

An Objective Model and Methodology for Calculating Legislator Voting Records

Richard G. Brown
Colorado Public Policy Strategies
www.coloradopublicpolicystrategies.com

Copyright © Richard G. Brown

All rights reserved. No Part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Introduction	2
Part One: An Objective Evaluative Tool for Voters and Constituency Groups	3
Part Two: The Objective Mathematical Calculation of Voting Records	4
Critical Assumptions Underlying the Methodology	4
Not All Bills Are of Equal Importance – Weighting Importance	4
The Involvement of Legislators with a Bill Is Not Equal On All Bills at All Times..	5
Votes Count, Platitudes Do Not.....	6
Patterns of Voting Over Issues and Over Time	6
The Complete Picture.....	7
Using the Formulas within the Methodology	7
Criteria for Weighting the Importance of Bills	8
Criteria for Allocating Numeric Values to Legislator Actions on a Bill	8
Sponsorship: Prime and Co-Sponsorship.....	9
Committee Action: Amendments and Votes on a Bill.....	9
Third Reading Action: Amendments, Votes on Amendments and Final Vote.....	10
Reconciling Differences between the Houses: Consideration of 2 nd House Amendments and	
Readoption of Bill	10
Adhering or Receding on Bill	11
Consideration of Gubernatorial Veto.....	11
Tallying Arithmetic Vote Totals and Displaying Them for Review and Analysis.....	11
Aggregate Total: All Arithmetic Vote Totals for All Bills for All Legislators Stratified in	
Descending Order.....	11
Total Arithmetic Votes calculated on a Selected Subject Matter (e.g., taxation)	11
Total Arithmetic Votes Calculated on House Membership, Committee Membership, Party,	
Gender or Other Identifiable Criterion.....	12
Total Arithmetic Votes Displayed for an Individual Legislator by Session, Selected Subject	
Matter and Over Time (Multiple Sessions).....	12
Part Three: Using the Information Once It Is Compiled.....	12

Introduction

Colorado Public Policy Strategies has developed an objective model for tracking and analyzing legislator voting records. The model was developed for the exclusive use of Colorado Public Policy Strategies and its clients. This report is an explanation of the model, its methodology and its uses.

The 2007 Regular Session of the Colorado General Assembly convened with a record number of freshman legislators. The House of Representatives had 24 freshmen, which is 37% of the entire House membership. The State Senate welcomed 9 freshmen Senators, which is 26% of the Senate membership. Some of these Senate “freshmen” were not really freshmen since several were elected to the Senate following terms as Representatives, so they had knowledge and experience to rely upon. This unusually high number of freshmen was the result of a convergence of two Colorado political phenomena: Constitutionally limited terms of office and a voter uprising that saw several incumbent legislators removed from office. While the fickleness of the electorate may fluctuate from election to

election, term limits are a Constitutional constraint that is a strong destabilizing influence on the legislative branch.

The rapid turnover of legislators makes it very difficult to evaluate their votes. Prior to term limits, observers could keep track of voting patterns over a reasonably long and stable time period. With the rapid turnover, keeping such information has become problematic and highly unreliable. In addition, legislators have learned to “game” the term limits by strategically resigning before a term is up and allowing a handpicked or party endorsed successor to move into the vacancy through the appointment process. Under Colorado judicial decisions, the appointee is not penalized against the maximum number of years in office if he or she assumes a vacancy which is less than half of the term prescribed for the vacant office. The appointee can then run as an incumbent for his or her first full term in the office and subsequently run for reelection without violating the Constitution.

Not only is the forgoing problematic for voters, constituency groups and the media, other institutional constraints have begun to obscure legislators’ accountability for their votes. With the effects of campaign finance changes, restrictions on lobbying, the constitutionally limited number of calendar days the legislature can be in session, and the increasing isolation of legislators within the logistical system of the institution, it is exceedingly difficult to evaluate legislators when they are seeking campaign support or endorsement. There is virtually no meaningful way to determine accurately whether a legislator has been supportive or opposed to the best interests of a constituency group or the public. It is possible to track votes on a given bill, but there are obstacles to being able to portray that vote in context or over time.

Voting record evaluation tends to rely on anecdotal information and memory, each of which is highly unreliable. It is very often the case that using anecdotes (often little more than gossip) and memory results in an apologist rationalization for the legislator and the vote he or she cast rather than an objective evaluation of the legislator’s voting history and patterns.

