



Rockies Snapshot: Federal Representation

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Background

The relationship between the federal government and the residents of the eight-state Rocky Mountain West is complex. Westerners are wary of being an inland colony of the United States, supplying the nation with valuable natural resources and receiving little in return. Such skepticism is not unfounded—federal ownership of nearly 60 percent of land in the Western states leaves the region vulnerable to federal action that either ignores or usurps state and local interests. The history of the West is rife with abuses of this imbalance of power, from haphazard oil shale experiments and fast-tracking oil and gas leasing on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, to proposals to deposit nuclear waste in Yucca Mountain, Nevada. And exploitation is not limited to federal entities—the mining companies, railroads, energy developers, and banks that finance these industries, headquartered outside the region, are just as culpable of benefiting from Western resources, while contributing little to the long-term vitality of the region. Too often Western resources are permanently exported leaving only the shells of boomtowns and environmental blight. Despite the seemingly antagonistic relationship, The West is also dependent on the federal presence. Federally funded water diversion projects deliver water to cities in an arid region, and state and local economies benefit from military bases and federal laboratories. The result is a delicate balance between political sovereignty and federal support.

The *2006 Colorado College State of the Rockies Report Card* included a study entitled “A Common Western Voice: Can the Rockies Be Heard in

Washington D.C.?” The study counted campaign stops and expenditure data from the 2004 presidential race to show that the West is a group of “flyover” states with too few Electoral College votes to warrant as much attention as the East or West coasts. The recent 2008 presidential election, however, was a different story. The West provided its own presidential candidates in Arizona Senator John McCain and former New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, hosted the Democratic National Convention in Denver, and contained several battleground states. Westerners are also playing a significant role in the new Obama administration—former Colorado Senator Ken Salazar has been appointed Secretary of Interior, and former Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano has been named Secretary of Homeland Security.

The Rockies region has made progress gaining influence in national politics, but it is unrealistic to assume that Western issues will take center stage in the White House. We cannot simply wait until our population matches that the East Coast or West Coast to have our voices heard in Washington. However there are other avenues through which our views and voices are represented, but are they functioning effectively?

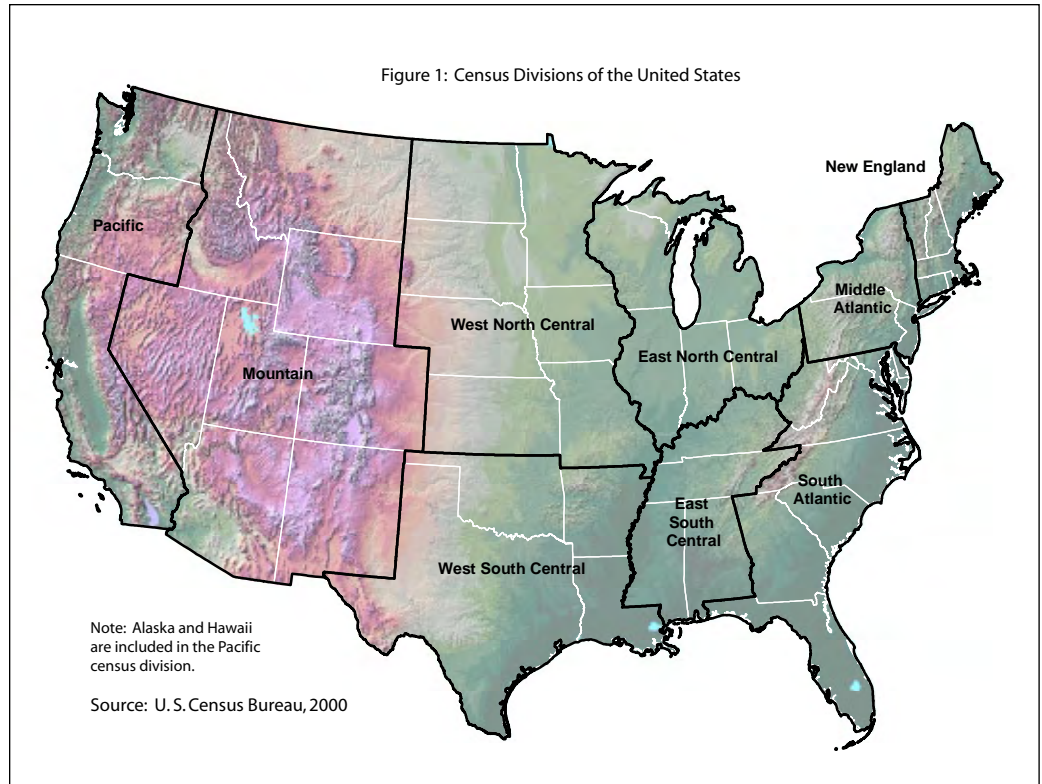
Ultimately, the responsibility of representing the eight Rockies states in the national arena falls on the delegation of 16 Senators and 28 Representatives who make up our “regional caucus” in both chambers of Congress. Their political prowess and tenacity translate to political legislation that addresses Western issues. Although much action can be taken at the state and local level, the unfortunate reality in the West is that federal laws and policies will continue to have a prevalent impact on the course of our region. Without

