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Ulterior Oversight: Minority Party Investigations and the Politics of Exclusion

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ABSTRACT

The minority party in Congress faces structural barriers to influencing policy and controlling the oversight agenda. Yet even when excluded, it can use investigations and formal reports to challenge majority narratives and sustain political visibility. Building on foundational theories of legislative behavior, oversight, and recent work on minority party strategy, we examine when and how the minority uses formal oversight reports and differentiate their behavior from the majority. Using data from the Congressional Oversight Records Database (CORD), we find that minority-issued reports become shorter under unified government, less frequent when the minority is rolled more often on the floor, and longer when the minority has recently lost majority control or when its members have greater committee experience. These findings show that minority oversight is both constrained and strategic; it expands in depth when experience and recent displacement provide motivation but contracts in scope when institutional exclusion is greatest. These findings contribute to emerging research built around CORD by showing that oversight serves as a durable yet limited outlet for the minority party seeking to challenge or advance their own narratives.

1 | Introduction

On November 9, 2007, the majority staff of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform released a 41-page report titled "Allegations Regarding State Department Inspector General Howard Krongard."[1] The report detailed a series of allegations against Krongard, including that he impeded an investigation into construction contracts in Iraq, declined to pursue credible complaints of wrongdoing, and maintained inappropriate ties with those under investigation. In interviews, Krongard's actions were described as giving "the appearance that the OIG is not being independent," and the majority portrayed them as evidence of broader partisan interference that undermined the integrity of executive branch accountability mechanisms. The report served not only to document investigative findings but to frame the narrative around the administration's management of overseas operations.

Five days later, the Republican minority on the committee issued its own 117-page report titled "Governing By Accusation: The Committee's Assault on the State Department Inspector General."[2] The minority response directly challenged the majority's findings, arguing the original investigation "descended to governing by personal attack" and asserted that the accusations "remain unsubstantiated" even after more than a dozen interviews and depositions. Rather than defending every action of Krongard, the minority offered a counter-narrative: that the majority had misused the oversight process, exaggerating interpersonal conflicts to manufacture a scandal. The report warned that "the Majority's expenditure of time and taxpayer funds proving that the State Department IG is abrasive and abusive is itself an abuse of the Committee's authority," concluding that "the public deserves more than government by accusation." By casting the investigation itself as partisan overreach, the minority reframed the investigation as evidence of legislative overreach rather than executive misconduct. Together, the two reports demonstrate how oversight investigations can devolve into dueling narratives, with the minority using its own reports to contest the majority's framing and assert a competing interpretation of the same facts.

We use these dueling reports as a motivating example to examine how the minority party in Congress employs oversight not merely to oppose the majority, but to construct and advance alternative interpretations of political events. In doing so, we build on foundational accounts of legislative behavior—including Mayhew's emphasis on credit claiming (Mayhew 1974), Fenno's insights into member-constituent relationships (Fenno 1978), and Rosenthal's attention to legislators' pursuit of tangible outcomes (Rosenthal 1974a, 1974b)—to consider how these incentives operate when access to the formal levers of power is limited. Recent research shows that minority-party members act strategically to influence policy and shape communication from their institutionally disadvantaged position (Ballard and Curry 2021; Jenkins et al. 2023) and that public credit claiming and accountability statements can enhance electoral support (Grimmer 2013; Grimmer et al. 2012). We extend these literatures by treating oversight as a form of strategic accountability: a behavior that remains tied to Congress's monitoring function but also serves representational and communicative ends when undertaken from the minority. Whereas much oversight research treats Congress and committees as unified (e.g., Aberbach 1990; Balla and Deering 2013; Kriner and Schwartz 2008; MacDonald and McGrath 2016; McGrath 2013), we disaggregate this activity to examine how minority members operate under different incentives and constraints. In doing so, we highlight how oversight reports provide a formal yet flexible means for the minority to exercise political voice, contest majority narratives, and demonstrate responsiveness even without agenda-setting power.

Drawing on a collection of congressional oversight reports from the Congressional Oversight Records Database (CORD), we test how political and institutional conditions shape when and how the minority issues its own reports (Moore et al. 2026). We find that minority oversight declines as legislative exclusion deepens: when the minority is rolled more frequently on the floor, committees produce fewer reports. Report length, however, varies across political contexts. Reports are shorter under unified government but become longer when the minority has recently lost control of Congress or when its members are more experienced. These patterns suggest that oversight expands in depth, rather than frequency, when institutional knowledge and recent governing experience give minority members both the motivation and the capacity to sustain it.

These findings contribute to broader theories of legislative behavior by showing that the minority party, though institutionally constrained, adapts oversight when it is excluded in selective rather than uniform ways. Formal investigative outputs give minority members a durable vehicle for contesting dominant narratives, signaling credibility, and maintaining a visible role in the policymaking process even when agenda-setting power is limited. These reports create institutional records that allow members to communicate priorities, document dissent, and preserve alternative interpretations of political events. This article also contributes to the broader agenda developing around CORD by linking the production of minority reports to their downstream uses and content. For example, Theriault (2026) shows that oversight reports can structure later legislative activity, with reports authored by majority staff holding more weight on downstream activity than the minority. Additionally, Lowande and Weiss (2026) demonstrate that partisan investigation teams differ in the kinds of knowledge claims they make in these reports. Our contribution is to help explain the upstream politics of minority report production. That is, when the minority produces these reports in the first place, and why minority reports should be understood as both formal records of oversight and a strategic medium for the minority to contest the majority narrative. In an era of narrow majorities and continuous partisan competition (Lee 2016), recognizing these dynamics is essential for understanding how oversight functions as both an instrument of accountability and a strategy for political relevance in Congress.

2 | Legislative Oversight

Decades of research have examined why legislators engage in oversight and how it shapes the behavior of government agencies, private contractors, and the public sector (Aberbach 1990; Ban and Hill 2025; Clinton et al. 2014; Boehmke and Shipan 2015; Kriner and Schickler 2016; Lowande and Potter 2020; MacDonald and McGrath 2016; McGrath 2013; Parker and Dull 2009). Oversight serves both institutional and political purposes. Institutionally, it helps ensure that agencies implement laws as intended and reinforces Congress's constitutional role in checking executive power. Politically, it allows legislators to define issues, signal responsiveness, and frame narratives that advance their party's goals (Balla and Deering 2013; Lowande 2018; McCubbins and Schwartz 1984).

Classic scholarship, however, has portrayed oversight as a thankless task—time-consuming and rarely rewarded by voters (Mayhew 1974; Ogul and Rockman 1990; Rosenthal 1974a). Members tend to favor activities with more direct credit-claiming opportunities, such as casework or bill sponsorship. More recent work complicates this view. In an era of permanent campaigning, oversight can also be a venue for position-taking and partisan differentiation. Committee chairs from competitive districts, for example, are more likely to hold oversight hearings, suggesting they see political value in that work (Feinstein 2018). Likewise, investigations that uncover waste or mismanagement can boost members' reputations for competence and accountability (Aberbach 1990; MacDonald and McGrath 2016; McGrath 2013; Eldes et al. 2024).

