Who Votes for LGBTQ Rights? The Role of Straight Allies and Religious Identity in the U.S. House

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Abstract

This study examines how religious affiliation of House lawmakers influences legislative allyship on LGBTQ policy in the U.S. House of Representatives. By using panel logistic regression models on roll-call votes of six LGBTQ-related legislation, this research analyzes lawmakers' support/opposition for key LGBTQ-related legislation, including the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act, the 2010 Don't Ask Don't Tell Act Repeal, the 2012 and 2019 Violence Against Women Act renewals, and the 2022 Respect for Marriage Act. Findings indicate that House lawmakers' party affiliation and district ideology through presidential vote margins remain dominant predictors, but evangelical Protestant identity strongly correlates with opposition. This study highlights the intersection of Christian religious conservatism and partisanship among House lawmakers in shaping legislative behavior, offering insights into the evolving landscape of substantive representation of LGBTQ issues in the U.S. Congress.

1 Introduction

This study seeks to answer the following research question: How do religious affiliation and partisanship influence voting behavior on LGBTQ-related legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives? The substantive representation of straight allies—non-LGBTQ lawmakers who support LGBTQ rights—is critical to understanding broader questions of equality and how democratic institutions respond to marginalized communities. While past research has examined descriptive representation through the role of openly LGBTQ lawmakers in passing LGBTQ-inclusive legislation, there remains a gap in understanding the role of straight allies—non-LGBTQ legislators who vote in favor of LGBTQ rights. Examining straight allies is essential to assessing the broader coalition supporting LGBTQ rights and how legislative behavior aligns with shifting public attitudes and party dynamics. Studies such as Hertzog and Lax & Phillips highlight the role of party affiliation and district ideology as dominant predictors of LGBTQ legislative outcomes (Hertzog, 1996; Lax and Phillips, 2012), but the role of religious affiliation in shaping allyship remains underexplored.

This study examines how House lawmakers' religious affiliation and partisan alignment influence their support for LGBTQ-related legislation, with particular attention to straight allies. It analyzes voting patterns across key LGBTQ bills, including the Defense of Marriage Act (1996), the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act (2009), the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act (2010), and the Respect for Marriage Act (2022). These bills represent critical moments in the evolution of LGBTQ rights policy in Congress, spanning issues such as marriage equality, military service, hate crime protections, and gender-based violence protections. By analyzing legislative behavior across these landmark votes, this study provides a more nuanced understanding of how allyship has evolved in response to shifting political and ideological landscapes.

To address this question, this study employs panel logistic regression models with bill fixed effects to analyze U.S. House lawmakers' voting patterns on LGBTQ-related legislation. This approach allows for a clearer assessment of how individual legislators' religious

affiliations and partisan alignments shape their legislative decisions across different policy contexts. Building on prior research on congressional voting behavior, this study extends Karol's (2023) analysis by incorporating bill fixed effects into the panel logistic regression model to account for differences among bills, offering a more precise estimation of how different types of LGBTQ legislation influence voting behavior.

Additionally, this study advances research on LGBTQ representation by focusing on straight allies—non-LGBTQ lawmakers who vote in favor of LGBTQ rights. It highlights how Christian evangelical conservatism intersects with party ideology to shape congressional behavior, providing new insights into the role of substantive representation in the U.S. House.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to LGBTQ Representation in Congress

Descriptive and substantive representation of minority individuals and their issues in legislative bodies have been a focal point of scholarly inquiry, particularly in understanding how straight allies (as part of substantive representation) contribute to advancing the interests of marginalized communities.

Allyship refers to actions taken by individuals from privileged groups to support marginalized communities (De Souza and Schmader, 2025). Legislatively, this allyship can be reactive, where legislators support inclusive policies mainly due to external pressures (electoral incentives, constituent demands), or proactive, actively advocating through bill sponsorship and public support independently of external pressures. For instance, straight lawmakers (non-LGBTQ legislators) may engage in proactive allyship by consistently sponsoring bills, publicly advocating for LGBTQ-inclusive policies, and prioritizing LGBTQ issues regardless of immediate electoral incentives. In contrast, reactive allies may support LGBTQ-inclusive legislation primarily when facing constituent demands or strong party pressure. Religious affiliation may also play a role in shaping these allyship behaviors, as lawmakers from conser-

vative religious backgrounds may be more likely to engage in reactive allyship, whereas those from more progressive religious traditions may be more inclined toward proactive allyship. Understanding this distinction helps explain variations in how straight allies navigate their advocacy on LGBTQ rights within Congress.

The framework of descriptive, symbolic, and substantive representation has been used to explain how LGBTQ lawmakers and their straight allies contribute to policy discussions that affect their communities (Mansbridge, 1999; Pitkin, 1967). Descriptive representation refers to the idea that elected officials should resemble the demographics of the people they represent, whereas symbolic representation deals with the broader societal meanings that such representation can entail (Mansbridge, 1999). Substantive representation, on the other hand, captures the proactive and reactive actions taken by representatives to advocate for the policy interests of a marginalized group (Pitkin 1967). While Pitkin and Mansbridge do not mention explicitly on LGBTQ descriptive and substantive representation, we can use their definitions in understanding how substantive representation works in terms of LGBTQ representation. This study looks mainly at substantive representation as the main focus.

While descriptive representation for LGBTQ individuals has gained traction in recent years with an increasing number of LGBTQ members elected to Congress, in terms of understanding substantive representation in Congress, the complexities of straight allyship and the influence of religious dynamics on legislative behavior remain insufficiently explored. This study fills this gap by explicitly examining how straight allies navigate their legislative advocacy based primarily on their religious affiliations, partisan alignments, and constituency preferences, specifically analyzing how these factors influence their voting decisions on LGBTQ-related legislation over time.

In studies of substantive representation in the literature, Herrick (2010) noted how LGBTQ members work towards advancing policy initiatives that directly impact their community, such as marriage equality and protections for transgender rights (Herrick, 2010). However, achieving substantive representation often involves overcoming significant barri-

ers, including party dynamics and constituency pressures, which can complicate efforts to pass LGBTQ-inclusive policies. Straight allies also contribute to substantive representation as their legislative efforts often complement those of LGBTQ members, creating broader coalitions for policy change.

2.2   Religion's Role in Legislative Behavior and Allyship

Religion has been highlighted as a critical predictor of legislative behavior concerning LGBTQ rights. Studies like those of McTague and Pearson-Merkowitz (2013) and Fastnow et al. (1999) provide insights into how religious affiliations shape lawmakers' votes on issues related to social and cultural issues how religious affiliations shape lawmakers' votes on social and cultural issues, including LGBTQ equality. McTague and Pearson-Merkowitz (2013), for instance, examine the influence of religious affiliation on senators' voting patterns, identifying significant polarization on "culture war" topics, including LGBTQ rights, abortion, and stem cell research, with evangelical Christian senators voting conservatively on such issues, while Jewish senators lean toward liberal positions, reflecting broader partisan divisions. Their findings suggest that religious belief systems can significantly influence legislative attitudes, offering a lens through which to analyze how religious affiliation shapes allyship dynamics, even though there their study lacks focus on allyship in LGBTQ contexts (McTague and Pearson-Merkowitz, 2013). However, McTague and Pearson-Merkowitz's study focus mainly on the US Senate as an upper-house institution, which, while a legislative institution of importance, only represents a collegial representation of state interests and not on the population. This makes my study on House lawmakers crucial to understanding on how a House lawmaker's roll-call vote patterns depend upon both a lawmaker's religious and partisanship background and constituents' ideological demographics.

On the other hand, Fastnow et al. (1999) discuss the role of religious tradition in influencing congressional roll call voting, particularly on socially conservative issues such as abortion. While the study does not explicitly address LGBTQ legislation, its findings on the

influence of Evangelicals and conservative Catholics provide a foundational understanding of how religious tradition can inform legislative behavior, which is relevant to this study on analyzing votes on LGBTQ-related issues. Evangelicals and conservative Catholics, for example, are often more likely to align with socially conservative positions (Fastnow et al., 1999). Haider-Markel and Meier (1996), on the other hand, focus on morality politics and interest group dynamics in state-level political institutions, emphasizing the influence of religious denomination groups such as evangelical Christians and Catholics, and elite support on the adoption of antidiscrimination policies (Haider-Markel and Meier, 1996). This research aims to expand the literature on the role of religious identity among lawmakers on social issues into LGBTQ rights at the federal level, as past literature mentioned here only limits its findings towards abortion rights at the federal level and on LGBTQ rights at the state level.