The lack of an objective vote evaluation tool allows a legislator to take advantage of the idiosyncrasies inherent in the legislative process and too often to avoid true accountability for votes cast. Without having criteria and standards by which to evaluate votes, a vote against an issue of importance can simply be justified by “I didn’t know that it was that important – someone should have told me” or “Well, it was a leadership vote for the party.”

There is another reason for using an objective vote evaluation tool. It is a sad commentary on contemporary American politics that campaigns are increasingly brutal and are often little more than character assassinations of incumbents and candidates. The use of carefully distorted voting records has become rampant, and even when the attacks are shown to be frivolous or just wrong, the candidate has suffered substantial damage. An objective vote evaluation tool provides a valid and useful counter to negative advertising that distorts vote records.

Part One: An Objective Evaluative Tool for Voters and Constituency Groups

The model that has been developed and which is employed in this analysis is objective, nonpartisan and verifiable. It does not have any biases built into its formulas or results.

Many advocacy groups have used legislator voting “score” cards for many years. Most of them are distinctly, and probably intentionally, biased. Most often they are used by the group to skew the scoring either for or against a legislator to meet the advocacy goals and objectives of the group. The methodology used for this analysis is designed to avoid any bias; it is built upon straightforward interrelated sets of formulas using objective arithmetic values. It simply records and stratifies voting records. There is no component for explanation or rationale as to why a vote was cast the way it was. In a way, the methodology incorporates the philosophy expressed in the line uttered by Tommie Lee Jones to Harrison Ford in the movie “The Fugitive.” When Ford told Jones that he had not killed his wife, Jones simply replied, “I don’t care.” This model does not care why a vote was cast the way it was or why the legislator scored either high or low in the overall ratings, that set of explanations is best left for the legislator to discuss with his or her constituents.

The model can be used by any constituency group, and will develop unique results that reflect the group’s priorities. Because the model is completely objective, it can even be used by groups that were diametrically opposed to each other on an issue and give each of the groups meaningful and valid information. It may seem counterintuitive that the model can be used with equal validity but yield very different results. That is because the using group must begin by evaluating bills and weighting them for their relative importance to the group. There is nothing generic about the model, it is unique to each user and develops data based on the priorities of the user.

The model can also be used during a legislative session to monitor activity while a bill is progressing through the process. Since the 2007 session has adjourned, these analytical results are on the final version of the bills as they met their final destiny. Using the model during a session can be illuminating since a bill may be substantially changed as a result of amendments. However, it is the final version of the bill that becomes the most relevant marker in the model.

The formulas in the model are also historic recordings. Assume that there is a bill that is opposed by a group. As the bill goes through the process, it is amended to remove the most onerous provisions. The constituency group that is monitoring the bill changes its position from opposition to support. When the final arithmetic value of the bill is calculated, each legislator has been scored based on his or her vote. Over the life of the bill, the accumulating scores will compensate for the change in status of the bill.

Part Two: The Objective Mathematical Calculation of Voting Records

Critical Assumptions Underlying the Methodology

Any analytical methodology is only as good or useful as its assumptions are valid. This model is based on the following major assumptions:

Not All Bills Are of Equal Importance – Weighting Importance

Not all bills are created equal. Some are very important to certain voters and constituency groups while others are no more than housekeeping or minor clean up bills. The same bill may be more important to a given constituency group than to another.

As noted in the preceding section, the model may be used with equal validity by constituency groups that are diametrically opposed to each other on the policy questions embodied in the bill. The reason that each can use the model with equal validity is that the model requires the user to establish a numerical weight of importance to the bill, and to determine whether that the value should be positive or negative. The model defaults at a positive (+) value unless the user opts to assign a negative value (-) to the bill. The model is flexible enough to allow the user to change the assigned value and the weighted importance of the bill during its progression through the process.

Assigning numerical weights to bills allows the user to view voting records in a way that displays the relative importance of bills vis-à-vis each other. Bills which are assigned a high numerical value generate a higher number of points than do bills which are considered of little importance.

The Involvement of Legislators with a Bill Is Not Equal On All Bills at All Times

As is the case with the weighting of bills by importance, the model recognizes that a legislator's involvement with the bill may range from being the prime sponsor to being no more than a passive vote through the use of the morning roll call. The respective involvements with a bill should not be given the same weight of importance; they should be stratified according to involvement.