Party control strongly conditions when and how oversight occurs. The majority typically uses it to support its governing agenda through identifying bureaucratic inefficiencies, justifying policy change, or reinforcing its policy brand (MacDonald and McGrath 2016; Kriner and Schickler 2016). Under divided government, both parties have incentives to intensify investigations into the opposing administration's performance (Kriner and Schwartz 2008; McGrath 2013; Parker and Dull 2009). Yet much of what we know about these dynamics comes from studies of hearings, which represent only one dimension of oversight.

Recent research shows that members also engage in oversight through alternative channels such as information requests and direct agency correspondence (Lowande 2018; Lowande and Potter 2020; Selin and Moore 2023). These activities expand opportunities for legislators to monitor, signal, and communicate outside of the formal hearing process, reflecting a broader conception of oversight as both institutional control and political communication.

Research also shows that oversight meaningfully influences agency behavior. Studies of federal rulemaking, agency performance, and responsiveness to political principals show that pressure through oversight can be effective (Ban and Hill 2025; Boehmke and Shipan 2015; Feinstein 2018; Lowande 2019; Lee and Park 2024; Whitford 2005). For example, Lowande and Potter (2020) find that when House and Senate members challenge Environmental Protection Agency proposals, the agency responds by lengthening comment periods and reevaluating analytical assumptions, delaying final rules and, in several cases, altering regulatory stringency. The extent of this responsiveness, however, depends on both agency and congressional capacity: resource-rich agencies can better absorb oversight pressure, and well-staffed committees are more capable of sustaining it (Clinton et al. 2014; Drolc and Keiser 2021; Gailmard and Patty 2012). Together, this work demonstrates that oversight—broadly conceived—remains a consequential instrument of legislative influence even when it occurs outside of formal hearings.

At the same time, Congress's internal rules and power asymmetries shape who can exercise that influence. Committee chairs largely control agendas, witnesses, and subpoena authority, leaving rank-and-file and minority members with a modest set of formal tools. House and Senate rules guarantee minority members the right to append dissenting or supplemental views and, in some cases, to request a minority witness day. These provisions ensure the minority's perspective can be placed on the record, but they do not compel the majority to share investigative leadership. Similarly, statute allows a group of House Oversight Committee members to request information from the executive, a tool often invoked by minority members to seek documents the majority is not pursuing.[3] However, changes to House rules beginning in the 118th Congress require the committee chair to be one of the included signatories, weakening the minority's ability to unilaterally seek information from the executive branch (Hudiburg 2025).[4] Within these constraints, legislators—especially those outside the majority—turn to alternative oversight routes such as producing their own reports to contest the existing narrative or formally record their findings.

3 | Claiming Oversight

Credit claiming in Congress is just as much a part of the job as attending committee meetings and pursuing policy goals. Individual legislators and parties use communications to define problems, signal priorities, and demonstrate responsiveness and competence to multiple audiences—constituents, party leaders, policy subsystems, and the press (Arnold 1990; Fenno 1978; Lee 2016; Mayhew 1974). Because most legislative work is opaque, members must make their efforts known. As such, credit claiming and communicating with stakeholders are core activities of representatives.

Existing literature shows that members cultivate reputations through strategic messaging about their activities and priorities with the goal of gaining favorability among constituents. The messages legislators send are just as important as the content of their policies and the benefits they win for their districts. Grimmer et al. (2014) demonstrate that what legislators say—via press releases, newsletters, and other communications—shapes constituent credit allocation and creates an "impression of influence." In this way, legislator communication choices complement material actions like spending and bill sponsorship.

For members of the minority party, this communication is especially important given their constrained influence over policy. With fewer opportunities to claim legislative wins, minority members can place greater value on activities that produce public-facing evidence of effort. Oversight outputs, from agency correspondence letters to formal committee reports, produce public records that members can reference in their own communications, linking their monitoring to claims of responsiveness and holding others accountable (Grimmer et al. 2012; Grimmer 2013). Moreover, legislative oversight reports provide an alternative pathway for the minority to note flaws or discrepancies with the majority party and situate themselves for an institutional shift.

These features make oversight a particularly attractive vehicle for party branding and coordinated messaging. Committees can convert investigative findings into press releases, floor statements, and media appearances that anchor a common narrative about problem detection and proposed remedies (Arnold 1990, ch. 3). High-salience inquiries like Watergate, Iran-Contra, and Benghazi illustrate how oversight can generate sustained attention and shape the broader political agenda, and research shows such episodes can alter evaluations of Congress and the executive and influence electoral outcomes (Kriner and Schickler 2016). Survey evidence likewise indicates that when citizens learn a member or committee engages in oversight, evaluations of those actors improve, consistent with the idea that these outputs are effective for cultivating reputations (Miller and Ruder 2020).

Moreover, recent work on oversight reports clarifies why minority-authored reports deserve separate attention. Theriault (2026) moves the conversation beyond investigations to the legislative activity that follows them, showing that oversight reports can help structure later bill referrals and legislative agendas, but that majority and minority reports do not appear to travel through Congress in the same way Lowande and Weiss (2026) point to a different but related distinction: reports also vary in the kinds of claims they make. Their analysis separates oversight content into findings, evaluations, predictions, and recommendations, showing that partisan investigation teams rely more heavily on raw findings and make fewer recommendations than bipartisan teams (Lowande and Weiss 2026). Important to our argument, minority reports are likely to face a credibility problem that majority and bipartisan reports do not. From its more disadvantaged position in Congress, the minority must use reports to demonstrate expertise, document evidence, and preserve an alternative account, even when it lacks the power to make that account the official committee position.

In short, oversight provides minority members with assets that “travel” across venues—press releases, floor statements, and media—and supply concrete, public records of monitoring when legislative routes are limited. This logic motivates our focus on oversight reports as a window into how members can communicate their priorities and distinguish themselves institutionally, especially during times when influence over policy is limited. Reports are formal, citable products that turn committee investigations into visible records of engagement, making them valuable indicators of when and how legislators use oversight as part of their broader political activity.

Oversight reports offer a view into how committees assess policies, agencies, and outcomes. They function as a position-taking tool; once released, they also enable members to claim credit for monitoring and problem detection. While congressional work is often perceived as opaque, oversight reports can be highly revealing—laying out findings, rationales, and proposed remedies. We borrow from the legislator messaging literature to motivate our expectations about report production. By examining how often committees issue reports and how these products vary in scope, we assess the conditions under which legislators invest in oversight as part of their work. We focus on the minority party, which has much to gain from these efforts but is often overlooked in studies centered on formal agenda power.

4 | Motivating Minority Party Oversight

Despite extensive research on congressional oversight, most studies do not differentiate between the actions of the majority and minority parties, instead treating oversight as a largely undifferentiated institutional function. This approach overlooks how the minority, despite lacking agenda-setting power, can strategically use oversight as a tool to challenge the majority's narrative, signal competence, frame political issues, and set themselves up for credit-claiming opportunities. While existing work emphasizes the political and policy motivations behind oversight, it rarely considers how those dynamics operate differently for the minority party or how institutional and partisan contexts shape their engagement. In particular, we know little about the conditions under which minority members choose to assert themselves through formal oversight outputs, such as issuing separate reports. This project addresses that gap by examining when, how, and under what circumstances the minority leverages oversight reports to present an alternative message or challenge the majority's narrative.