An underexplored area of study is the role of straight allies with specific religious affiliations in supporting LGBTQ rights. While much of the literature mentioned provides valuable insights into the influence of religious affiliation on voting behavior of various social issues, there is a lack of clarity regarding the behavior of straight allies who support LGBTQ rights despite potentially conflicting religious beliefs. This gap is particularly relevant for understanding how straight allies in Congress, particularly in a body representing the population such as the House, navigate external and internal pressures—such as party expectations, one's religious identity, and/or constituent preferences—while supporting or opposing LGBTQ causes.

2.3   Allyship in LGBTQ Representation

Allyship in LGBTQ representation is a critical yet underexplored element in the literature. Haider-Markel and Meier (1996) hint at the role of allies in advancing LGBTQ rights but fall short of examining how these allies navigate complex dynamics, such as their religious affiliations, and voter base pressures (Haider-Markel and Meier, 1996). Straight allies often

play an instrumental role in legislative bodies, especially where LGBTQ members are underrepresented. Their support can significantly influence the success of LGBTQ-inclusive policies, yet there remains a gap in understanding the challenges they face and the strategies they employ to advocate effectively within institutional constraints.

Fingerhut (2011) offers insights into allyship at the individual level, identifying factors such as personal relationships with LGBTQ individuals and values of social justice as key motivators for allyship (Fingerhut, 2011). While Fingerhut's study focuses on heterosexual allies among American citizens outside of Congress, its findings complement Haider-Markel and Meier (1996) by providing a micro-level perspective on allyship. However, these findings are limited in applicability to legislative contexts, where lawmakers must navigate institutional constraints, electoral incentives, and intra-party expectations that individual citizens do not face. This study expands the literature by specifically examining how straight allies within Congress balance their personal identities—particularly religious affiliation—and political pressures when making legislative decisions on LGBTQ rights.

Haider-Markel and Meier (1996) also highlight the unique challenges allies face, including navigating intra-party tensions and balancing political strategies with personal convictions (Haider-Markel and Meier, 1996). Their focus on morality politics provides a valuable framework for understanding the pressures allies might experience. Still, it does not delve deeply into the substantive contributions of individual allies within Congress, as their study focuses mainly on morality politics and interest group dynamics in state and local policies. By analyzing legislative behavior at the congressional level, this study provides a more direct examination of the institutional and ideological factors shaping allyship in the U.S. House, moving beyond studies of LGBTQ advocacy in general society. Tremblay (2022) further emphasizes their importance, suggesting that allies play a key role in connecting marginalized groups to legislative processes (Tremblay, 2022). This study builds on these insights by focusing on how straight allies within the US House manage conflicting religious affiliations to either advocate for LGBTQ rights effectively or oppose such policies fiercely.

2.4   Temporal Dynamics of LGBTQ Representation

The literature has largely focused on studies that examine LGBTQ legislative behavior at specific points in time or within a limited timeframe. For instance, Haider-Markel (2007) analyzes the effects of LGBTQ representation on legislative outcomes in U.S. state legislatures from 1992 to 2002, highlighting both the progress and backlash that often accompany increased LGBTQ visibility (Haider-Markel, 2007). While this study examines over-time changes in LGBTQ representation and policy responses, it does not specifically explore the role of non-LGBTQ allies in legislative advocacy.

Haider-Markel (2007) provides an important discussion on the intersection of descriptive and substantive representation, noting that increased LGBTQ visibility often triggers both greater support and intensified opposition (Haider-Markel, 2007). His study serves as a foundation for understanding legislative behavior in the context of morality politics. However, it does not analyze the longitudinal evolution of allyship among non-LGBTQ lawmakers, particularly in relation to religious affiliations, leaving an open question about the role of religious identity in shaping ally-driven legislative support for LGBTQ rights.

Karol (2023) provides a thorough over-time analysis of how party positions on LGBTQ rights have changed, emphasizing legislator conversion (changes in stance) and replacement (new legislators bringing different perspectives). Using co-sponsorship data, roll-call votes, and party platforms across multiple Congresses, he demonstrates that Democrats increasingly aligned with LGBTQ rights, while Republican resistance remained largely driven by religious conservatives Karol, 2023. While Karol (2023) examines the role of religion and ideology in shaping legislative shifts, he does not specifically isolate straight allies—non-LGBTQ lawmakers who support LGBTQ rights—as a distinct category of analysis. My study extends Karol's framework by focusing on straight allies and how their religious affiliations, partisan alignment, and district ideology shape their voting behavior on LGBTQ legislation.

Existing studies primarily track LGBTQ rights evolution at the party level, emphasiz-

ing shifts in Democratic and Republican platforms or overall polarization trends. While this provides a broad understanding of partisan transformation, it overlooks how individual legislators—especially those with different religious backgrounds—may shift their positions over time within these parties. Studying temporal dynamics at the individual level allows for a more nuanced examination of the personal and institutional factors influencing legislative allyship, rather than focusing on party shifts.

Karol (2023) provides an extensive analysis of party-level shifts in LGBTQ rights support, examining how individual legislators change their positions through conversion and replacement Karol, 2023. He assesses co-sponsorship trends and roll-call votes for specific bills using logit regression, demonstrating the partisan polarization of LGBTQ rights over time Karol, 2023. While Karol's study offers valuable insights into legislative shifts, my study extends this framework by incorporating bill fixed effects, allowing for a more precise estimation of how different types of LGBTQ legislation (e.g., marriage equality, anti-discrimination protections, military service) influence allyship among straight lawmakers.

Further extending the temporal analysis of LGBTQ representation, Bishin et al. (2021) examine congressional polarization on LGBTQ rights through mechanisms of legislator conversion (existing legislators changing their stance) and replacement (newly elected legislators with differing stances) (Bishin et al., 2021). Their analysis demonstrates that polarization emerges primarily through legislator replacement, as new legislators bring increasingly polarized positions into office (Bishin et al., 2021). However, their study does not explicitly incorporate individual legislators' social or religious identities as explanatory factors for these shifts, leaving a significant gap concerning how identity factors, such as religious affiliation, interact with these party polarization processes at an individual level—precisely the gap this study addresses.

These studies provide valuable foundations, but a gap remains in understanding the nuanced evolution of straight allies over time. While Karol and Bishin effectively track party-level transformation and legislator replacement, my study uniquely focuses on how

individual straight allies maintain or shift their positions over time within evolving political and ideological landscapes.

2.5 Party Dynamics and Religion

Party dynamics have a significant impact on allyship in LGBTQ rights advocacy. Karol (2023) discusses the shift in the Democratic Party towards more consistent advocacy for LGBTQ issues, while Haider-Markel and Meier (1996) highlight the challenges faced by Republican allies within conservative coalitions (Karol, 2023; Haider-Markel and Meier, 1996). These intra-party tensions can serve as either motivators or barriers for straight allies when deciding whether to support LGBTQ-inclusive bills.

The interaction between party expectations and religious affiliations is central to understanding how straight allies decide to support or oppose LGBTQ rights. Party expectations impose ideological and electoral pressures, guiding how lawmakers vote. While Democratic legislators often face pressure to align with a pro-LGBTQ stance, Republican lawmakers must navigate conservative voter bases that largely oppose such measures. However, religious identity can amplify or moderate these partisan pressures. McTague and Pearson-Merkowitz (2015) find that religious identity strongly influences senators' voting behavior on LGBTQ rights. Evangelical Protestant senators maintain consistently conservative positions, reflecting their conservative religious teachings on morality, while Jewish senators consistently support LGBTQ rights, aligning with religious values emphasizing social justice (Mctague and Pearson-Merkowitz, 2015).

Evangelical Protestants have historically opposed LGBTQ rights due to their strict, conservative theological emphasis on biblical literalism, traditional gender roles, and moral conservatism (Hill et al., 2004; Schnabel, 2016). Many evangelical denominations, including the Southern Baptist Convention, have actively lobbied against same-sex marriage and non-discrimination protections, particularly since the rise of the Religious Right in the 1980s, which solidified evangelical alignment with the Republican Party during the Reagan ad-

ministration (Wilcox, 2018). Conversely, Jewish legislators tend to be more supportive of LGBTQ rights, reflecting the historical Jewish emphasis on social justice, minority solidarity, and progressive reform within Reform and Conservative Judaism (Boockvar, 2023; Human Rights Campaign, n.d.-b; Human Rights Campaign, n.d.-a). Mainline Protestants often fall in between these two groups, with some denominations supporting LGBTQ inclusion (e.g., Episcopalians, United Church of Christ), while others remain divided (Bean and Martinez, 2014).