effective political representation our issues and challenges go under-represented.

In addition to the political skill of our individual Senators and Representatives, the Rockies region will enjoy greater national influence if our delegation works together, regardless of party affiliation. Historically, politically unified regions such as the Northeast and the South, can wield greater influence than their states would individually garner. For example, it was once considered impossible to win the presidency without winning the South, resulting in greater attention paid to southern issues. Opinions in the West are as diverse as its people, but many of the critical issues facing our region transcend party affiliation. Even as Westerners are split on Rockies issues such as energy development, conservation, water management, pollution, and immigration, we still depend on our members of congress to elevate the dialogue on these issues to the national level.

How effective is our group of senators and congressmen at representing the Rockies? How does our regional caucus compare to those of other regions? This section of the 2009 State of the Rockies Report Card examines the performance of Western members of the 110th Congress which represented our region through 2007 and 2008. Our method for determining the effectiveness of our regional caucus does not look at

Figure 1: Census Divisions of the United States



specific stances on policy issues; rather, it measures both their political power among other regions and the willingness of our delegation to disregard party politics and work together to promote the general welfare of the West.

The Political Efficacy Index

The Rockies Project has developed a measure of how effective our regional delegation is at representing the West. We have compiled an index of three indicators: a cooperation score, a bi-partisanship score, and a congressional power score. This index was compiled

for each of the nine geographical divisions determined by the U.S. Census Bureau (See Figure 1). By comparing each regional delegation on these measures, we can see how the Rockies senators and representatives stack up. In addition, we present a more detailed look at the individual senators and representatives from the Rocky Mountain West, including their individual bi-partisanship score, percentage of missed roll call votes, and congressional power

TABLE 1: COOPERATION SCORE BY DIVISION, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 110TH CONGRESS

DIVISION	COOPERATION SCORE	PARTY HOMOGENEITY
New England	88	95%
Middle Atlantic	59	67%
Pacific	50	66%
East South Central	46	54%
West South Central	45	58%
Mountain (Rockies States)	44	61%
Midwest East North Central	43	51%
Midwest North Central	43	52%
South Atlantic	43	56%

SOURCE: VOTER INFORMATION SERVICES, 2008

TABLE 2: COOPERATION SCORE BY DIVISION, SENATE, 110TH CONGRESS

DIVISION	COOPERATION SCORE	PARTY HOMOGENEITY
East South Central	80	100%
Middle Atlantic	78	83%
Pacific	70	70%
Midwest East North Central	67	80%
New England	61	50%
Midwest North Central	53	50%
West South Central	53	63%
South Atlantic	51	50%
Mountain (Rockies States)	50	69%

SOURCE: VOTER INFORMATION SERVICES, 2008

score and corresponding rank among their colleagues in the entire U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives. (See Appendix 1 and Appendix 2).

The cooperation score was calculated for us by Voter Information Services and measures the rate at which members of each region vote the same way on a set of roll call votes.¹ A higher number in this category means that the majority of a regional delegation voted the same way on each roll call vote during the 110th Congress.

