution. This article reconstructs an overlooked chapter in that story. A final section considers how S&I's history of congressional oversight out of sight, conducting investigations outside of public view on behalf of the appropriations subcommittees, contributes to scholarship.

Oversight: Overlooked, Out of Sight, and Over

Why does congressional oversight so often appear weak or ineffective? McCubbins and Schwartz's (1984), "Oversight Overlooked," answers that timeless question with an intuitive model and a memorable metaphor, contrasting centralized police patrol surveillance with decentralized, incentive-based fire alarms as instruments for reducing asymmetric information between principals and agents (Miller 2005). "Oversight Overlooked" presented both a model of oversight and a model for how congressional oversight should be studied, an approach taken up in generative research programs and undergraduate government classes. Contrasting police patrols and fire alarms became the textbook model (CRS 2022). Read in hindsight, however, it is hard to miss the article's normative frame. What looks like abdication is reinterpreted as rational outsourcing to latent capacities, outsourcing fire alarm oversight to third parties.⁴⁶ Those warnings of institutional erosion today seem prescient (Glastris and Edwards 2014; LaPira, Drutman, Kosar 2021).

Models create blind spots. The resilience and ultimately the decline of the S&I staff followed from its function as neither police patrol nor fire alarm. S&I performed oversight out of sight. Its investigations were unobserved by institutional design. S&I's stories are reconstructed using historical narrative to build explanations in context (Abbott 2001: 129-160; Pentland 1999). As an organizing frame, this article draws on Andrew Abbott's (2004:146) *Methods of Discovery*, which describes four narrative heuristics or strategies using events and stories in

⁴⁶ McCubbins made clear his skepticism of abdicationist diagnoses of congressional decline (McCubbins 1999).

social science research: narrative situates abstracted explanations; infuses static models with movement; illuminates the overlooked and unexpected; and promotes counterfactual inference.

First, S&I's historical narrative of oversight out of sight illuminates the overlooked and reveals unexpected consequences. Designed in 1943 to produce confidential facts that could not be politicized, S&I investigators in 1947 produced the Lee List, later implicated in among the most notorious lies of the 20th Century. A powerful congressional capacity left latent under decades of Democratic dominance became manifest when controlled by House Republicans opposing a Democratic administration. Among students of Congress, Ogul's (1976) distinction between formal and latent equates latent with informal. S&I reports were formal but deliberately unobserved, a latent function (Merton 1968: 116-20). Fenno's (1966, 1973) appropriators empowered by anonymous staff and McCubbins and Schwartz's (1984) fire alarm model likewise turn on functionalist reasoning about latent capacities. While in 1943 Cannon said of S&I it, "cannot be used for the publicizing or aggrandizement of the chairman or any member of the committee," its record reveals an ironic history of invisibility with exceptions.⁴⁷

The Levin Center's Congressional Oversight Records Database (CORD) enriches empirical research on congressional oversight. Committee Report of Committee Activities included in the CORD, long an under exploited resource, are complemented in this article with additional evidence to illuminate a forgotten chapter in the history of congressional oversight. The S&I reports surfaced by this study fit the stated criteria for inclusion in the CORD, but are omitted because they were not made publicly available. S&I reports constitute data that are missing by design. Empirical research on congressional oversight often draws inferences from

⁴⁷ Nelson, drawing on Niebuhr, describes historical irony as an "apparently fortuitous incongruity," between intentions and outcomes that is not fortuitous at all but is caused by a "hidden relationship" (Nelson 1982: 749; Niebuhr 1952).

artifacts and performative behaviors, leaning on sometimes unexamined assumptions about what is unobserved, latent, and missing. Recent scholarship on oversight as performance (Chafetz 2020; Kornberg 2023) invites reflection on what is meant to be seen and unseen.

Second, stories of S&I's evolution from a few FBI agents on loan to a GAO-infused oversight juggernaut show oversight institutions are not static but processual and changing. S&I was embodied and empowered by routines anchored in formal artifacts. S&I's tasking directives and reports functioned as "informally embedded formality," that appropriators did not need to "go behind," coordinating a dense ecology of informal expertise (Stinchcombe 2001). Yet S&I's design isolated its performance and, in the long run, constrained its adaptive capacity as House institutions were transformed through reforms of procedures, committees, and party leadership (Evans and Oleszek 1997: 3-4).

Third, stories of S&I's development and decline situate the design of congressional oversight institutions in time, contextualizing the politics of delegation and monitoring in the contingencies of 20th century state-building (Carpenter 2002; Dodd and Schott 1979; Wilson 1989). As government expansion and social change transformed oversight politics, S&I's ethic of anonymity became a defining "character," commitments that both enabled its distinct competence and bound it to particular practices, making it harder to adjust when environments shift.⁴⁸ As the locus of congressional activity shifted toward bureaucratic "fixit services" (Fiorina 1989: 45) and problem-focused, message-oriented hearings (Lewallen, Park, and Theriault 2024; Lewallen, Theriault, and Jones 2016), did S&I's invisible investigations fall out of fit with dominant incentives? Did its oversight reports no longer serve the demands of its clients? Did the

⁴⁸ Regarding organizational character (Dull 2010; Khademian 2002; Selznick 1957; Wilson 1989).

institutionalization of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) or growth of inspectors general and other oversight actors reduce the oversight demands placed on appropriators? How much did growing populist distrust and a long-standing cultural aversion to the administrative state contribute to S&I's demise?

Finally, S&I historical narratives prompt questions like: What, if anything, is lost when S&I's oversight out of sight is absent? Aaron Stockham's history of the alliance between Cannon and Hoover challenges a dominant historiography situating Hoover's power in the expanding scope of Cold War executive, arguing, "This focus on the FBI's relationship with the executive branch overlooks one important aspect behind the FBI's growing influence and power: its relationship with the legislative branch and, in particular, its dealings with the House Appropriations Committee" (Stockham 2013: 501). Without the alliance embodied in S&I, what might have been the implications for Hoover's unrivaled consolidation of bureaucratic autonomy? And, for students of congressional institutions, in the wake of S&I's silent demise, does it matter if its story is forgotten?

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