Abstract

The World of 9/11 and Beyond: The Landscape of Congressional Commissions Proposed at the Turn of the Millennium

Amelia Frappolli, Department of Political Science, Class of 2015

Thesis Committee: Professor Natalie Masuoka, Professor Deborah Schildkraut

Congressional commissions are an often utilized and rarely studied legislative strategy. While case studies regarding commissions were conducted in the 1970s, they were almost entirely qualitative studies that focused on a few select commissions of interest. These studies also exclusively examined commission legislation that had previously passed into law. Alternatively, this thesis focuses on proposed congressional commissions, with a larger sample size and quantitative analysis as part of its research design. The time period from which the data were collected included the years surrounding 9/11; from 1999-2003. The sample of 457 proposed commissions provides insight into the general landscape of the commissions proposed in Congress, along with information about various attributes of the members that sponsored the bills. Additionally, proposed congressional commissions were examined by the event that inspired their creation, such as 9/11, the Columbine shooting, and Bush v. Gore, to gain a better sense of how commissions are used by Congress in reaction to an event. This study concludes that congressional commissions proposed in relation to an event were used and presented differently than those that were unrelated to an event. Moreover, congressional commissions proposed in relation to 9/11 exhibited significant differences in terms of the types and proportion of commissions passed compared to other event commissions. This analysis presents new information on what commissions were proposed from the 106th to 108th Congress, who proposed them, and the relevance of events to commission legislation.