The formulas embedded in the model are structured and the numerical values that relate to a legislator's actual vote are preset and embedded and cannot be altered by the user. Whereas the user may modify the weighted importance of the bill, the user may not alter the assigned values within the formulas. This constraint allows for a consistent and valid accumulation of numerical values across all versions of all bills so that there are no creeping subjective assessments that taint the formula.

Because the nature of the legislative process relies upon committees to review bills, some legislators will have more involvement with a bill than others simply because they will have had more contact with it through the committee process. The model is designed to capture that closer proximity because it is recorded on a legislator-by-legislator methodology. This makes the model particularly useful if the user wishes to evaluate the performance of a committee, say the Senate Judiciary Committee, on the issues of interest that came before that committee during the session. However, it should be noted that if the user wishes to capture committee specific data the decision to do so should be made before the model is set in motion to make it easier to segregate that information for later review.

There is one aspect of the use of the committee process that is somewhat limiting. As a general rule, members of leadership do not serve on committees of reference. Since the model identifies committee of reference involvement by legislators, members of leadership will tend to not score as high as some of their colleagues simply because they do not have as much contact with a bill. Since the model is designed to be objective, it does not attempt to capture legislative leadership actions that may have a direct effect on the future of a bill. That is information that the constituency groups will have to monitor separately.

Votes Count, Platitudes Do Not

It is the nature of the legislative and political processes that observers, even professional ones, tend to analyze legislator behavior with a significant amount of subjectivity. These observers tend to rationalize, explain and apologize legislator votes in order to report not only what occurred but why it occurred. Often these kinds of analyses provide justifications and apologies that the legislator can in turn use as a defense. The model does not allow any kind of explanation for a vote to be factored into the formulas. The model relies solely upon recorded votes which can be documented from publicly available sources such as the official journals, archived tape recordings and committee reports.

As noted in a preceding section, the model, like Tommy Lee Jones, does not care why a vote was cast the way that it was. It is the vote that counts in public policy, not the rationalization or excuse for why it was cast. The record quite simply is the record; it is up to the legislator to explain his or her votes to constituents. It is up to constituents to ask legislators why they voted the way that they did. Sometimes the explanation can be quite revealing in an interview, and the model produces a result that allows constituents to question the legislator on the vote with accuracy and confidence.

It should be noted that the model only uses recorded votes that are attributed to a legislator. It is often the case that when a bill is undergoing second reading floor debate that there is no recorded vote. In that case the model simply ignores the lack of a record since all legislators would have to be treated the same whether they voted for or against the bill on a voice vote or a division of the chamber. In some cases there may be a recorded action on consideration of the report of the committee of the whole which is captured in the model.

The only recorded vote that is not captured in the model is a vote to simply refer a bill to another committee without having taken any other action on it. The model considers such votes to be administrative in nature and not a substantive review of the bill.

The lack of data for second reading non-recorded votes is immaterial to the outcome. Votes get recorded on 3rd and final reading so there is a clear record for each legislator. The Colorado Senate uses a consent calendar for some noncontentious bills, and even though the recorded votes are all in favor of the bill that recorded vote is captured in the formula. Consent calendar votes are neutral among the Senators since they are all the same and do not skew the model results. However, the consent calendar vote is useful in the event that a Senator is excused or does not cast a vote for that particular bill.

Patterns of Voting Over Issues and Over Time

To truly gauge a legislator's voting history, it is useful to track a series of votes recorded on several bills within an established category or subject and to aggregate them over time. Tracking such histories will also reveal voting patterns on an issue when the legislator moves from one house to the other. For example, if the user group were an organization of conservation voters following water quality legislation, the model allows that group to identify the key pieces of legislation within the category, develop a voting history across all the bills and then to aggregate the votes for 3 or 4 years to get a true picture of the voting pattern. Rather than looking at a single bill in a given session, it allows the group to look at say 25 bills over 5 sessions.

This information can be archived for future use. For example, assume that there was a representative who at the end of his or her term must leave office because of term limits. Two years later, that former representative wishes to run for a Senate seat and approaches a constituency group for support. If the constituency group had archived the past voting records that information could be quickly accessed to be used in a conversation with the candidate.

The model also allows voting patterns and histories of two legislators running against each other for an office to be compared. For example, assume that there was a Senator running for reelection and that there was a term limited Representative challenging the Senator. The model allows their individual voting records to be displayed side-by-side in order to compare their respective voting histories on issues of interest to the constituency group.