Religious sorting has reinforced partisan polarization in Congress, with evangelical Christians increasingly aligning with the Republican Party and Jewish legislators leaning toward the Democratic Party (McTague and Pearson-Merkowitz, 2013). However, religious affiliation does not always dictate alignment with partisan expectations—some lawmakers' religious backgrounds push them toward positions that diverge from their party's stance, shaping the complexity of allyship in LGBTQ advocacy. By analyzing the House, this study extends prior research on the Senate (Mctague and Pearson-Merkowitz, 2015) by examining how religious identity interacts with party expectations in a chamber where legislators are more directly accountable to district-level ideological and religious pressures.

2.6 Beyond LGBTQ Identity: How Lawmakers' Backgrounds Shape Allyship

LGBTQ representation is often analyzed through sexual orientation and gender identity, but lawmakers' religious beliefs and partisan affiliations may also shape their advocacy for LGBTQ rights (Clyde Wilcox et al., 2020). While much of the literature on LGBTQ representation in legislatures focuses heavily on descriptive representation, fewer studies examine on how straight lawmakers engage in substantive representation through various forms of allyship for LGBTQ communities.

2.6.1 The Role of Lawmakers' Religious Backgrounds in Straight Allyship

Research suggests religious affiliations significantly influence policy attitudes, partisan alignments, and broader cultural politics related to LGBTQ issues. Wilcox & Robinson (2010) highlight evangelical Protestant activism in shaping policy attitudes, particularly opposing LGBTQ rights. Layman (2001) further demonstrates how evangelical Protestantism has reshaped partisan coalitions and voter alignments around moral and cultural conflicts, such as LGBTQ rights and abortion. However, both studies primarily examine voters and activists rather than explicitly analyzing congressional lawmakers' voting behaviors.

Karol (2023), on the other hand, examines how partisan positions on LGBTQ rights evolved within Congress, analyzing legislator conversion and replacement to explain growing polarization on these issues. Yet, while Karol offers critical insights into congressional behaviors, he does not explicitly explore how specific religious affiliations among lawmakers, such as evangelical Protestant or Catholic identities, shape their individual decisions on LGBTQ-related legislation. This study addresses that gap by specifically analyzing how religious affiliations intersect with partisan pressures to shape straight lawmakers' allyship toward LGBTQ rights within the U.S. House.

2.6.2 Shifting the Focus from Marginalized Lawmakers to Majority Straight Allies

Most studies examining on legislative representation and advocacy focus mainly on marginalized lawmakers (e.g., Black, female, or LGBTQ legislators) and how their identities (as well as their intersectional status if they have multiple minority identities) shape their ability to advocate for policies affecting their marginalized communities as part of descriptive representation (Shames, 2017; Reingold, 2022). However, there has been limited research on how lawmakers that are not of a minority identity (such as straight, white, male legislators) engage in allyship with a marginalized community and what factors (whether it's their religious background, partisanship, congressional district ideology) influence their advocacy.

Most research on legislative representation and advocacy has focused on marginalized lawmakers (e.g., LGBTQ legislators), neglecting to fully explore how majority-group lawmakers, such as straight allies, engage substantively with marginalized issues. This gap limits understanding of factors—especially religious affiliation, party identity, and district characteristics—that shape legislative allyship among straight lawmakers. Rather than using intersectionality, a framework primarily applicable to marginalized groups, this study employs identity-based substantive representation and coalitional representation theories to explore how straight allies navigate their identities to advance LGBTQ rights within the U.S. House.

Previous studies by Bishin and Smith (2011, 2013) explore subconstituency politics, arguing non-minority legislators often respond strategically to intense minority groups within their districts rather than broadly held majority preferences when voting on polarizing issues such as LGBTQ rights. These legislators prioritize the preferences of vocal, committed minorities within their electorate, sometimes defying general public opinion to secure political support from these influential groups. However, these studies leave open the question of how legislators' personal identities—particularly religious affiliation—interact with subconstituency pressures, an area my study directly addresses through an identity-based approach.

2.7   Bridging the Gap: The Contribution of This Study

This study fills this gap by examining how religious affiliation and partisanship interact to influence straight lawmakers' allyship toward LGBTQ rights. While prior studies have addressed party-level shifts (Karol, 2023) and state-level policy dynamics (Haider-Markel and Meier, 1996), they have not systematically explored individual lawmakers' religious affiliations as they influence support for LGBTQ rights legislation over time at the federal level. This study fills this gap by examining how religious affiliation interacts with party pressures to influence straight lawmakers' allyship in LGBTQ rights, and how allyship in LGBTQ legislative support has evolved over time.

To assess these dynamics, this study conducts a panel logistic regression model with bill fixed effects of congressional votes on key LGBTQ-related bills, including the Defense of Marriage Act (1996), the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act (2009), the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act (2010), the Violence Against Women Act (2012, 2019 renewals), and the Respect for Marriage Act (2022). Unlike prior research, which often treats religion and party affiliation as separate influences, this study examines how they interact to shape congressional voting behavior. McTague and Pearson-Merkowitz (2013) demonstrate that religious identity does reinforce partisan divides rather than acting independently, particularly among evangelical Protestants and Jewish legislators. Building on McTague and Pearson-Merkowitz's study, this study extends their findings into the US House to provide a more nuanced understanding of how personal identity factors—such as religious affiliation—mediate institutional party dynamics and influence policy advocacy over time in the lower house.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader literature by expanding theories of identity-based substantive representation (Mansbridge, 1999) to include majority-group allies in LGBTQ advocacy and by applying coalitional representation frameworks (Swers and Rouse, 2011) to explain why straight lawmakers engage in LGBTQ allyship despite electoral and religious constraints. Additionally, by providing empirical evidence on the longitudinal shifts in allyship, rather than relying on static cross-sectional analyses, this study advances a more comprehensive understanding of LGBTQ rights advocacy in the U.S. Congress. By bridging the gap between the House lawmakers' religious affiliations, and their legislative behavior, this research sheds light on the evolving nature of allyship and the conditions under which lawmakers become effective advocates for marginalized communities.

Having identified the gaps in existing literature, the following section uses Social Identity Theory and theories of coalitional representation to explain why and how religious and partisan identities shape allyship among straight lawmakers.

3 Theory and Hypotheses

3.1 Theoretical Framework

3.1.1 Identity-based Substantive Representation

Mansbridge (1999) argues that descriptive representation can enhance substantive representation through actions in the relationship between the lawmaker and constituents such as fostering trust, improving communication, and advocating for the interests of constituents (Mansbridge, 1999). Shared lived experiences between the lawmaker and their constituents are highly important and beneficial in contexts when there is mistrust in relationship between a marginalized group and the government or where policy concerns related to the marginalized group remain ignored in the legislative agenda (Mansbridge, 1999). In these kind of scenarios, there is a necessity that a lawmaker must be a strong advocate for marginalized constituents in order for their voices and interests to be heard in the legislative agenda (Mansbridge, 1999). Descriptive representation, according to Mansbridge, is not always necessary for effective advocacy. In certain conditions, such as when a policy area related to the marginalized community is still evolving or when a white, male lawmaker can establish trust with a marginalized community, representatives that do not fit descriptive representation can still serve as effective advocates (Mansbridge, 1999). However, in such conditions, this would require for the lawmaker to exert additional efforts and actions to gain credibility and effectively communicate the concerns of marginalized groups (Mansbridge, 1999). While Mansbridge's theory focuses mainly on racial and gender representation and not on LGBTQ representation or allyship, her theoretical argument provides a strong foundation in understanding on how straight House lawmakers might engage in substantive allyship for LGBTQ rights, especially in legislative contexts where LGBTQ representation in legislature is limited in numbers.

While identity-based substantive representation helps explain why some allies emerge, it does not fully capture the mechanisms through which allies advocate for LGBTQ rights. For

this, we turn to coalitional representation theory.

