Generic Interview Question Template (English translation)

Introduction

My research has to do with the levels, and sources, of party unity in legislatures – in particular, in legislative voting. I am gathering data from many legislatures, mostly in Latin America, for a comparative analysis. I would like to ask you some questions about the XXX legislature.

Parties

How do you decide, within the legislative party, what will be the party's position with respect to a particular proposal or vote?

How is the position communicated to the members of the party before voting?

How are the rank-and-file legislators' preferences communicated to the party leadership?

Normally, do all members of the party vote together?

Are there some votes on which the party takes no official position – that is, "open" votes, on which the legislators can vote how they want?

How do you decide whether a vote will be open or disciplined?

Under what conditions or circumstances are legislative votes recorded and made public?

When votes are not recorded, how does the party leadership know how each legislator voted?

What happens if a legislator votes against his party on a disciplined vote?

Committees

Is the composition of legislative committees more or less proportional, according to party?

Are there committees (the budget committee) that are of higher precedence, and to which more experienced or expert legislators are assigned?

Does the composition of committees change each year? Partially, in order to maintain sufficient experience?

How are legislators assigned to committees? Does the President of the Congress make the assignments? What criteria are considered?

Staff
How many staff does the whole legislature have?

Are staffers dedicated to each legislator personally, or to parties, or to committees, or how?

How many staff do committees have? Party leaders? The President of the Congress?

Does the legislative staff serve as a source of technical expertise on complex policy areas, like economics, law, social or environmental or foreign policy?

Votes
Is it the case that votes on which the roll is called and each legislator is required to state his position are fairly rare? How frequent?

What are the factors that prompt this sort of vote? Divisions between parties? Within parties?

Is there an electronic voting system in the legislature? (Has the legislature considered installing one? Why has it not been adopted?)

Is attendance a problem in the legislature, or a failure to vote?

What is the significance if a legislator – or a group of legislators – does not vote, or does not attend a session when voting takes place? Is this a sign that they oppose the project under consideration? That they oppose the position of their party? Or just a lack of interest?

Is attendance a matter of discipline?

Reelection
For the most part, do members of congress want reelection? Or do they aspire to other political positions? Or do they not aspire to continue on in public office?

To get reelected, what are the most important things a legislator should do? Work hard on behalf of the party? Cultivate support among voters and groups in the district? Raise money for the electoral campaign? Other?