Further Response to "Shirking in the Contemporary Congress: A Reappraisal"

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In a response published exclusively on the *Political Analysis* website, Carson et al. provide some further analysis of our paper and our response to their critique. This note provides some additional comments which will, hopefully, be our last word on the subject.

Overall, we find the Carson et al. response to be unconvincing. Its major point, about combining the two groups of legislators departing, is simply inappropriate. Essentially, the authors' claim that what we did was somehow wrong lacks foundation and they, in turn, use an inappropriate measure to buttress their remarks.

Specifically, the rejoinder misrepresents what we previously said. In earlier work, we noted that combining the two types of members was "potentially inappropriate." In response, when using a hesteroskedistic regression, we did a statistical test and found our fears were not realized ($p = 0.31$), so we combined the categories (and, given that we are now including dummy variables for each Congress, conserving explanatory power by not estimating extra parameters certainly is a good thing). Indeed, in our original paper, we kept the two groups separate only because they varied on abstention, which is not relevant for this analysis.

Additionally, Carson et al. use the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient as a means of criticizing our approach even though it is inappropriate in this context. Cronbach's alpha is used for evaluating the dimensionality of a set of items, as on a test or questionnaire, to see whether the items are scalable. This does not fit our situation, either theoretically or empirically. We are not creating an "Exiting" scale to represent some underlying construct, and we are not comparing the value of "Exiting" for different groups of legislators. Instead, we are defining a single indicator of a member's status as a

lame-duck, after having found that the two different types of lame-duck do not behave differently. Here, the issue is whether the effects of two different variables are statistically distinguishable, and we find that they are not. The issue of scalability is simply irrelevant.