The dynamics that drive minority oversight are not a scaled-down version of majority behavior. They are distinct, emerging from asymmetries in agenda control, visibility, and access to institutional resources. Much of majority-led oversight proceeds through the formal structures of the committee system—hearings, subpoenas, and coordinated reports—designed to monitor executive compliance and inform policymaking. Minority oversight, by contrast, often operates as a parallel or counter-record, allowing members to document evidence, express dissent, and project policy vigilance when they are excluded from shaping the official committee narrative. Separate reports serve as one of the few institutional mechanisms through which the minority can exercise initiative and establish a record of engagement independent of the majority.

In an era of intense partisanship and fragile majorities, these incentives have become even more pronounced. Today's “insecure majorities” leave both parties aware that control of Congress is always at stake (Lee 2016). Minority members, lacking the ability to advance legislation or set committee agendas, can turn to oversight as a means to maintain visibility, differentiate their party brand, and communicate governing priorities. Separate reports allow the minority to highlight executive branch missteps, contest the majority's framing of policy issues and outcomes, and demonstrate responsiveness to constituents and other stakeholders. This strategy reflects broader patterns of partisan messaging in Congress, where communication and agenda control are central to party competition (Curry and Lee 2022). As such, oversight becomes both a venue for policy scrutiny and a form of political communication. In this way, it allows the minority to exercise influence through the production of information and the framing of accountability rather than through the passage of legislation.

This distinction also helps reconcile our argument with related work. If majority reports are more likely to be connected to subsequent legislative activity, as Theriault (2026) shows, minority reports may serve a different function. They may be less consequential as direct legislative inputs but more important as records of dissent, expertise, and party positioning. Similarly, the evidence offered by Lowande and Weiss (2026) suggests that minority reports should not be treated as thinner versions of majority reports. They are likely to differ in purpose, audience, and structure.

Importantly, the motivations underlying minority oversight differ from those of the majority in scope and kind. Majority committees tend to investigate as part of their institutional duty or to reinforce their governing agenda, particularly when oversight aligns with the party's policy goals. The minority, on the other hand, engages in oversight to construct an alternative narrative, call attention to perceived failures, and hold the majority accountable in the public sphere. These reports often function as instruments of party messaging, carving out a degree of power despite their numerically weaker position and limited direct policy influence (Ballard and Curry 2021; Jenkins et al. 2023).

In short, minority oversight reflects a distinct form of legislative behavior. It allows members to contest the majority's narrative and sustain a visible presence within an institution that structurally favors the majority. The next section develops this argument further by examining the mechanisms underlying when and how minority members use oversight reports as a strategic tool.

4.1 | Minority Oversight Under Constraint

The degree to which the minority is excluded from policymaking is central to understanding when its members turn to oversight. Minority legislators are structurally disadvantaged in shaping policy outcomes: they lack control over the floor agenda, committee leadership, and the flow of legislation. When the governing coalition is unified, this imbalance deepens, as the majority and the president share aligned priorities and little incentive to investigate one another. In such contexts, minority oversight becomes one of the few available means to contest the dominant policy narrative. Prior research shows that oversight activity tends to decline when Congress and the presidency are controlled by the same party, as legislators prioritize advancing the president's agenda over scrutinizing it (Kriner and Schwartz 2008; Parker and Dull 2009; Reynolds and Maehr 2023). This pattern creates a vacuum that the minority can fill through its own investigations and reports. These efforts not only publicize alternative interpretations of executive behavior but also demonstrate that the minority remains engaged in governing, even when shut out of the policymaking process.

Exclusion also occurs within the internal operations of committees. Majority members control hearings, witness lists, and the drafting of reports, leaving the minority with limited opportunities to influence investigative priorities or the presentation of findings. When the partisan distance between committee leaders widens, cooperation becomes increasingly difficult (Curry 2019). Under such polarized conditions, joint fact-finding and cooperation break down, and the minority can turn to issuing separate reports to register dissent and document its own version of events. These reports serve both immediate and long-term purposes: they contest the majority's framing of current controversies and establish a historical record of opposition for future Congresses. In contrast, when committees are more ideologically aligned or evenly balanced, minority members may find collaboration feasible and see less need to publish separate accounts.

A second factor shaping minority oversight is capacity. Conducting meaningful oversight—especially without the institutional support available to the majority—requires expertise, organization, and time. Minority staff and experienced members play a crucial role in identifying issues, managing evidence, and drafting reports that rival majority products in scope and detail (Curry 2019; Ommundsen 2023). When the minority's staff resources are thin, members may be limited to appending short dissenting statements to majority reports or raising concerns in hearings. With greater capacity, however, they can conduct their own investigations, compile independent evidence, and produce stand-alone reports. In other words, capacity converts the formal right to issue separate oversight documents into a tool the minority can wield routinely, a dynamic that parallels the broader link between minority resources and legislative influence identified by Ballard and Curry (2021).

Taken together, we expect both exclusion and capacity to shape minority oversight activity. Exclusion creates competing pressures. On one hand, exclusion increases the minority's incentive to use oversight reports to assert relevance, contest the majority's narrative, and demonstrate governing competence. On the other hand, deeper exclusion may reduce the minority's ability to convert those incentives into formal oversight products. When the minority is routinely shut out of winning coalitions, it may have fewer agenda hooks, less access to committee-led investigative activity, weaker informational leverage, and stronger incentives to redirect efforts elsewhere. For this reason, exclusion may increase the value of oversight reports while simultaneously reducing the minority's capacity or opportunity to produce them. The distinction between motivation and opportunity is important; even if the minority wants to contest the majority through an oversight report, they may not have the ability to do so. When the minority possesses greater capacity—through experienced staff and institutional expertise—it is better equipped to pursue these goals, generating more reports, crafting longer and more detailed analyses, and responding to the majority's findings.

5 | Research Design

To evaluate our expectations, we explore patterns of minority participation in committee oversight with a focus on written reports across three related outcomes. First, we analyze the frequency of minority-issued committee reports. Second, we examine the length of those reports as a proxy for intensity, assuming longer reports reflect greater investment and effort. Third, we focus on whether the minority issues a separate report in response to a majority-led oversight investigation. In total, these outcomes provide a fuller picture of minority oversight behavior: decisions to investigate *and* the depth of that engagement.

5.1 | Minority Oversight Reports

Oversight reports are a key tool through which congressional committees present findings and conclusions of their investigations. These reports document fact-finding efforts, summarize testimony, and offer formal recommendations for executive action, legislation, or additional inquiries.[5] While hearings often receive more scholarly and public attention (e.g., Aberbach 1990; Balla and Deering 2013; MacDonald and McGrath 2016; Marvel and McGrath 2016; McGrath 2013),[6] reports offer a lasting institutional record of oversight activity and reflect the priorities and framing adopted by the committee.