3.1.2 Coalitional Representation and Legislative Advocacy

Swers and Rouse (2011) further refine the role of legislative allies by emphasizing on the theory of coalitional representation, where lawmakers from outside marginalized communities align with marginalized communities and their interests to advance shared policy goals (Swers and Rouse, 2011). Their research on women and ethnic minority lawmakers shows that legislative coalitions between the marginalized and the non-marginalized are crucial in advancing policies that benefit the marginalized group (Swers and Rouse, 2011). Allies from dominant groups (such as white, male lawmakers) can help amplify and legitimize marginalized voices in the lawmaking process. This framework can be applied to this study in theorizing that straight lawmakers may engage in LGBTQ allyship not only due to personal beliefs but also because of coalition-building within their party and legislative networks.

Legislative coalitions in support of LGBTQ rights can emerge both formally, through structured groups such as the Congressional LGBTQ+ Equality Caucus, and informally, through bipartisan cooperation or cross-party alliances on specific LGBTQ-related bills. Straight legislators may become proactive allies through actions such as sponsoring/co-sponsoring LGBTQ rights legislation as a message of commitment to their advocacy, publicly advocating for LGBTQ protections, voting consistently in roll-call votes in favor of LGBTQ-inclusive policies, as well as using their political capital to push for coalition-building with LGBTQ lawmakers to advance legislation.

3.1.3 Social Identity Theory and Allyship

Social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) suggests individuals derive a sense of self from their group memberships (Tajfel, 1979). In legislative settings, straight allies may identify with LGBTQ communities due to personal relationships or shared values, such as commitments to equality or social justice. Such values can be shaped by personal expe-

riences, family upbringing, and notably, religious beliefs and partisan identities. Legislators' religious affiliations can inform their views on morality and social justice, motivating proactive or reactive allyship behaviors depending on the congruence between their religious convictions and party platforms. Additionally, party alignment itself can become a form of social identity, exerting electoral and ideological pressures that influence lawmakers' willingness to advocate openly for LGBTQ rights. Social identity theory thus helps explain why legislators from similar partisan backgrounds or religious traditions may adopt comparable advocacy styles, emphasizing either proactive legislative sponsorship and vocal support, or reactive voting behaviors driven primarily by external pressures and constituent demands. For instance, evangelical Protestant Republican legislators may vote consistently against LGBTQ legislation to maintain alignment with their religious and political identities and constituent expectations, while Democratic legislators from more liberal religious traditions might proactively advocate for LGBTQ rights, reflecting their religious values of equality or social justice.

3.1.4 Temporal Dynamics and Policy Shifts

Building on theories of policy change (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993), this study hypothesizes that allyship and support for LGBTQ rights evolve over time in response to significant legislative and societal events (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993). Key legislative milestones such as the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) renewal, and the Respect for Marriage Act provide critical opportunities to observe how allyship has shifted in the U.S. House of Representatives.

For example, DOMA, passed in 1996, was supported by a significant number of House Democrats at a time when public opinion on same-sex marriage was largely opposed. This reflected the broader political landscape, where supporting LGBTQ rights was seen as politically risky. However, as public opinion began to shift in favor of LGBTQ equality over the subsequent decades, many of the same legislators reversed their positions. By the time the

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Respect for Marriage Act was passed in 2022, bipartisan support highlighted the evolution of allyship and the broader normalization of LGBTQ rights within the political mainstream.

Similarly, the VAWA renewal effort in 2019, which included expanded protections for transgender individuals, illustrates how legislative events can highlight allyship dynamics. While the bill passed in the House, its LGBTQ-inclusive provisions, such as prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in shelters and services, faced opposition in the Senate and among conservative lawmakers. Legislators from moderate or conservative districts who supported these provisions likely faced significant pressures from their constituents and party leadership, showcasing the interplay between political context, ideological divides, and allyship evolution.

To systematically capture these temporal shifts in allyship, this study employs panel logistic regression models with bill fixed effects. Unlike previous studies, such as Karol (2023), which primarily analyze aggregate party-level transformations, this approach isolates how individual lawmakers' support for LGBTQ rights changes across different legislative contexts over time. By controlling for bill-level characteristics, this methodology ensures that shifts in allyship are not merely the result of broader partisan trends but also reflect variations in the policy content and salience of each legislative proposal. This allows for a more precise estimation of how lawmakers' religious affiliations, party alignments, and constituency preferences interact with key legislative moments to influence voting behavior on LGBTQ rights.

These examples demonstrate how temporal dynamics—including shifts in public opinion, changing party platforms, and the emergence of key legislative events—reshape allyship over time. As LGBTQ rights became more widely accepted over time in the 21st century until the 2020s, lawmakers previously hesitant to support such policies recalibrated their positions to align both their party's evolving stance (mainly among Democrats) and the preference of constituents. This study aims to analyze these patterns to better understand how straight allies adapt their advocacy strategies in response to evolving societal norms and policy

priorities.

3.2 Hypotheses

Building on existing literature on legislative allyship, party dynamics, and religious influence in policymaking, this study develops the following hypotheses to examine the role of a House lawmaker's religious affiliation identity, partisanship affiliation, and electoral factors in shaping their LGBTQ-related voting behavior in the U.S. House of Representatives.

H1a: Evangelical Baptist lawmakers will be significantly more likely to oppose LGBTQ-related legislation compared to lawmakers of other religious affiliations due to the historical alignment between evangelical theology and conservative policy stances on LGBTQ rights (Wilcox & Robinson, 2010; Layman, 2001)

Evangelical Baptists have historically been the most opposed to LGBTQ rights due to their religious group's strong theological conservatism and alignment with anti-LGBTQ policy stances. House lawmakers who identify themselves as Evangelical Baptists also tend to oppose LGBTQ-inclusive policies at higher rates than other religious groups.

H1b: Mainline Protestant lawmakers are more supportive of LGBTQ rights compared to Evangelical Baptist lawmakers.

Mainline Protestant denominations include both LGBTQ-affirming and more conservative groups, leading to greater variation in voting behavior. However, Mainline Protestants overall also tend to be less opposed to LGBTQ rights than Evangelicals, as many denominations (e.g., Episcopalians, Presbyterians) have taken more progressive stances on LGBTQ inclusion.

H1c: Catholic lawmakers show more mixed voting patterns, but overall are less likely to oppose LGBTQ rights than Evangelical Baptist lawmakers.

The Catholic Church officially opposes same-sex marriage but has a more complex stance on LGBTQ issues, particularly regarding anti-discrimination protections. Catholic House lawmakers, especially those from diverse or Democratic-leading districts, may adopt more

moderate or liberal positions compared to Evangelical lawmakers.

H1d: Jewish lawmakers are among the most supportive of LGBTQ rights compared to lawmakers of other religious affiliations.

For this hypothesis, Jewish denominations (e.g., Reform and Conservative Judaism) have a long history of supporting LGBTQ rights. Jewish lawmakers in the House tend to align strongly with liberal and civil rights traditions, making them among the most consistent supporters of pro-LGBTQ policies.

H2: Democratic lawmakers are significantly more likely to vote in favor of LGBTQ rights compared to Republican lawmakers.

For this hypothesis, partisan polarization on LGBTQ issues has been trending for the last decade, with Democrats overwhelmingly supporting LGBTQ protections and Republicans generally opposing them. Party affiliation here serves as a key determinant of voting behavior, often overriding religious influences.

4   Research Design

This study aims to examine how straight allies in Congress advocate for LGBTQ rights and how their support evolves in response to changing societal and legislative dynamics. The research design integrates a combination of data sources, analytical frameworks, and modeling techniques to systematically address the outlined hypotheses.

4.1   Data Sources

This study utilizes multiple data sources to examine the factors influencing straight allies' advocacy for LGBTQ rights. Roll-call votes for the Defense of Marriage Act (1996), the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act (2009), the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act (2010), Violence Against Women Act renewals (2012, 2019), and the Respect for Marriage Act (2022 - both the House and Senate versions) are sourced from the

U.S. House Clerk's Office, ensuring comprehensive coverage of voting behavior across relevant legislative periods for all LGBTQ-related legislation that were passed in the House. For these LGBTQ-related legislation, the congressional periods that are relevant for this study are the 104th, 111th, 112th, 116th, and 117th congresses. For my independent variables, the religious and party affiliations of all House members of the 104th, 111th, 112th, 116th, and 117th congresses were curated from both the legislatorR dataset in R and the Pew Research Center's religious affiliation for every congressional session since the 111th congress (as well as manual imputation and verification of their party affiliations through external sources online such as Ballotpedia, Legistorm, and Wikipedia, especially in the case of the lack of available religious affiliation dataset online for 104th Congress). As for Democratic presidential vote, Erik Engstrom generously gave me his own dataset that contains Democratic presidential vote by congressional district until the 2016 presidential election. For the 2020 presidential election, I had to utilize the Daily Kos blog website where they do publish datasets made by the Daily Kos team on recent presidential election votes by congressional district since 2008.