The bi-partisanship score measures the rate at which members of each delegation were willing to vote against their party leadership. A high number in this category means a more bi-partisan voting pattern. By including both the cooperation score and the bi-partisanship score, we control for regions that have a relatively homogenous party composition. For example, the New England region has a very high cooperation score but also mostly belongs to the Democratic Party. Concordantly, the region's bi-partisanship score is quite low, thus controlling for party homogeneity in the final index.

**TABLE 3:
BI-PARTISANSHIP SCORE BY DIVISION,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
110TH CONGRESS**

DIVISION	BI-PARTISANSHIP
<i>Mountain (Rockies States)</i>	13.2
Midwest East North Central	12.3
Middle Atlantic	12.1
West South Central	12.0
East South Central	12.0
South Atlantic	11.4
Midwest North Central	10.8
Pacific	10.5
New England	6.7

SOURCE: VOTER INFORMATION SERVICES, 2008

**TABLE 4:
BI-PARTISANSHIP SCORE BY DIVISION,
SENATE, 110TH CONGRESS**

DIVISION	BI-PARTISANSHIP
New England	19.1
Midwest North Central	18.8
West South Central	18.0
Midwest East North Central	16.5
<i>Mountain (Rockies States)</i>	16.0
Middle Atlantic	15.8
Pacific	15.1
South Atlantic	15.1
East South Central	13.0

SOURCE: VOTER INFORMATION SERVICES, 2008

- Position - considers tenure, committee assignments and leadership position
- Indirect influence - examines how each member uses the media and congressional caucuses to affect legislation
 - Legislative activity - measures how effective each member is at passing substantive legislation and passing amendments to legislation
 - Earmarks - using data from "Taxpayers for Common Sense," this variable measure how much money each member secured for local projects

In short, the congressional power score measures the effectiveness of each senator and representative. Again, the congressional power score was not calculated by the Rockies Project, rather, it was developed by Knowlegis and made available online as a tool for comparing member of the House and Senate.

Results

Cooperation Score

The cooperation score measures the rate at which members of each region vote the same way in roll call votes. While certainly a rudimentary measure of regionalism (not all regional issues are settled by legislation that reaches a roll call vote, such as successful oversight in the committees of jurisdiction), the cooperation score does provide a point for comparison. Although not an input in the final index, we have also provided a column for "Party Homogeneity," which depicts the percent that each region's delegation to each chamber is comprised of members of the same party (Table 1 and Table 2). Not surprisingly, the regions with the highest cooperation rates are also the most politically homogeneous regions.

U.S. Capitol Building, Lincoln Inauguration, 1861. Photo from the Library of Congress



Finally, the index includes the aggregate congressional power score, which is the average of each individual senator's and representative's power score. The congressional power scores were calculated by Knowlegis, LLC.² The scores are compiled based on four criteria:

**TABLE 5:
AVERAGE CONGRESSIONAL POWER SCORES
BY DIVISION, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
110TH CONGRESS**

DIVISION	AVERAGE KNOWLEGIS CONGRESSIONAL POWER SCORE
New England	23.9
Middle Atlantic	21.3
Midwest East North Central	20.9
Pacific	20.9
South Atlantic	18.9
East South Central	17.4
West South Central	17.2
Midwest North Central	16.4
Mountain (Rockies States)	13.8

SOURCE: CALCULATED USING DATA FROM KNOWLEGIS AND ROLL CALL, 2008

**TABLE 6:
AVERAGE CONGRESSIONAL POWER SCORES
BY DIVISION, SENATE, 110TH CONGRESS**

DIVISION	AVERAGE KNOWLEGIS CONGRESSIONAL POWER SCORE
Middle Atlantic	33.3
New England	33.0
Midwest East North Central	32.0
Mountain (Rockies States)	31.0
Pacific	30.1
East South Central	26.3
Midwest North Central	25.1
South Atlantic	23.7
West South Central	23.3

SOURCE: CALCULATED USING DATA FROM KNOWLEGIS AND ROLL CALL, 2008

Bi-Partisanship

The bi-partisanship score measures the rate at which members of each regional caucus break with their party leadership on roll call votes (Table 3 and Table 4). This indicator is included in the index to augment the cooperation score by controlling for party homogeneity. A higher rate score indicates a greater demonstrated willingness to “go against” an elected official’s party of affiliation.