For this study, we draw on multiple sources of data. We primarily use the Congressional Oversight Records Database (CORD), a newly compiled dataset of oversight products issued by Congress since the early 1990s (Moore et al. 2026). CORD contains more than 1600 reports, each linked to its authoring committee or individual member.[7] We focus on oversight reports issued between the 103rd and 117th Congresses (1993–2022) and the seven standing committees with complete information, totaling 1448 reports.[8] We exclude any "oversight records" ($n = 332$) from the CORD database. These include any fact sheets or quick policy memos that are substantially shorter than typical oversight reports. Rather than presenting an analysis, memos are brief and list summary facts. For example, the House Committee on Homeland Security released a series of monthly "Terror Threat Snapshot" fact sheets for a period of about 2 years. In total, 1116 single-committee reports are included in the analysis, while 67 joint-committee reports are excluded. After these restrictions, the final dataset includes 474 majority-authored reports, 481 minority-authored reports, and 94 bipartisan reports produced by committees across the House and Senate.

Our primary analysis proceeds in three stages, each capturing a different dimension of minority party oversight behavior.

The unit of analysis varies across these stages: the first uses the committee-Congress, while the latter two rely on the report level. First, we examine the volume of minority-issued reports. These represent formal outputs of committee work that reflect the minority's decision to initiate or participate in oversight, even without control of the committee. While these reports may vary in scope and importance, their publication signals a deliberate choice by the minority to contribute an institutional product to the congressional oversight record. On average, the minority party in each committee releases five reports each Congress, ranging from none to 69.

Second, we consider the length of minority reports, using page count as a proxy for intensity. Longer reports generally require more resources, time, and effort, and may reflect higher stakes or greater political investment. While imperfect, length offers an observable measure of variation in the seriousness or depth of oversight work undertaken by the minority. Report length varies considerably across the dataset. While the average report is 30 pages, the interquartile range spans from 11 to 31 pages, with the shortest report at just 3 pages and the longest extending to 611. To account for skew and facilitate interpretation, we use the natural log of report pages as our measure of report length.

Third, we identify cases where the minority issued a separate report in *response* to a majority-issued report on the same topic or investigation. This represents the clearest case of the minority contesting the majority narrative, in which members do not simply append dissenting views to the majority report but instead produce a fully independent oversight product. We treat each majority-issued report as a potential opportunity for the minority to articulate an alternative narrative. While standalone minority reports are just as common as majority reports, those directly responding to majority-issued oversight reports are rare. In total, we identified 20 unique minority-issued reports that function as responses to majority-led investigations. However, the number of response linkages is slightly higher. One minority report, *No Evidence of White House Involvement or Political Motivation in IRS Screening of Tax-Exempt Applicants*, responds to three separate majority reports related to the IRS targeting controversy.[9] Accounting for this case, we found 22 total majority-to-minority response linkages.

The data for this analysis are structured at the report level, with each observation representing a single majority-issued oversight report. The dependent variable is a binary indicator coded as 1 if the minority produced a report directly responding, and 0 otherwise. Reports that include dissenting views from the minority but are not standalone are coded as 0. This structure captures the minority party's strategic decision to either accept the majority's framing or escalate by producing a distinct and public rebuttal through their own report.

Each analysis is grounded in a shared premise: that minority-authored reports reflect strategic choices about how minority party members engage in oversight. These reports, whether independently initiated or issued as a direct response to majority investigations, offer insights into how the minority invests in oversight activity. Using report frequency, length, and responses, we are able to see how minority oversight changes in response to a shifting political environment and their own capacity.

5.2 | Institutional and Political Conditions

To test our expectations, we include measures capturing the degree to which the minority is excluded from policymaking, the broader partisan context, and ideological polarization. First, unified government captures whether the minority party is entirely out of power, coded as 1 when the same party controls the House, Senate, and presidency. This measure reflects the institutional environment in which the minority's formal influence is most constrained.

Second, we include an indicator for whether the minority party previously held the majority in the last Congress, coded as 1 if the current minority was in control during the prior term. Committees led by parties that recently lost power may approach oversight differently. Having only recently relinquished agenda-setting control, these minorities may be more attentive to maintaining visibility and defending their prior record, or more motivated to challenge the new majority's framing of issues. In this sense, recent displacement from power can heighten incentives for the minority to engage in oversight as a way to signal continued relevance and articulate a contrasting policy narrative.

Finally, to capture exclusion from the legislative process itself, we include the minority roll rate—the proportion of final-passage votes in which a majority of minority-party members voted "No" and the measure still passed (Cox and McCubbins 2005, 2007).[10] This measure reflects how frequently the minority is "rolled" on the floor, providing an indicator of their influence on legislative outcomes or their opposition to the majority's policymaking goals. Higher roll rates denote Congresses in which the minority is more routinely sidelined in policymaking and may turn to oversight as an alternative venue for shaping policy narratives or asserting relevance.

To illustrate how unified government and the minority party transitioning from the majority correspond with patterns of oversight activity, Figure 1 presents the number of minority oversight reports and their average length by Congress for both chambers. As shown, the House produces substantially more minority reports than the Senate, although these tend to be shorter in length. Report activity occasionally spikes during periods of unified government—especially in the House—suggesting that unified majority control may at times prompt a more active minority response. In terms of report length, there is a modest but discernible uptick in most Congresses where the minority had recently held the majority, consistent with the idea that transitions out of power may encourage the production of more detailed oversight documents.

Turning to factors within committees themselves, we consider two sets of characteristics that shape minority oversight behavior: the degree of partisan conflict and exclusion within committees, and the capacity of the minority to act on its oversight ambitions.

First, to capture the degree of partisan conflict within committees, we include leadership polarization, measured as the absolute difference in first-dimension DW-NOMINATE scores between the committee chair and the ranking minority member