4.2   Operationalization of Key Variables

4.2.1   Dependent Variable: Legislative Voting Behavior

The dependent variable in this study is vote binary, which captures whether a House member voted in favor or in opposition to LGBTQ-related legislation. This variable is coded as a binary indicator, where 1 represents a vote in favor of the proposed LGBTQ-related legislation and a value of 0 indicates opposition. The roll-call votes used in this study are drawn from key legislative actions on LGBTQ rights, including votes on the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, the Violence Against Women Act (2012 and 2019), and the Respect for Marriage Act (House and Senate versions). These votes here serve as meaningful indicators of congressional support or opposition towards the expansion of LGBTQ rights over time. While most of the LGBTQ-related legislation are legislation related to promote

LGBTQ rights and inclusivity, only the Defense of Marriage Act of 1996 and the Violence Against Women Act of 2012 are to be seen as LGBTQ-excluded legislation due to textual language in their legislation that either limits the rights of LGBTQ minorities or expunges any mentioning of LGBTQ minorities from its original draft.

4.2.2 Independent Variables

To examine the factors that influence House lawmakers' vote on LGBTQ-related legislation, I include three key independent variables in the model: religious identity of lawmakers, party affiliation, and Democratic presidential vote share. The choice of these variables in the model is grounded in existing literature on the role of religion, district ideology, and partisanship in shaping policy preferences. These independent variables are selected based on prior research indicating their significant influence on LGBTQ legislative behavior. Religious identity is included as a key explanatory factor, as prior studies (McTague and Pearson-Merkowitz, 2013; Mctague and Pearson-Merkowitz, 2015) show that doctrinal differences influence lawmakers' stances on LGBTQ rights. Party affiliation serves as a dominant predictor given the sharp partisan polarization on LGBTQ issues, while district presidential vote share is used as a proxy for constituent ideology, following Karol (2023) and Haider-Markel (2010), who find that presidential vote share correlates strongly with district-level partisan attitudes.

4.2.3 Religious Identity of Lawmakers

Religious affiliation identity of House lawmakers is the main core critical factor that shapes legislators' policy stances on social and identity issues, particularly on LGBTQ rights. To capture this dimension, I categorize lawmakers' religious identities that are listed on Pew Research Center and legislatorR datasets into seven categories, which are Mainline Protestant, Evangelical Baptist, Catholic, Jewish, Mormon, Other Christian, and Non-Christian Religious Groups. Having these categorical distinctions are important in reflecting doctrinal and institutional differences in attitudes towards LGBTQ rights

- Mainline Protestant in this study serves as the reference category in the regression analysis due to its doctrinal diversity among various Mainline Protestant denominations (Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopal, etc.), as well as the group's broad representation in Congress. Many Mainline Protestant denominations tend to exhibit a spectrum of doctrinaire views on LGBTQ rights, making this category a stable comparison group as a reference category.

- Evangelical Baptist lawmakers are expected to be the most resistant to any kind of legislation that expands LGBTQ rights due to the denomination group's strong relationship with right-wing politics and the Republican Party dating back to the Reagan presidency and the group's promise of wanting to reshape America under their evangelical Christian doctrinaire lenses, which includes restrictions on LGBTQ rights. House lawmakers that belong in such a group tend to vote consistently in opposing LGBTQ rights.

- Catholic House lawmakers present an interesting paradoxical case, as the Catholic Church's doctrine has long been opposed to same-sex marriage. However, a vast majority of Democratic lawmakers (especially from Blue states in both the West and East Coasts) belong to the Roman Catholic faith. Given that the Roman Catholic Church is a global-wide universal church that does not fully actively marry themselves into political activity on social issues in contrast to Evangelical Baptist churches, we expect that partisanship and district ideology would moderate how Catholic House lawmakers view LGBTQ rights.

- Jewish lawmakers are expected to be more supportive of LGBTQ policies due to the Democratic Party's strong relationship with Jewish constituents and the historical alignment of Jewish political identity with liberal and progressive American politics.

- Mormon lawmakers are more likely to oppose LGBTQ rights due to their conservative doctrinaire beliefs on LGBTQ minorities similar to Evangelical Baptists.

In the analysis, I will compute the marginal effects of each religious affiliation category on the probability of voting in favor of LGBTQ rights, allowing for a clearer understanding of how religious identity conditions voting behavior among House lawmakers.

4.2.4 Party affiliation

Party affiliation of a House lawmaker is also a key predictor of voting behavior on social policies, especially in regards to LGBTQ rights. This variable is a binary categorical indicator, where the Republican Party is the reference category. Since the GOP has always been consistent in opposing same-sex marriage and LGBTQ rights, it makes sense to use the Republican Party as the reference category. The expectation here is that Democratic lawmakers are significantly more likely to vote in favor of LGBTQ rights than their Republican counterparts, reflecting the broader partisan polarization on this issue. However, Democrats have not always been pro-LGBTQ and many voted in favor of restricting LGBTQ rights in the beginning with the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996. In interpreting the logistic regression results, I will emphasize on the marginal increase in the probability of voting "yes" when moving from a Republican to a Democratic House lawmaker.

4.2.5 District Ideology: Democratic Presidential Vote Share

Democratic presidential vote share variable represents the percentage of votes cast for a Democratic presidential ticket in each congressional district. This variable here serves as a proxy for district-level ideology, capturing to the extent which constituents within the district lean liberal or conservative. The expectation here is that House lawmakers representing districts with a higher Democratic vote share will be more likely to support LGBTQ rights legislation, as the literature on the relationship between district ideology and House voting behavior shows that House lawmakers are more likely to be responsive to the ideological composition of their districts. In the analysis, I will assess the substantive impact of this variable by calculating the marginal effect of a one standard deviation increase in Democratic presidential vote share on the probability of voting in favor of LGBTQ rights.

Democratic presidential vote share is used as a proxy for district ideology because it consistently reflects the partisan leanings of congressional districts (Karol, 2023; Haider-Markel, 2010). While alternative measures such as Cook Partisan Voting Index (PVI) exist, these

are either unavailable for historical congressional sessions or introduce inconsistencies across election cycles. District-level Democratic presidential vote share (from Erik Engstrom's dataset) provides a stable and widely used measure in political science research for understanding constituent ideology at the district level.

4.2.6 Control variable: LGBTQ lawmakers

To take into account on the potential influence of a House lawmaker's sexual orientation identity on their voting behavior regarding LGBTQ-related legislation, I include an indicator variable for LGBTQ lawmakers as a control variable in the model. This variable is coded as a binary indicator (0/1), where 1 represents legislators who either openly identify as LGBTQ during their time in office or after they served time, and 0 represents all other legislators who identify themselves as straight.

The reason for including this control variable is that LGBTQ House lawmakers may have stronger personal motivations to support LGBTQ rights legislation due to their sexual orientation identity, independent of their party affiliation, district ideology, and religious affiliation. Controlling for this factor here ensures that the estimated effects of party, district ideology, and religious affiliation on voting behavior are not confounded by an individual's LGBTQ identity. By incorporating this factor as a control variable, the model would improve its ability to isolate the effects of the key independent variables. Given that the number of openly LGBTQ House lawmakers has always been relatively small, I do not expect this variable to have much statistical impact across all models.

Each of these independent variables is grounded in literature on voting behavior and decision-making among legislators. Religious identity of House lawmakers provides insight into how a lawmaker's moral and doctrinal beliefs from their religious social circle or upbringing influence policymaking on social issues. Party affiliation captures partisan divisions between Democrats and Republicans on LGBTQ rights. On the other hand, district ideology reflects to the extent in which House lawmakers align with constituent ideology preferences.

By integrating these three variables into a single model

4.3   Models

Model Specification

All Y_{it} values represent binary roll-call votes on LGBTQ-related legislation, coded as:

- $Y_{it} = 1$ if the legislator votes **in favor** of LGBTQ rights or protections.

- $Y_{it} = 0$ if the legislator votes **against** LGBTQ rights or protections.