Congressional Power Score

The congressional power score measures individual political prowess that stems from the position, influence, ability to pass legislation, and ability to collect earmarks for their state that each member represents. The Rockies Project is including these scores in the combined Political Efficacy Index, but the scores themselves were generated by Knowlegis and made available online. (Table 5 and Table 6).

Political Efficacy Index

The index considers the cooperation score, bi-partisanship score, and congressional power score as equal factors in measuring an effective regional delegation, and grades each region based on the composite of all three factors (Table 7 and Table 8).³

The results for the regional study show that the Rockies delegation to the House of Representatives ranks 8th of 9 in the political efficacy index, and the group of Rockies Senators ranks 6th of 9 in the political efficacy index. Looking at each individual category reveals the strengths and weaknesses of our delegation.

On the positive side, the Rockies regional caucus in the House of Representatives in the 110th

**TABLE 7:
POLITICAL EFFICACY INDEX BY DIVISION,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, 110TH CONGRESS**

DIVISION	COOPERATION SCORE	BI-PARTISANSHIP SCORE	AVERAGE KNOWLEGIS CONGRESSIONAL POWER SCORE	PERCENT RANK	GRADE
New England	88	6.7	23.9	100.0%	A
Middle Atlantic	59	12.1	21.3	87.5%	A-
Midwest East North Central	43	12.3	20.9	75.0%	B
Pacific	50	10.5	20.9	62.5%	C+
South Atlantic	43	11.4	18.9	50.0%	C
East South Central	46	12.0	17.4	37.5%	C-
West South Central	45	12.0	17.2	25.0%	D
Midwest North Central	43	10.8	16.4	12.5%	D
Mountain (Rockies States)	44	13.2	13.8	0.0%	D

SOURCE: CALCULATED USING DATA FROM KNOWLEGIS, ROLL CALL, AND VOTER INFORMATION SERVICES, 2008

**TABLE 8:
POLITICAL EFFICACY INDEX BY DIVISION,
SENATE, 110TH CONGRESS**

DIVISION	COOPERATION SCORE	BI-PARTISANSHIP SCORE	AVERAGE KNOWLEGIS CONGRESSIONAL POWER SCORE	PERCENT RANK	GRADE
Middle Atlantic	78	15.8	33.3	100.0%	A
New England	61	19.1	33.0	87.5%	A-
Midwest East North Central	67	16.5	32.0	75.0%	B
Mountain (Rockies States)	50	16.0	31.0	62.5%	C+
Pacific	70	15.1	30.1	50.0%	C
East South Central	80	13.0	26.3	37.5%	C-
Midwest North Central	53	18.8	25.1	25.0%	D
South Atlantic	51	15.1	23.7	12.5%	D
West South Central	53	18.0	23.3	0.0%	D

SOURCE: CALCULATED USING DATA FROM KNOWLEGIS, ROLL CALL, AND VOTER INFORMATION SERVICES, 2008

**TABLE 9:
TOTAL AND PER CAPITA CONGRESSIONAL EARMARKS BY ROCKIES
STATES, 2008**

STATE RANK: In Dollars per Capita Received out of 50	GEOGRAPHY	TOTAL CONGRESSIONAL EARMARKS, 2008	EARMARK DOLLARS PER CAPITA, 2008	2007 POPULATION ESTIMATE
8	New Mexico	\$211,940,090	\$108	1,969,915
9	Idaho	\$155,662,700	\$104	1,499,402
10	Montana	\$91,685,490	\$96	957,861
11	Nevada	\$217,322,770	\$85	2,565,382
22	Utah	\$134,709,500	\$51	2,645,330
28	Wyoming	\$21,921,600	\$42	522,830
49	Colorado	\$91,835,710	\$19	4,861,515
50	Arizona	\$118,554,400	\$19	6,338,755
Mountain (Rockies States)		\$1,043,632,260	\$49	21,360,990
United States		\$11,997,454,836	\$40	410,878,291

SOURCE: TAXPAYERS FOR COMMON SENSE, 2008

Congress had a higher bi-partisanship score than any other region, meaning our representatives are the most willing to break with their party leadership. Our House cooperation score, however, was quite low, meaning that although our representatives were willing to vote against their party, they did not necessarily vote with their fellow Westerners. The biggest shortcoming, however, was the aggregate House Congressional power score, which was the lowest of all regional caucuses.