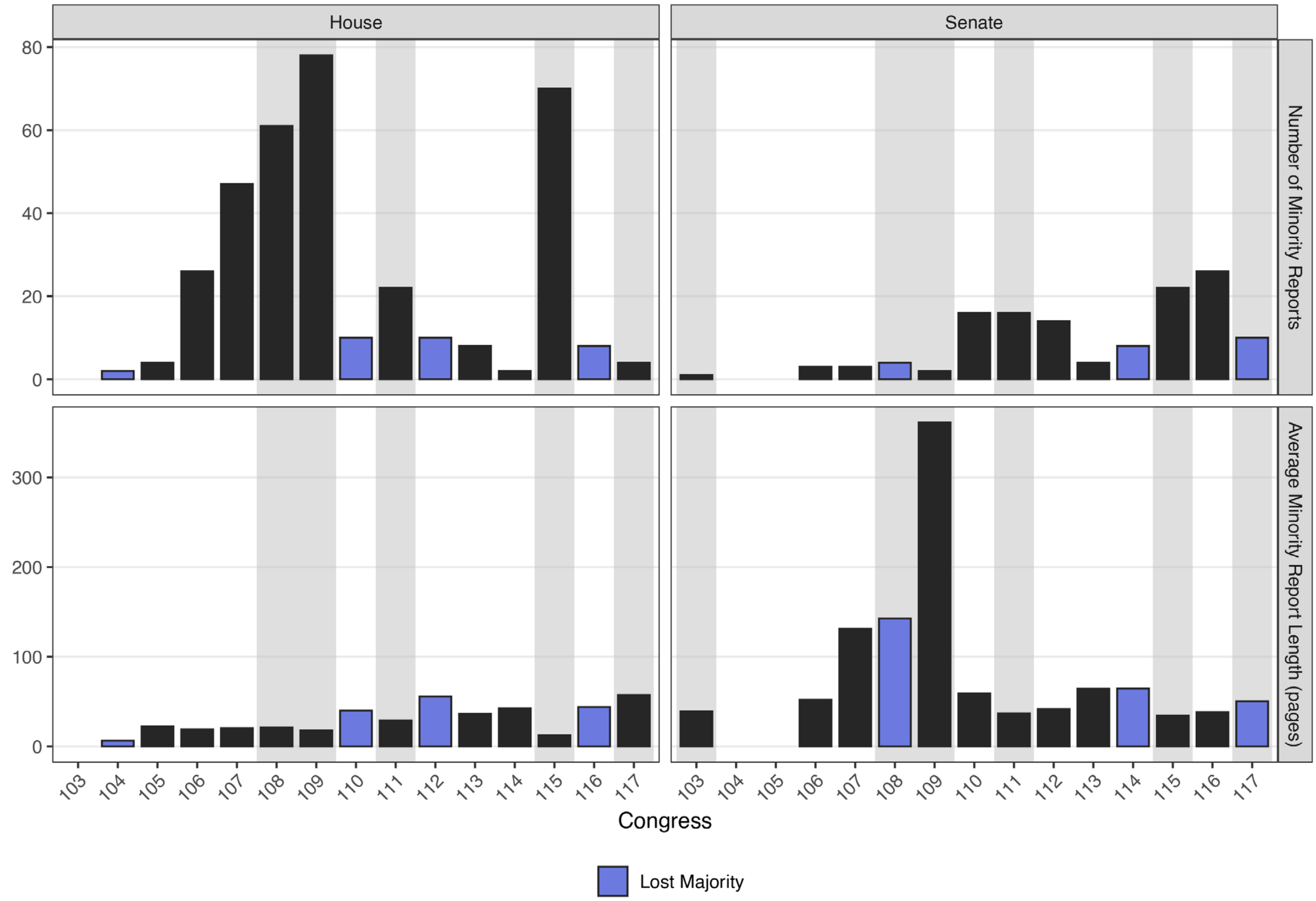

FIGURE 1 | Number and average length of minority oversight reports by Congress, 103rd–117th. Periods of unified government are shaded in gray. Bars in color mark Congresses where party control shifted, such that the chamber's current minority was the majority in the prior Congress. The top panels show the total number of minority reports issued by each chamber; the bottom panels show the average length (in pages) of minority reports.

(Lewis et al. 2025). This measure reflects the ideological distance between the two most powerful partisan figures on the committee who influence the votes and behavior of their party members (Curry 2019). It also signals how divided leadership is over agenda-setting and investigative priorities. Larger values indicate sharper partisan divides and greater potential for conflict, which should increase the likelihood that the minority issues its own oversight reports to present an alternative narrative.

We also include the committee membership margin, calculated as the number of majority-party members minus the number of minority-party members in a given committee-Congress. Wider margins indicate that the majority has a stronger procedural advantage, potentially narrowing the space for bipartisan agreement and amplifying incentives for the minority to act independently. Together, leadership polarization and the committee margin capture both ideological and potential for procedural exclusion at the committee level—conditions under which the minority may be most likely to pursue separate oversight outputs.

Next, we account for the capacity of the minority party to engage in oversight. Conducting independent investigations and producing reports requires staff time, institutional knowledge, and technical expertise. We measure minority capacity using two indicators. The first is the average years of committee service among minority members, which reflects accumulated procedural experience and familiarity with oversight processes. More experienced minority contingents should be better able to navigate institutional constraints and organize independent oversight work.

The second indicator is minority staff resources, drawn from manual counts in the *Congressional Directory* for each committee and Congress. We relied on the *Directory* because alternative sources, such as committee financial or payroll records, do not differentiate between majority and minority staff, and the directory has the historical completeness we required. When multiple directories were published during a single Congress, we used the most recent edition. Additional details about classifying staff are available in the Supporting Information. In short, these counts identify the number of staff members assigned to the minority, allowing for a direct measure of the personnel available to support oversight activities. These staff play a critical role in conducting research, drafting findings, and managing the administrative demands of producing formal oversight reports.

Finally, we include a set of controls to account for broader institutional and contextual factors that may shape oversight activity. For models at the committee-Congress level, we control for the logged number of majority reports issued (plus one) to account for overall oversight volume, which can create opportunities or pressure for minority engagement. To address potential endogeneity between staffing and oversight workload, we incorporate a lagged measure of committee activity. Specifically, we include the logged number of hearing days from the previous Congress, drawn from the Comparative Agendas Project (Jones et al. 2025), as an exogenous proxy for expected workload. Because hearing schedules can influence subsequent staffing decisions but precede current oversight production, this lagged measure helps mitigate some simultaneity concerns and better isolate the relationship between committee capacity and minority oversight behavior.

At the report level, we control for majority report length (log-transformed), since more extensive investigations may invite greater minority response. Report-level models also include an indicator for the major policy area of the report based on the Comparative Agendas Project classification system, which consists of 18 substantive categories plus an "other" category. All models include committee fixed effects to account for time-invariant differences in committee norms, jurisdiction, and reporting practices.

6 | Results

6.1 | Minority Party Reports

To assess the conditions under which minority party members engage in formal oversight activity—specifically through the production of committee reports, we estimate three models corresponding to the outcomes described above. Model 1 uses negative binomial regression to estimate the count of minority-issued reports per committee-Congress. Model 2 uses OLS to estimate minority report length (logged page count), which captures the depth or intensity of their oversight efforts. Finally, and for ease of interpretation, Model 3 also uses OLS and is structured at the level of majority-issued reports, with the outcome coded as a binary indicator of whether the minority issued a separate report in response.[11] All models reported in Table 1 include committee fixed effects and cluster standard errors by committee. Recall, we expect minority report activity to increase when the minority is excluded from policymaking and has greater capacity.