Exceptions:

- **Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), 1996:** This bill was explicitly anti-LGBTQ, defining marriage federally as between a man and a woman. **A "Yes" vote is coded as $Y_{it} = 0$ (anti-LGBTQ), and a "No" vote as $Y_{it} = 1$ (pro-LGBTQ).**

- **Violence Against Women Act (VAW), 2012:** The original Senate version contained LGBTQ-inclusive provisions, but the final House version **removed** protections for LGBTQ survivors of domestic violence. **A "Yes" vote on the final House bill is coded as $Y_{it} = 0$ (against LGBTQ inclusivity), and a "No" vote as $Y_{it} = 1$ (pro-LGBTQ).**

In the logistic regression models, Republican Party serves as the reference category for party affiliation, and Mainline Protestant serves as the reference category for religious affiliation. These choices reflect their broad representation in Congress and provide a stable baseline for comparison.

Baseline Logistic Regression Model

To estimate the probability of a legislator voting in favor of LGBTQ rights, I employ the following logistic regression model:

$$\Pr(Y_{it} = 1) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-\eta_{it}}}$$

where:

$$\eta_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Party}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{Presidential Vote Share}_{it} + \beta_3 \text{Lawmaker LGBTQ}_{it} + \sum_j \gamma_j \text{Vote Name}_{ijt} + \epsilon_{it}$$

Variable Descriptions (Baseline Model):

- Y_{it} = Legislator i's vote on LGBTQ-related bill t (1 = Yes, 0 = No).

- Party_{it} = Party affiliation (1 = Democratic, 0 = Republican; Independents coded separately).

- $\text{Presidential Vote Share}_{it}$ = Democratic presidential vote share in legislator's district/state.

- $\text{Lawmaker LGBTQ}_{it}$ = Indicator if legislator is openly LGBTQ (1 = Yes, 0 = No).

- Vote Name_{ijt} = Fixed effects for specific LGBTQ-related bills (e.g., DOMA, DADT Repeal, RMA, VAW).

- ϵ_{it} = Error term.

Religion Logistic Regression Model

To assess whether religious affiliation influences legislators' votes on LGBTQ rights, I introduce religion as an explanatory variable:

$$\Pr(Y_{it} = 1) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-\eta_{it}}}$$

where:

$$\eta_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{Party}_{it} + \beta_2\text{Presidential Vote Share}_{it}$$

$$+ \beta_3\text{Lawmaker LGBTQ}_{it} + \beta_4\text{Religion}_{it} + \sum_j \gamma_j\text{Vote Name}_{ijt} + \epsilon_{it}$$

Variable Descriptions (Religion Model):

- Y_{it} = Legislator i's vote on LGBTQ-related bill t (1 = Yes, 0 = No).

- Party_{it} = Party affiliation (1 = Democratic, 0 = Republican; Independents coded separately).

- Presidential Vote Share$_{it}$ = Democratic presidential vote share in legislator's district/state.

- Lawmaker LGBTQ$_{it}$ = Indicator if legislator is openly LGBTQ (1 = Yes, 0 = No).

- Religion$_{it}$ = Categorical variable for religious affiliation (Catholic, Evangelical Protestant, Jewish, Mormon, Other Christian, Other Non-Christian, Unknown).

- Vote Name$_{ijt}$ = Fixed effects for specific LGBTQ-related bills (e.g., DOMA, DADT Repeal, RMA, VAW).

- ϵ_{it} = Error term.

This second model allows for an explicit test of whether religion plays a significant role in shaping legislative behavior on LGBTQ-related bills, beyond party affiliation and electoral district ideology. This study employs logistic regression model to analyze binary roll-call votes on LGBTQ-related legislation (Y_{it}), taking into account on both legislator-level characteristics through party and religious affiliations of a House lawmaker and district-level characteristics on district ideology through Democratic presidential vote. The baseline models are meant to estimate the effects of party affiliation and district partisanship on LGBTQ binary voting behavior. In the hypothesis testing models, categorical variables for religious

denomination identity are incorporated. Additionally, models with electoral characteristics such as district partisanship are incorporated on how district characteristics influence lawmakers' voting patterns.

4.3.1 Expected Effects of Independent Variables

In this logistic regression framework, the expected effects of key independent variables on the probability of voting in favor of LGBTQ rights ($Pr(Y_{it} = 1)$) are as follows:

$$\eta_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Democratic Party}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{Presidential Vote Share}_{it}$$
$$+ \beta_3 \text{Lawmaker LGBTQ}_{it} + \beta_4 \text{Religion}_{it}$$
$$+ \sum_j \gamma_j \text{Vote Name}_{ijt} + \epsilon_{it} \tag{1}$$

- $\beta_1 > 0$ (Democratic Party): Expected to be positively associated with pro-LGBTQ votes, as Democrats have historically supported LGBTQ rights at higher rates than Republicans.

- $\beta_2 > 0$ (Democratic Presidential Vote Share): Expected to be positively associated with pro-LGBTQ votes, as districts with higher Democratic support tend to elect more progressive representatives.

- β_4 (Religious Identity):

  - Evangelical Baptist and Mormon lawmakers ($\beta_4 < 0$) are expected to be negatively associated with pro-LGBTQ votes, given their denominations' historically conservative stance on LGBTQ rights.

  - Jewish and Mainline Protestant lawmakers ($\beta_4 > 0$) are expected to be positively associated with pro-LGBTQ votes, reflecting their denominations' more progressive views.

- $\sum_j \gamma_j$ (Bill Fixed Effects): Captures variation across specific LGBTQ-related bills (e.g., DOMA, DADT Repeal, RMA, VAWA).

This formulation ensures that the logistic regression properly accounts for party alignment, religious identity, and district ideology while controlling for legislative context through bill fixed effects.

5 Results

5.1 Summary statistics

To provide a summary basic descriptive statistical overview of the key variables in this study, Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of religious affiliations across different congressional sessions, while Tables 1, 2, and 3, provide information on the roll-call vote summary by party and vote name as well as summary statistics on LGBTQ-identifying lawmakers.

5.1.1 Distribution of Religious Affiliations

Figure 1 presents the distribution of religious affiliations among U.S. House lawmakers across multiple congressional sessions. The distribution highlights the predominance of Mainline Protestants and Catholics, which remain the largest religious groups among legislators. Evangelical Baptists, while consistently a minority, represent a notable and stable presence, ranging from approximately 60 to 130 House members per session.

The variation across congressional sessions suggests a relatively stable religious composition overall, with some fluctuations in smaller religious groups. Notably, non-Christian religious groups, such as Jewish and Mormon lawmakers, remain consistently underrepresented, with relatively small and stable proportions over time.
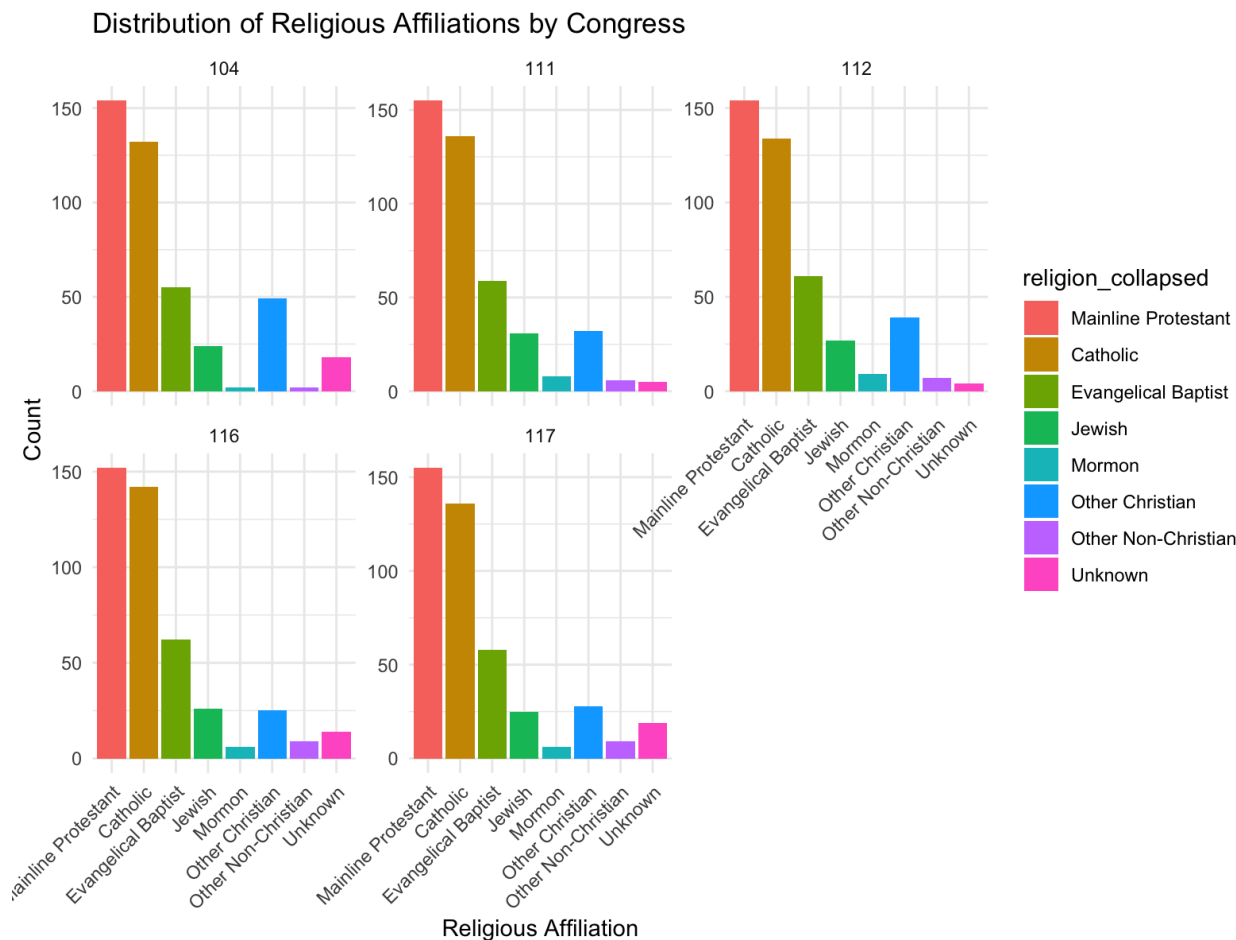
Figure 1: Distribution of Religious Affiliations by Congress