The longer a legislator serves, the more complete the voting pattern history will be. Take for example a legislator who serves 8 years in the House and 8 years in the Senate and then decides to run for Governor. A constituency group would have a very good picture of that legislative history and a better means for evaluating whether to support the person for a higher office. This is particularly useful if the leadership of the constituency group does not have a long history of involvement with the group. The archives become part of the institutional history of the group.

The Complete Picture

Some constituency groups are truly one subject or one issue groups. However, most groups involved in public policy advocacy follow multiple issues. The model is structured for such groups to incorporate a category-by-category weighting as well as a bill-by-bill basis. For example, say that the constituency group was a business trade group following four issues: taxation, civil liability, unionization and air quality. The group may decide that civil liability is of critical importance and should be weighted higher than air quality. This feature allows the user to create a display that stratifies the recorded votes accordingly. For this feature to be most useful the user should select categories which are multi-year interests rather than single year importance.

Using the Formulas within the Methodology

While the formulas are data heavy, the arithmetic is quite simple. The user first determines the weighted value of the bill and whether that bill is of positive or negative importance. The model defaults for positive values and must be instructed to calculate a negative. This was intentionally built into the design of the formulas to be able to capture bills which might be selected by the user simply for monitoring purposes. Unless the bill is assigned a negative rating, the formula treats it as a positive.

The model is useful whether the user opposed, supported, endorsed, or just monitored a bill. Simply because the user did not commit any resources or publicly advocate a position on a bill does not mean that it should be excluded from the final list of bills to be evaluated. On the other hand, a group may have monitored a bill during the session but later determined that it was not of enough importance to include in the final list of bills to be used. In that circumstance, the bill will be deleted from the model.

Criteria for Weighting the Importance of Bills

Once the user has determined whether a bill is to have a positive or negative designation, the user is then ready to assign a numerical weight of importance to the bill. This numerical weight becomes a multiplier within the formula that is applied to the aggregate votes cast on the bill by a legislator. The model uses four categories of importance for the user to determine which level of importance the bill has:

- The bill is critical to the core mission of the user;
- The bill would result in significant effects upon the organization or its members;
- The bill would result in modest effects upon the organization or its members; and,
- The bill is of interest only for monitoring purposes.

These four categories are the default categories. A user may wish to add categories to secure a more thorough picture of importance. The model will accommodate that option.

The forgoing categories are each assigned a numeric range so that the user can use to assign the weight of importance of the bill. The model defaults with a 12 point scale allocated in blocks of 3 points each to the designated categories:

- The bill is critical to the core mission of the user: 10 – 12 points;
- The bill would result in significant effects upon the organization or its members: 7 – 9 points;
- The bill would result in modest effects upon the organization or its members: 4 – 6 points; and,
- The bill is of interest for monitoring purposes: 1 – 3 points.

These point allocations are the default points. A user can change the scale to reflect a wider range of options in a category or to accommodate the addition of new categories. As a cautionary note, any scale should be composed of an even number of points so that there is no median point. That forces the model to make a choice of importance. It should also be noted that there is no option for zero points. If the bill has zero importance, it should not be included in the list under review.

The user has control over these categories and over the allocation of weighting. The user may change these determinations as a bill progresses through the process and is amended to address the concerns or interests of the user.

In addition, the model will allow a user to create a “shadow” bill. If the user wished to keep distinct histories of legislator voting on differing versions of a bill, the user can simply identify the new bill version and assign weights accordingly. Since the formula does not use bill numbers for any purpose other than organizing data, the formula does not care which version of the bill is being tracked. For example, a user may wish to keep the voting histories on the bill as it was introduced distinct from the votes that were cast on the bill as it passed 3rd reading.

Criteria for Allocating Numeric Values to Legislator Actions on a Bill

The next step in using the model is to track individual legislator's votes and actions relative to the bill. Actions are limited to the making of motions and casting of votes and do not include verbal comments and debate. Tracking may be accomplished by either direct observation when the observer is present in a committee hearing and records the votes or motions or by reviewing the formal committee reports and journal entries when they are published. In the event that the direct observation method is used, the observation should be verified by reviewing the written record to confirm accuracy.

It should be noted that beginning with this phase of using the model, the numeric values assigned to the categories are embedded in the formulas in the model and cannot be changed by the user.

As is the case with the relative importance of the bills, it is also true that a legislator's involvement with a bill has different levels of importance. The numeric values embedded in the formula are designed to reflect these differences.