TABLE 1 | Estimates of minority oversight report activity.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	Minority reports	Report length (log)	Minority response
Unified government	0.61	−0.24*	0.006
	(0.41)	(0.11)	(0.03)
Lost majority	−0.95	0.51**	−0.04
	(0.66)	(0.15)	(0.04)
Minority roll rate	−2.8**	−0.24	0.03
	(1.1)	(0.26)	(0.13)
Minority experience	0.09	0.07**	−0.0008
	(0.13)	(0.02)	(0.004)
Minority staff	0.05	−0.02	−0.0009
	(0.05)	(0.01)	(0.004)
Hearing days$_{t-1}$ (log)	−0.35	−0.19*	−0.04
	(0.27)	(0.09)	(0.05)
Majority committee margin	−0.15	−0.02	−0.0007
	(0.15)	(0.06)	(0.004)
Leadership polarization	1.1	−0.83	−0.04
	(1.0)	(0.64)	(0.07)
Majority reports (log)	0.83		
	(0.54)		
N	83	481	474
R^2		0.36	0.04
BIC	402.13		
α	0.75		
Committee FE	✓	✓	✓
Policy Area FE		✓	✓

Note: Model 1 is negative binomial, and models 2 and 3 are OLS. Coefficient estimates with robust standard errors clustered by committee are shown in parentheses.
**0.05.
*0.1.

Beginning with Model 1 reported in Table 1, which examines the number of oversight reports produced by the minority in each committee-Congress. Unified government is positively signed, but the estimate is not statistically significant, suggesting that while minority report activity could rise modestly when the majority controls both chambers and the presidency, the relationship is not robust.

Two variables related to minority exclusion show clearer associations. The lost majority coefficient is negative, though not significant, indicating that the minority party in committees whose party recently lost control does not appear to produce more reports overall. However, the minority roll rate is negative and statistically significant. When the minority is more frequently "rolled" on final-passage votes—excluded from winning coalitions—it produces fewer oversight reports. Substantively, a one standard deviation increase in the minority roll rate (0.14) reduces the expected number of minority reports by about 33% (95% CI: −54 to −12%), or approximately two reports for the average committee.

This pattern suggests that deeper procedural exclusion in lawmaking does not necessarily translate into greater oversight activity; instead, a high roll rate may reflect a broader environment of marginalization that constrains opportunities for independent action. In that environment, members may have fewer opportunities to attach oversight work to active legislative disputes, less access to information generated by majority-led committee activity, and greater reason to invest scarce resources elsewhere at the expense of oversight activity, which we do not capture here.

Among the other controls, neither staff size nor the committee majority margin is significantly related to minority report frequency. Leadership polarization is positively signed but not significant, while hearing activity in the previous Congress is also negatively signed, implying that committees with heavier prior workloads may be less active in generating new oversight reports.

Model 2 turns to the intensity of minority oversight efforts, using report length as the outcome. The results suggest an important contrast with the patterns observed in Model 1. Whereas exclusion from policymaking—as captured by the minority roll rate—corresponds with fewer reports overall, the minority produces longer reports when it has recently lost majority status. Committees transitioning from majority to minority control appear to channel diminished influence into more extensive oversight products, investing effort in depth rather than volume.

By contrast, unified government is associated with shorter reports, indicating that when the minority is entirely out of power, its oversight reports are less substantive. Together, these findings suggest that exclusion can have heterogeneous effects: when that displacement is recent, the minority may intensify its engagement in depth, but under unified government, its willingness to do so diminishes.

Turning to the indicators of minority capacity, minority experience is positively and significantly related to report length. Committees with more seasoned minority members tend to produce more extensive reports, consistent with the idea that institutional knowledge and procedural familiarity equip members to mount deeper investigations and sustain independent framing efforts. Finally, hearing days in the previous Congress are negatively associated with report length, while other factors, including staff size, leadership polarization, and the majority margin show no consistent relationship with report length.

Model 3 focuses on whether the minority issues a separate report *directly* responding to a majority-led investigation. Because minority responses can only occur when the majority first issues an oversight report, Model 3 necessarily captures behavior that is conditional on majority activity. This dependence means the model cannot fully separate whether the absence of a minority response reflects disinterest or simply a lack of opportunity. Moreover, the small number of direct responses limits the inferential leverage of this analysis. We therefore use Model 3 primarily to document whether observable institutional and partisan conditions predict this rare form of direct rebuttal, while recognizing that many relevant triggers are likely case-specific.

Across all predictors, none are statistically significant, and most coefficients are small in magnitude. This null pattern is consistent with descriptive evidence that such responses are rare and selective rather than routine. Neither unified government nor recent loss of majority status meaningfully increases the probability of a response, and the negative coefficient for the minority roll rate indicates that more frequent legislative exclusion slightly reduces the likelihood of direct rebuttals. Likewise, leadership polarization and minority capacity show no discernible relationship with this form of oversight activity. These results suggest that formal direct responses are rare and opportunistic, emerging under circumstances not well explained by institutional or partisan conditions.

The results suggest that minority oversight activity responds most clearly to institutional exclusion and experience-based capacity rather than to broader partisan polarization or staffing levels. Although we expected that greater exclusion would lead to more frequent oversight and that institutional resources would strengthen report production, the results indicate the opposite. Committees produce fewer reports as legislative exclusion deepens, and most measures of capacity, including staff size, show little consistent relationship to report activity or length. At the same time, minority reports become longer when the party has recently lost majority control or when its members have greater experience, suggesting that adaptation takes the form of depth rather than volume. These patterns qualify the expectation that exclusion uniformly increases minority engagement and instead point to a more constrained strategy. Institutional disadvantages appear to narrow the scope of activity but prompt deeper investment when experience or recent displacement provide the means to sustain it.

To evaluate whether the patterns we identify are unique to minority oversight or reflect broader committee oversight dynamics, we conduct several robustness tests. We first estimate placebo models using majority-issued reports as the dependent variable. The results show limited evidence that majority oversight responds to the same political or organizational conditions as minority activity. The only consistent predictor of majority report production is the number of minority reports, suggesting a modest reciprocal pattern rather than shared responsiveness to institutional context. Notably, the minority roll rate operates in the opposite direction for the majority: when the minority is more frequently rolled, the majority produces more—but shorter—reports. This reinforces that the roll rate captures partisan advantage in lawmaking and that minority and majority oversight behavior are driven by distinct incentives.

To ensure the results are not driven by specific modeling choices, we estimated alternative specifications that adjust how partisan control and intra-committee dynamics are measured. Substituting unified Congress for unified government produces substantively similar results, and the key relationships involving exclusion and experience remain stable. However, when replacing leadership polarization with overall committee polarization, we find some evidence that more polarized committees tend to produce shorter minority reports, suggesting that broader ideological divides may dampen the depth of oversight activity. Notably, these checks underscore that minority oversight reflects a *distinct* strategic process shaped by institutional exclusion and experience-based capacity, rather than a broader pattern of committee workload or majority-driven oversight.

6.2 | The Minority Message

Our analysis shows that *direct* minority responses to majority oversight reports are rare, but when they do occur, they provide a revealing window into how the minority seeks to contest the majority's framing of oversight investigations. These reports do not appear to be routine records of fact-finding but deliberate acts of political communication—opportunities to dispute conclusions, defend reputations, and reassert narrative control within the committee.

In this section, we take a closer look at the content of two such responses. Our goal is not to test differences across political contexts, but to illustrate how minority members use these reports to engage in direct confrontation and messaging. The quantitative results and overall distribution of reports indicate that these responses are infrequent and selective, suggesting they are reserved for cases where the minority feels compelled to challenge the legitimacy or framing of a majority-led investigation.