Figure 2 presents the distribution of religious affiliations among U.S. House lawmakers by party across multiple congressional sessions. Similar to Figure 1, Mainline Protestants and Catholics are the two largest religious groups within both the Democratic and Republican parties.

Among Evangelical Baptists, Democrats had a relatively strong representation in the 104th Congress, but over time, Republicans became the dominant party among Evangelical Baptist House lawmakers. This shift reflects broader partisan realignments, where Evangelical Protestants increasingly aligned with the Republican Party.

The partisan composition of most other religious groups, such as Mainline Protestants and Catholics, remains relatively stable across these congressional sessions, though minor

fluctuations are observable. Jewish and Mormon lawmakers continue to be underrepresented in both parties, with Jewish legislators more commonly aligning with Democrats.
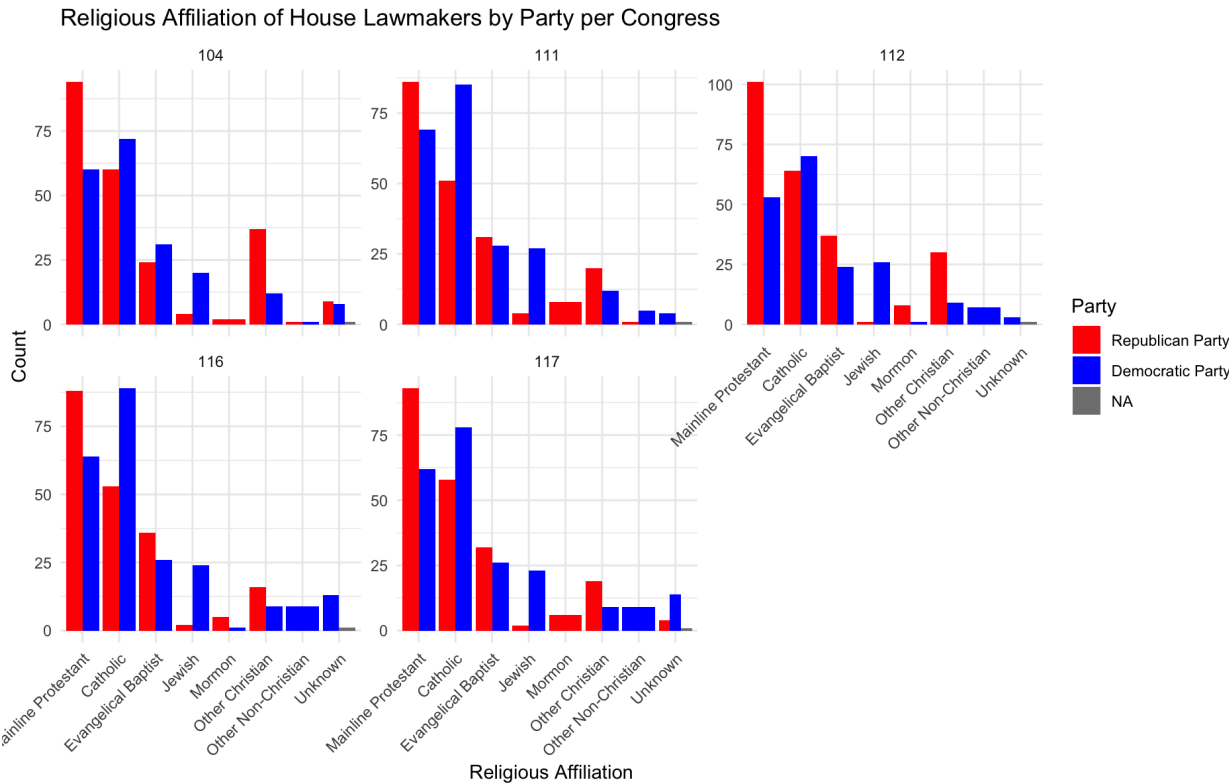
Figure 2: Distribution of Religious Affiliations per Party by Congress

The summary statistics in Table 1 provide an overview of the roll-call vote breakdown for each LGBTQ-related bill included in the analysis. The table here provides the number of Yes and No votes by party affiliation. DOMA received overwhelming support from Republicans (219-1) while Democrats were more divided on the bill's passage (123-65). The division among Democrats reflects a more homophobic political climate at the time when some Democrats of the 104th Congress aligned with Republicans in defining marriage as between a man and a woman. As for subsequent LGBTQ-related bills later on, we see a more partisan divide as Democrats over time support more LGBTQ-inclusive legislation, with the exception of the Violence Against Women renewal Act in 2012, where most Democrats voted no on the bill. This is likely due to the House passing the Violence Against Women renewal

in 2012 that strips away textual language that is meant to protect LGBTQ minorities from domestic violence and workplace discrimination, as Republicans believe inclusion of such language in the bill goes against the "spirit" of the bill's original intention. The Violence Against Women renewal Act in 2019 had some variation in Republican support in a way similar to DOMA in 1996 for Democrats. With the exception of the Defense of Marriage Act of 1996 and the Violence Against Women Act of 2012 that are LGBTQ-discriminatory, many of these LGBTQ-inclusive bills seem to have at least 30-40 Republicans that have crossed the party to support Democrats in passing such bills.

Table 1: Roll-Call Vote Summary by Party and Vote Name

Vote Name	Party	Yes	No
Defense of Marriage Act (1996)	**Total**	330	67
	Republican Party	219	1
	Democratic Party	123	65
	Independent	0	1
Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act (2010)	**Total**	249	175
	Republican Party	42	154
	Democratic Party	207	21
Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Act (2009)	**Total**	249	175
	Republican Party	40	158
	Democratic Party	209	17
Respect for Marriage Act (House Roll Call 373, 2022)	**Total**	267	157
	Republican Party	47	157
	Democratic Party	220	0
Respect for Marriage Act (Senate Roll Call 513, 2022)	**Total**	258	169
	Republican Party	40	169
	Democratic Party	218	0
Violence Against Women Act (2012)	**Total**	222	205
	Republican Party	215	24
	Democratic Party	7	181
Violence Against Women Act (2019)	**Total**	262	158
	Republican Party	33	157
	Democratic Party	229	1

Independents do not caucus with a formal party in the House.

Tables 2 and 3 here looks into the presence of LGBTQ lawmakers votes per bill and the number of their presence by party and congressional session. For House lawmakers that identify themselves during or after their time in Congress as LGBTQ, there is more variation by party among those who identify themselves as LGBTQ during the 104th Congress, which was the congressional session that pass the Defense of Marriage Act. There were around two LGBTQ-identifying lawmakers (Mark Foley and Jim Kolbe; both of them Republicans) that voted in favor of DOMA, but both of them did not identify themselves as LGBTQ until after the bill's passage, as seen on Table 4 here. The same pattern in voting behavior applies to Aaron Schock in Table 5. A Republican in the 111th and 112th Congress, he voted against many of the LGBTQ-inclusive bills but later identified himself as LGBTQ after leaving Congress.