The Rockies delegation to the Senate in the 110th Congress performed slightly better than their colleagues in the House. The Western Senators' cooperation score was the lowest of all regional delegations, their bi-partisanship score was exactly in the middle, and their aggregate power score, was 4th of 9, boosted by high-ranking senators such as Montana's Senator Max Baucus, Arizona's Senator John McCain, and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada.

Conclusion

By the measures employed in this study, the Western regional delegation to congress is not as effective in representing its home region as other regional delegations. What does this mean for the West? The success of a regional agenda is difficult to measure, especially when there is little consensus on exactly what that agenda entails. One method may be to measure how many dollars in earmarks are flowing into each region. Data compiled by the organization "Taxpayers for Common Sense" show that the West is actually receiving more dollars per capita in earmarks (\$48.86) than the national average (\$39.85). Two Western states, however, Colorado and Arizona, rank 49th and 50th respectively (Table 9).

If the Western delegation is indeed less effective than other regional caucuses, what is the reason? One possible explanation is that the West is currently a region in political transition. The West is diverse in both people and opinions and lacks a unified stance on its critical issues. The result is a politically divided region. Looking at our results, it is not surprising to see a connection between regional cooperation and party homogeneity in a region. In the House, the two regions with the highest cooperation score also had the highest percent of members belonging to the same party. The results are the same in the Senate. Political

**APPENDIX 1:
DETAILED PROFILE OF WESTERN MEMBERS OF THE U.S. SENATE,
110TH CONGRESS**

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	STATE	PARTY	BI-PARTISANSHIP SCORE	REGIONAL UNITY SCORE	MISSED VOTES	PERCENT OF TOTAL VOTES MISSED	KNOWLEGIS HOUSE POWER RANK	KNOWLEGIS HOUSE POWER SCORE
Kyl	Jon	AZ	R	80	18	4	2%	18	38.23
McCain	John	AZ	R	61	45	173	81%	10	46.75
Allard	Wayne	CO	R	83	14	12	6%	79	17.31
Salazar	Ken	CO	D	54	12	0	0%	47	26.82
Craig	Larry	ID	R	89	16	6	3%	98	4.34
Crapo	Michael	ID	R	90	15	3	1%	72	18.52
Baucus	Max	MT	D	54	15	2	1%	6	53.27
Tester	Jon	MT	D	52	15	5	2%	92	13.88
Bingaman	Jeff	NM	D	48	9	2	1%	16	38.67
Domenici	Peter	NM	R	87	20	20	9%	46	26.91
Ensign	John	NV	R	81	16	13	6%	42	29.41
Reid	Harry	NV	D	51	0	3	1%	1	109.7
Bennett	Robert	UT	R	91	15	3	1%	76	17.77
Hatch	Orrin	UT	R	91	16	3	1%	39	30.47
Barrasso	John	WY	R	86	15	0	0%	99	3.56
Enzi	Michael	WY	R	85	15	3	1%	63	20.81

SOURCE: CALCULATED USING DATA FROM KNOWLEGIS, ROLL CALL AND VOTER INFORMATION SERVICES

unity may also affect the congressional power scores. In both chambers, seniority drives influence. Solidly Republican or Democratic regions, where it is easy for members of the favored party to get reelected, probably have more committee chairmanships and seniority. Periods of political transition, like that occurring in the West, mean high turnover among politicians, which can in turn negatively affect committee appointments and congressional power scores. Ironically, the same political transition that makes legislating difficult also put Western states on the political map for the 2008 presidential race, thus elevating the profile of Western issues in national debates.