Sponsorship: Prime and Co-Sponsorship

Prime sponsorship of a bill is very important, and the model is designed to assign the highest numeric value in this category to the prime sponsors. It is often the case that a bill is introduced without a second house sponsor and a second house sponsor is not secured until the bill is ready to be passed on final reading and sent over to the second house. The model considers such an addition as being equal to second house prime sponsorship on introduction.

Co-sponsorship of a bill has subtle distinctions depending upon when the co-sponsorship is committed. If the introduced version of the bill has co-sponsors, their act of co-sponsoring is considered more important than if co-sponsorship occurs following 3rd reading of the bill or the re-adoption of the bill following second house action. The model grades these involvements in a hierarchy.

Treating co-sponsorship this way compensates for the action of a legislator who has virtually nothing to do with a bill during its progression but signs on as a co-sponsor after the fate of the bill is determined. It also allows a constituency group to put into perspective the claim by a legislator "But I co-sponsored your bill."

Committee Action: Amendments and Votes on a Bill

The committees of reference deliberations are the first activity that begins the process of tracking a legislator's voting history on a bill. The model treats all committees equally so it does not matter whether the bill goes through one committee or two or three on its way to the floor. The model also treats committees in both houses the same. And, the model treats the committee of the whole as a committee even though it is a floor action.

Generally there are two separate actions that can be taken on a bill in committee. The first is the amendment phase and the second is the ultimate vote on the bill by the committee. The model assigns numerical values to the actions and votes. Each legislator who offers an amendment is identified and that action results in a record being made in the model. This is where the user's

determination of whether the bill is positive (+) or negative (-) becomes important. That determination dictates whether the vote is recorded as a positive or a negative number. Votes on the amendment are likewise recorded as positive or negative, and the same is true for final motions and votes on the finished bill.

Because legislators serve on more than one committee, it is possible that a legislator may vote on a bill in more than one committee. Serving on the Appropriations Committee is a good example. The model accommodates serving on more than one committee since each committee is treated equally with all other committees.

It should be noted that the model only uses recorded votes. A voice vote that is unanimous is not included since there is no individual record of each vote cast. As a procedural matter, if there is objection to a unanimous vote being taken in committee, a roll call vote is directed by the chairman.

The committee of the whole is treated like a committee of reference. However, amendments to bills being debated on second reading are treated in different ways. A motion to adopt a committee report that includes amendments to the bill is not included unless there is a motion to amend the committee report. This keeps actions taken in the committee of reference from being double counted on the floor. Floor amendments are not included if the vote was either a voice vote or a division of the members because individual votes cannot be verified. Amendments to the committee of the whole report are included because they are recorded votes.

Conference committees are treated the same as a committee of reference.

Third Reading Action: Amendments, Votes on Amendments and Final Vote

Ultimately all bills must undergo a recorded vote by each legislator before they can pass out of either the House or Senate. The model records these votes in the formula. Sometimes there are unusual motions on a bill when it is on 3rd reading. Occasionally it might be sent from the floor back to a committee of reference, and sometimes there are 3rd reading amendments to the bill. The model accommodates 3rd reading motions which are substantive (such as rereferring or to the text), but does not use 3rd reading amendments which are technical or of a Revisor nature. Technically, substantive amendments are not to be offered on 3rd reading, but occasionally leadership allows one to be offered and the model will allow that to be incorporated.

Reconciling Differences between the Houses: Consideration of 2nd House Amendments and Readoption of Bill

Once a bill has passed one house, it must be acted on by the second house. If there is a difference in the versions between the two houses, those difference must be reconciled because only one version of a bill may ultimately pass both houses.

The first step in tracking the votes is when the first house gives consideration to what the second house did in the way of amendments. The decision to reject or accept is a recorded vote which is captured in the model.

If the decision to reject is then accompanied by a motion to ask for a conference committee, that vote is recorded if it is a recorded vote in the journal.

The votes in the second house to consent to a conference committee are recorded if it is a recorded vote in the journal.

Subsequently, the two houses must each vote on accepting the conference committee report and the model records those votes.

It is sometimes the case that the conference committee report is rejected, a new committee is formed and the bill undergoes yet another action. The model records this action as well.

Ultimately the bill must be readopted by each house, and the model records that action as well.