These examples complement Lowande and Weiss's (2026) focus on the content of partisan knowledge claims. Whereas their analysis shows that partisan reports differ in the types of claims they make, our cases illustrate how minority members use oversight reports to reject the majority's conclusions, offer alternative interpretations of the same evidence, and shift attention to different actors or causal stories. In doing so, the minority treats formal oversight outputs as a venue for partisan communication—one that allows them to remain visible and influential even when they cannot shape the official record. The following two cases demonstrate what this looks like in practice and illustrate the rhetorical and strategic functions of minority oversight.

6.2.1 | Drug Prices

The majority staff report, titled "Drug Pricing Investigation,"[12] was released on December 10, 2021, by the Democratic-led House Committee on Oversight and Reform. The report represents the culmination of a nearly three-year investigation into the pricing practices of major pharmaceutical companies, initiated under Democratic control during the 116th and 117th Congresses. The inquiry focused on 12 of the most expensive drugs for Medicare and analyzed over 1.5 million pages of internal corporate documents.

The majority frames the investigation as evidence of systemic pricing abuses in the pharmaceutical industry, emphasizing that companies strategically raised prices to meet financial targets and leveraged patent protections to suppress competition. According to the report, "drug companies target the United States for price increases—while maintaining or lowering prices for the rest of the world—in part because Medicare cannot negotiate directly." This narrative generally supports the Democratic policy position about the role of the federal government in drug price regulation.

The report also argues that companies use reformulations and patient assistance programs to maintain monopolies rather than to benefit consumers. It cites examples such as price hikes unrelated to innovation and internal communications, describing strategies designed to "suppress competition and keep prices high." The report concludes that drug companies can raise prices with impunity because the market power they wield is unchecked, and it recommends policy reforms such as allowing Medicare negotiation, penalizing unjustified price increases, and increasing transparency in drug pricing.

On the same day, the Republican minority on the House Committee on Oversight and Reform issued a separate report in direct response to the majority's findings on drug pricing. The minority's report offered a sharply different interpretation of the investigation and challenged the majority's framing of pharmaceutical manufacturers as the primary driver of high drug costs. Rather than appending dissenting views, the minority produced a standalone document aimed at reframing the oversight narrative and highlighting what they viewed as key omissions.

Their succinct by comparison response titled "A View from Congress: Role of Pharmacy Benefit Managers in Pharmaceutical Markets"[13] did not take direct issue with the evidence but reframed the debate. The minority's version disputed the majority's conclusions and accused them of playing partisan games and failing to conduct a comprehensive inquiry. At the beginning of the report, the minority writes:

> For years, congressional Democrats have attacked brand-name pharmaceutical companies over pricing issues, claims of excessive profits, and tactics to maintain market share. In seeking to cast these companies as the sole villains in the drug cost debate, they disregard the benefits they provide the public in the form of treatments and cures, such as the three effective COVID-19 vaccines developed through Operation Warp Speed. In their focus on manufacturers, Democrats also ignore an important factor in the prescription drug debate: the practices of Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs).

The minority closed the report by contrasting their position with the Democrats', stating that:

> The cost of prescription drugs is still rising as it has consistently over the past decade, placing an ever-increasing financial strain on many Americans. Yet, instead of taking a holistic approach to investigating the causes of this continual rise, House Democrats have chosen to attack pharmaceutical companies that have brought innovative and life-saving medications to market, including three incredibly successful COVID-19 vaccines [...]

> While Democrats are unwilling to take action to address these concerns, there are several Republican proposals in the House and Senate that could provide real relief to millions of Americans struggling with the costs of their prescription drugs.

This example illustrates how the minority uses oversight reports to present a competing narrative. Released on the same day as the majority's report, the minority's report is a deliberate counter-message, reframing the target of blame and asserting policy alternatives. Rather than producing a shared account or merely appending dissenting views, the minority deployed a full, standalone document to recast the issue.

6.2.2 | White House Records

On December 4, 2000, the majority staff of the House Committee on Government Reform issued a more than 1800-page, two-volume report titled "The Failure to Produce White House E-Mails: Threats, Obstruction, and Unanswered Questions."[14] The report documents the committee's investigation into a major issue with the White House's Automated Records Management System (ARMS), which failed to archive emails from over 400 staff accounts between 1996 and 1998. These missing emails were not included in responses to subpoenas issued as part of multiple investigations, including inquiries into campaign finance violations and the Monica Lewinsky matter.

The report alleges that senior White House officials became aware of the problem in June 1998 but did not notify congressional investigators or take timely corrective action. It further claims that when contractors discovered the problem and attempted to raise concerns, they were met with threats and requests to keep the situation quiet. One contractor testified that she was asked "to keep a lid on this until they could manage the situation," while another was warned that disclosing the issue would result in a "jail cell with your name on it."

The report also charges that the White House obstructed investigations by limiting access to information and failing to produce documents. The committee—drawing parallels to the infamous 18.5-min gap on a Nixon tape—stated, "The 'gap' created by hundreds of thousands of missing e-mails, and by a Vice Presidential staff decision to manage records so they could not be searched, is of no less consequence." The report goes on to frame the issue as part of a larger pattern of noncompliance and defiance of congressional oversight. As the title of the report suggests, the majority characterized the situation as a case of "threats, obstruction, and unanswered questions," ultimately concluding that continued investigation was necessary to determine whether the email failure was accidental or part of a broader attempt to withhold information.

The minority response to the majority's extensive investigation into White House email record keeping was issued on March 1, 2001—87 days after the release of the majority report and following the transition to the George W. Bush administration. Titled "Unsubstantiated Allegations of Wrongdoing Involving the Clinton Administration,"[15] the report offers a sharp rebuttal of the majority's findings and characterizes the investigation as politically motivated rather than evidence-driven. It represents a clear effort by the minority to reframe the narrative and defend the actions of the prior administration.

The report opens with a sweeping critique of the majority's investigative record. "Over the past eight years," it begins, "Chairman Dan Burton…and other Republican leaders have repeatedly made sensational allegations of wrongdoing by the Clinton Administration," noting that the committee issued over 900 subpoenas, obtained 2 million pages of documents, and spent an estimated $23 million investigating claims that were often "unsubstantiated." The report accuses the majority of following a pattern of making accusations before investigating the issue, arguing that such tactics "have done great harm to reputations" while failing to uncover credible evidence of misconduct.

Throughout their report, the minority reinterprets the majority's allegations as examples of partisan excess rather than oversight. In one instance, it recounts that "Chairman Burton suggested numerous times on the House floor that Deputy White House Counsel Vince Foster had been murdered," then systematically walks through the findings of multiple independent counsels concluding suicide. Similar sections review allegations about the FBI files controversy, campaign finance, and IRS audits, each time emphasizing the official investigations that found "no credible evidence" or "no proof" of wrongdoing.

The tone of the report is both defensive and accusatory: it defends the administration's record while portraying the majority's approach as a political misuse of investigative authority:

> This report is not intended to suggest that President Clinton or his Administration have always acted properly. There have obviously been instances of mistakes and misconduct that deserve investigation. But frequently the Republican approach—regardless of the facts—has been "accuse first, investigate later." Further investigation then often shows the allegations to be unsubstantiated.