The 2008 elections brought a new president, as well as two new senators and six new representatives in Rockies states. Already, we have seen increased representation in the cabinet, and hopefully this will increase the consideration of Rockies issues in the national agenda. Real progress, however,

must come from those whose job first and foremost is to look out for the interests of the West. We must now turn our attention to the 111th congress and hope that the new Western members will perform better than their predecessors, while the veteran members of our delegation improve their political skills and expand their influence to better serve the Rockies. Citizens of the West can do their part by encouraging the discussion of Rockies issues in ways shared with our congressional delegation. Such steps will help bring us closer to finding our common Western voice.

APPENDIX 2: DETAILED PROFILE OF WESTERN MEMBERS OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, 110TH CONGRESS									
LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	STATE	PARTY	BI-PARTISANSHIP SCORE	REGIONAL UNITY SCORE	MISSED VOTES	PERCENT OF TOTAL VOTES MISSED	KNOWLEGIS HOUSE POWER RANK	KNOWLEGIS HOUSE POWER SCORE
Flake	Jeff	AZ	R	16	75	27	4%	372	8.1
Franks	Trent	AZ	R	9	80	10	1%	387	7.27
Giffords	Gabrielle	AZ	D	11	59	13	2%	277	12.91
Grijalva	Raul	AZ	D	8	47	59	9%	246	14.44
Mitchell	Harry	AZ	D	13	61	19	3%	334	10.86
Pastor	Ed	AZ	D	6	51	1	0%	84	28.68
Renzi	Rick	AZ	R	21	91	114	17%	435	-2.59
Shadegg	John	AZ	R	10	80	15	2%	211	16.56
DeGette	Diana	CO	D	7	50	29	4%	66	30.49
Lamborn	Doug	CO	R	9	82	6	1%	411	5.71
Musgrave	Marilyn	CO	R	11	86	36	5%	391	6.92
Perlmutter	Ed	CO	D	6	55	12	2%	172	19.32
Salazar	John	CO	D	6	55	9	1%	314	11.68
Tancredo	Thomas	CO	R	22	75	107	16%	397	6.52
Udall	Mark	CO	D	13	52	149	22%	230	15.2
Sali	William	ID	R	11	83	8	1%	423	4.14
Simpson	Michael	ID	R	20	91	31	5%	220	16.1
Rehberg	Dennis	MT	R	14	94	1	0%	343	10.43
Pearce	Steve	NM	R	12	87	42	6%	273	13.09
Udall	Tom	NM	D	8	51	57	8%	130	23.88
Wilson	Heather	NM	R	20	90	91	13%	235	15.06
Berkley	Shelley	NV	D	7	54	34	5%	77	29.09
Heller	Dean	NV	R	12	87	13	2%	420	4.8
Porter	Jon	NV	R	23	92	16	2%	244	14.54
Bishop	Rob	UT	R	14	84	76	11%	354	9.9
Cannon	Christopher	UT	R	15	79	125	18%	318	11.56
Matheson	Jim	UT	D	14	59	8	1%	86	28.48
Cubin	Barbara	WY	R	32	67	269	39%	295	12.41

SOURCE: CALCULATED USING DATA FROM KNOWLEGIS, ROLL CALL AND VOTER INFORMATION SERVICES

¹ The calculation was a two-step process. First, the voting pattern of every regional division for each roll call vote was tabulated using the formula (For-Against)/(For+Against)*100. Second, these calculated values of all available roll call votes were averaged to determine a regional score.

² Available online at http://www.congress.org/congressorg/power_rankings/index.tt

³ Each region is assigned a Z-score for each variable that makes up the indicator in order to normalize and compare numerically different variables. The Z-score for a representative and for a given variable is equal to the value of the variable for that unit minus the mean value of the variable for all counties all divided by the standard deviation of the variable for the group. $Z = (X - X_{mean})/S_x$, where Z is the Z-score, X is the value of a variable for a unit, X_{mean} is the mean value of the variable for all units in the group, and S_x is the standard deviation of the variable for all units in the group. After each region is assigned a Z-score for each variable that makes up the indicator, each region is assigned an overall Z-score by averaging the Z-scores for all the counties. Then, each region is ranked in order of its overall Z-score for the indicator.