Adhering or Receding on Bill

It is sometimes the case that the differences between the houses are of such magnitude that they cannot be reconciled. The model records motions to adhere or recede accordingly.

Consideration of Gubernatorial Veto

In the event that a bill is vetoed by the Governor, the model tracks the legislative actions to override or sustain the veto.

Tallying Arithmetic Vote Totals and Displaying Them for Review and Analysis

Aggregate Total: All Arithmetic Vote Totals for All Bills for All Legislators Stratified in Descending Order

This display is a simple stratification of the legislators from the highest number of points achieved to the lowest. It is possible for a legislator to drop into negative numbers. This model does not calculate percentages as do many other voting scorecards. Since there are no maximum or minimum points that can be developed for a bill, the calculation of percentages is not possible. The model tallies points and then sorts the legislators by point totals. The model does calculate means and will calculate standard deviations if the user wishes to have that information.

This display is based upon all votes cast for all bills in all categories and is a composite of votes cast during the session.

Total Arithmetic Votes calculated on a Selected Subject Matter (e.g., taxation)

This display is a simple stratification of legislators and their votes based upon a category of interest that has been selected. The model groups all the bills within that category, such as taxation, and provides the user with a display that shows how the legislators voted on that category of interest.

Total Arithmetic Votes Calculated on House Membership, Committee Membership, Party, Gender or Other Identifiable Criterion

The model allows the user to make other groupings to analyze votes and patterns. The model will allow a committee (e.g., Senate Judiciary) display, it will allow the user to display the data by Republican and Democrat members, it will allow the user to display the data by gender, and it will allow the data to be displayed by any demographic profile that the user might wish to see or analyze. For example, the user may wish to view how rural, suburban and urban legislators voted and can extract that data from the model.

Total Arithmetic Votes Displayed for an Individual Legislator by Session, Selected Subject Matter and Over Time (Multiple Sessions)

The model is designed to be linked to results from several years. To make this feature most useful, the user should establish categories of bills that are consistent from year-to-year. The more consistent the categories, the more reliable will be the reports.

Part Three: Using the Information Once It Is Compiled

While the model is designed to focus on legislators and their voting records, there are many other uses of the data and the model that can be valuable to the user.

Within the Organization: Users can develop a sound process of evaluating their own priorities and values by reviewing the voting records and patterns. If a constituent group finds itself consistently on the losing side of issues, it may be time to review whether its positions are valid or need to be adjusted.

To establish and communicate the user's values and principles: If the user has developed principles and values that are communicated to legislators, the model will provide a sound method of determining how the legislators voted with respect to those principles and values. Establishing such principles and values strengthens the dialogue between the user and the legislators when discussions about issues and votes are engaged. However, if the user has not established and communicated its principles and values, the legislator could not have known what those criteria were and could not have taken the user's positions into consideration.

Since the model requires the user to determine the relative weight of importance of a bill, the user should be able to clearly articulate why the bill was given that particular weight. The user should be able to incorporate those reasons into its advocacy program so that legislators know not only what is important to the user but also why it is important.

To develop candidate questionnaires and interview criteria: The model provides excellent information to be used with incumbents seeking reelection. The user has a wealth of reliable data to engage the incumbent in a meaningful discussion of why votes were cast the way that they were.

The model is also very valuable for interviews with candidates who are not incumbents and who have no voting record history. The data provides a baseline of votes on issues and the candidate can be queried as to how he or she would have voted in relation to those who did cast votes. Discussions with candidates with no history allow for very precise questions to be asked and also provide the user with an excellent opportunity to communicate principles and values. If the candidate is elected, it is hard later for him or her to deny that those principles and values were not made known.

To more effectively participate in campaign finance activities: Since the voters enacted the stringent rules governing campaign finance, groups and individuals have developed sophisticated ways of complying with the law while maximizing their financial impact. It is commonly the case that multiple PAC's meet, evaluate candidates and determine which will receive quasi-bundled support from the extended group.

A group that has used the model is in an excellent position to participate in such meetings and discussions. The user has solid information to share with the group, and can offset incomplete or erroneous information supplied by others in the group.

Concluding Comments

The model can be used by any constituent group, and the model has built in flexibility that will allow each constituency group to tailor it to provide the data needed.

The model is not, however, designed to provide a universal or generic view of legislators and how they voted vis-à-vis each other since such a display would not have incorporated the important weighted voting calculations. To be used in its most valuable manner, the model needs to be instructed what is important and how important the bills are to the user.