The report turns the lens of oversight back on the investigators, constructing a counter-narrative of partisan waste and reputational damage.

This response illustrates how the minority uses oversight reports to publicly challenge the majority's investigative framing. While it emerged in the context of the White House email investigation, the report goes well beyond that single case. It compiles examples from across the Clinton administration to show what the minority describes as a recurring pattern of "sensational allegations" and investigative overreach. Throughout, the report highlights instances where the majority's claims were not substantiated by the evidence and where independent reviews reached different conclusions. By documenting these discrepancies, the minority uses a formal oversight report to question the credibility of the majority's findings and treats oversight itself as a space for contesting overtly partisan narratives.

7 | Discussion and Conclusion

This study offers a new perspective on congressional oversight by centering the minority party, not as a passive observer, but as an active and strategic participant. Our analysis shows that minority party members use formal oversight reports to present alternative perspectives and, at times, to contest the majority's framing of investigations. These reports serve an important purpose in registering dissent, communicating governing priorities, and contrasting with the other party, reinforcing that oversight serves as both an accountability mechanism and a stage for political expression.

Our findings offer two broad takeaways. First, they refine how oversight activity should be understood, even if the results diverge somewhat from our initial expectations. We anticipated that greater exclusion would spur more frequent oversight, yet the analyses show that exclusion instead constrains the volume of minority reports. This pattern suggests that exclusion creates a tension between incentives and opportunity. Minority members have reason to contest majority narratives, but deep marginalization can limit the informational access, agenda connection, and institutional foothold needed to produce formal reports. The minority party produces fewer reports as its procedural disadvantage deepens, but the reports issued tend to be longer and more detailed when the party has recently lost control of Congress or when members are more experienced. These conditions likely provide the capacity to sustain more developed oversight; recent majority status gives the minority familiarity with the committee agenda and a record to defend, while member experience helps translate disagreement into formal investigative work. Report length also declines under unified government, indicating that complete exclusion narrows both opportunity and investment.

Second, we contribute to a growing literature on minority-party behavior in Congress (Ballard and Curry 2021; Jenkins et al. 2023). While the majority tends to dominate the institutional agenda, the minority can still participate meaningfully through separate reports that document oversight positions and differentiate party priorities. Our results suggest that political conditions and institutional experience play a larger role than staffing levels in shaping when the minority engages in oversight. These relationships are modest but consistent with a view of oversight as shaped by the political environment rather than by resource advantages alone.

Taken together, these findings support the idea of *ulterior oversight*: oversight that remains grounded in accountability yet also enables partisan differentiation when formal power is limited. Minority reports create a durable public record that contests majority narratives and signals responsiveness. Recognizing this dual purpose expands our understanding of oversight as both a governing and political act. While not fully adjudicated here, a more formal version of ulterior oversight would model it as a two-stage choice. First, minority members decide whether the expected value of producing a report exceeds the cost of doing so, where value comes from factors like visibility, narrative control, reputational defense, and future agenda positioning. Second, conditional on producing a report, they decide how much to invest in depth. Exclusion can increase the value of opposition while also raising production costs or reducing opportunities, which helps explain why the minority may substitute depth for volume under some conditions but retreat from report production under deeper forms of marginalization.

Several avenues for future research remain. First, our analysis focuses on observable outputs rather than the selection process that makes minority responses possible. Because a response typically depends on majority action, future work could model that sequence explicitly to distinguish between the decision to respond and the depth of that response. Second, both majority and minority oversight likely react to external events that elevate issues onto the congressional agenda. Disentangling how shared shocks—such as agency scandals, crises, or media attention—jointly drive report production would clarify whether observed patterns reflect strategic complementarity or parallel reactions to the same events. Third, our analysis includes seven committees. Expanding this framework to more committees may highlight more robust patterns and additional cases of the minority directly responding to a majority report. Finally, the influence of minority oversight may extend beyond the reports themselves (Theriault 2026). Future research could trace how these documents are cited in press releases, floor speeches, or subsequent investigations, offering insight into how the minority uses oversight reports as foundations for broader communication and efforts to shape public narratives.

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Data Availability Statement

Replication data and code are available at: https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/3HOHOR.

Endnotes

[1] CORD entry: https://www.cord-levin-center.org/entities/publication/3bd92794-d543-431a-aeb7-6489d95485a0.

[2] CORD entry: https://www.cord-levin-center.org/entities/publication/6b22aa60-79eb-449c-b098-68d6909c0a61.

[3] 5 U.S.C. §2954, the "Seven Member Rule".

[4] The executive branch has questioned its obligation to comply with minority requests: a 2017 Office of Legal Counsel memo asserted that only full committees or chairs (not ranking minority members) are guaranteed responses (Seideman 2022).

[5] A recent Congressional Research Service report documents the various tools Congress uses to conduct oversight and highlights the different products committees produce as a result of or during their oversight efforts: https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/RL30240.

[6] But see Selin and Moore (2023) for a comprehensive discussion of oversight conducted by legislators beyond committee hearings.

[7] The CORD database receives constant updates and expands to more committees. The seven committees included complete records of their oversight reports at the time of writing.

[8] Four committees from the House and three from the Senate: House Committee on Education and the Workforce; House Committee on Foreign Affairs; House Committee on Homeland Security; House Committee on Oversight and Reform; Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor,

and Pensions; and Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

[9] Additional information about how we identified and coded minority responses is included in the Supporting Information.

[10] The roll rate is calculated separately for the House and Senate.

[11] We also estimate this model using logit and return substantively identical results.

[12] CORD entry: https://www.cord-levin-center.org/entities/publication/d7ebd574-149a-4376-bbd0-d2149c0b5859.

[13] CORD entry: https://www.cord-levin-center.org/entities/publication/235c7abc-f384-4105-9971-22f8c807bf85.

[14] CORD entry: https://www.cord-levin-center.org/entities/publication/2698ce97-1c79-4785-9dbb-b0c1dd6ffbcf.

[15] CORD entry: https://www.cord-levin-center.org/entities/publication/a9e30374-ba34-43f9-a14f-854aa4e85e95.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section. **Table 1.A.** Number of oversight reports by committee. **Table 2.A**. Coding rules for committee staff classification. **Table 3.A**. Summary Statistics for Model 1 (number of minority reports). **Table 4.A**. Summary Statistics for Model 2 (report length). **Table 5.A**. Summary Statistics for Model 3 (minority response report). **Table 6.A**. Estimates of majority party over sight report activity. **Table 7.A**. Estimates of minority over sight report activity using alternative estimators. **Table 8.A**. Estimates of minority over sight report activity, including unified congress indicator. **Table 9.A**. Estimates of minority oversight report activity, replacing unified government indicator with unified congress. **Table 10.A**. Estimates of minority oversight report activity, including committee polarization measure. **Table 11.A**. Estimates of minority oversight report activity, replacing unified government indicator with unified congress.