Table 2: LGBTQ Lawmakers' Votes by Bill

Bill	Voted Yes	Voted No	Total LGBTQ
Respect for Marriage Act (House Roll Call 373 - Original)	9	0	9
Defense of Marriage Act	2	3	5
Don't Ask Don't Tell	4	1	5
Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Act	4	1	5
Respect for Marriage Act (House Roll Call 513 - Senate Version)	9	0	9
Violence Against Women Act (2012)	1	4	5
Violence Against Women Act (2019)	7	0	7

Table 3: Number of LGBTQ Lawmakers by Party and Congressional Session

Congress	Republican Party	Democratic Party
104	3	2
111	1	4
112	1	4
116	0	7
117	0	9

Table 4: LGBTQ Lawmakers' Votes on Defense of Marriage Act (104th Congress)

Congress	Incumbent	Party	Vote Binary
104	Barney Frank	Democratic Party	0
104	Gerry Studds	Democratic Party	0
104	Steve Gunderson	Republican Party	0
104	Jim Kolbe	Republican Party	1
104	Mark Foley	Republican Party	1

Note: Vote Binary = 1 (Yes), 0 (No).

Table 5: LGBTQ Lawmakers' Votes by Bill

Congress	Incumbent	Party	Bill	Vote Binary
111	Aaron Schock	Republican Party	Don't Ask Don't Tell	0
111	Jared Polis	Democratic Party	Don't Ask Don't Tell	1
111	Barney Frank	Democratic Party	Don't Ask Don't Tell	1
111	Mike Michaud	Democratic Party	Don't Ask Don't Tell	1
111	Tammy Baldwin	Democratic Party	Don't Ask Don't Tell	1
111	Aaron Schock	Republican Party	Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes	0
111	Jared Polis	Democratic Party	Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes	1
111	Barney Frank	Democratic Party	Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes	1
111	Mike Michaud	Democratic Party	Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes	1
111	Tammy Baldwin	Democratic Party	Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes	1
112	Jared Polis	Democratic Party	Violence Against Women Act (2012)	0
112	Barney Frank	Democratic Party	Violence Against Women Act (2012)	0
112	David Cicilline	Democratic Party	Violence Against Women Act (2012)	0
112	Tammy Baldwin	Democratic Party	Violence Against Women Act (2012)	0
112	Aaron Schock	Republican Party	Violence Against Women Act (2012)	1

Note: Vote Binary = 1 (Yes), 0 (No).

5.2 Regression Results

5.2.1 Baseline Logistic Regression Results: reference category bill effect: RoMA House version

The baseline model in Table 6 examines the role of party affiliation and district partisanship in predicting LGBTQ roll-call votes. Democratic legislators are significantly more likely to support LGBTQ rights over time, with an estimated odds ratio of $e^{1.028} \approx 2.80$ ($p < 0.001$) compared to Republican lawmakers (the reference category). District-level Democratic presidential vote share is also a strong predictor, where a 1 percentage point increase in Democratic presidential vote share is associated with a 3.67% increase in the odds of a Yes vote ($OR = e^{0.036} \approx 1.037$, $p < 0.001$). The effect of party affiliation remains significant even after controlling for district ideology, suggesting that House lawmakers vote primarily based on their partisan and ideological preferences rather than strictly following constituent preferences on LGBTQ-related legislation.

In terms of bill effects, the Respect for Marriage Act (House-drafted version, House Roll Call 373) serves as the reference category, meaning all other bill coefficients represent their effect relative to this bill. Among the LGBTQ-related bills, the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) has a positive and highly significant effect ($OR = e^{1.205} \approx 3.34$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that House lawmakers were 3.34 times more likely to vote Yes on DOMA than on the House-drafted version of RMA. This aligns with expectations given that DOMA had bipartisan support in 1996 before LGBTQ rights became a sharply partisan issue.

Conversely, Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) Repeal and the Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Act both have negative and significant effects, indicating that lawmakers were significantly less likely to vote Yes on these bills compared to RMA (House). Specifically, lawmakers were approximately 29% less likely to support DADT repeal ($OR = e^{-0.341} \approx 0.71$, $p < 0.05$) and 28.5% less likely to support the Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Act ($OR = e^{-0.334} \approx 0.72$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that repealing DADT and expanding hate crime protections faced

stronger opposition than same-sex marriage protections did in the later legislative period. This may be due to the military-specific nature of DADT repeal, where even some pro-LGBTQ lawmakers may have been hesitant to make changes affecting military policy.

For Violence Against Women Act (VAW) reauthorizations, the 2012 renewal bill has a negative and highly significant effect, indicating that lawmakers were 42.3% less likely to vote Yes on this bill compared to RMA ($OR = e^{-0.552} \approx 0.58$, $p < 0.001$). This is consistent with the historical controversy surrounding House Republicans removing provisions from the original draft related to LGBTQ individuals, undocumented immigrants, and Native Americans, arguing that such provisions did not align with the original scope of VAW protections. However, the 2019 VAW reauthorization bill has a negative but statistically insignificant effect ($OR = e^{-0.035} \approx 0.97$, $p = 0.88$), suggesting that its provisions—including explicit protections for LGBTQ individuals—did not significantly shift vote likelihoods compared to the House-drafted RMA version.

Taken together, these findings highlight the evolving partisan nature of LGBTQ legislation. Earlier bills like DOMA received broad support, while later bills such as DADT repeal and LGBTQ-inclusive VAWA provisions faced stronger opposition, reflecting increasing partisan polarization on LGBTQ rights.

Table 6: Logistic Regression: House Roll Call Votes on LGBTQ Legislation

	Dependent variable:
	Vote (1 = Yea, 0 = Nay)
Democratic Party	1.028***
	(0.124)
Democratic Presidential Vote Share	0.036***
	(0.004)
Defense of Marriage Act (1996)	1.205***
	(0.179)
Don't Ask Don't Tell Repeal (2010)	−0.341**
	(0.157)
Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Act (2009)	−0.334**
	(0.157)
Respect for Marriage Act (House Roll Call 513 - Senate Version)	−0.112
	(0.158)
Violence Against Women Act (2012)	−0.552***
	(0.157)
Violence Against Women Act (2019)	−0.035
	(0.160)
Constant	−1.750***
	(0.215)
Observations	2,955
Akaike Inf. Crit.	3,263.6
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

To assess whether the presence of LGBTQ-identifying lawmakers influences the likelihood of voting for LGBTQ-related legislation, Table 7 introduces a secondary baseline model that includes Lawmaker LGBTQ (House lawmakers who identify themselves as LGBTQ) as a control variable. The results indicate that the inclusion of this variable does not significantly alter the odds ratios of other predictors, confirming that party affiliation and district-level partisanship remain the dominant factors shaping House votes on LGBTQ-related legislation.

The odds ratio for Lawmaker LGBTQ is $e^{0.204} \approx 1.23$ ($p = 0.390$), meaning that LGBTQ-identifying lawmakers are 23% more likely to vote in favor of LGBTQ rights than non-LGBTQ lawmakers, but this effect is not statistically significant. This suggests that LGBTQ personal identity alone does not drive voting behavior on LGBTQ-related bills; rather, partisan alignment and district ideology are stronger predictors.

The estimated effects of party affiliation, district-level Democratic presidential vote share, and bill fixed effects remain nearly identical to those in the primary baseline model (Table 6). Democratic lawmakers remain significantly more likely to vote in favor of LGBTQ rights, with an estimated odds ratio of $e^{1.023} \approx 2.78$ ($p < 0.001$). Similarly, a one percentage point increase in Democratic presidential vote share is associated with a 3.67% increase in the odds of a Yes vote ($OR = e^{0.036} \approx 1.037$, $p < 0.001$).

For bill fixed effects, lawmakers were significantly more likely to vote in favor of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), with an odds ratio of $e^{1.205} \approx 3.34$ ($p < 0.001$), meaning that House lawmakers were 3.34 times more likely to vote Yes on DOMA than on the House-drafted version of RMA. By contrast, lawmakers were significantly less likely to vote in favor of DADT Repeal ($OR = e^{-0.340} \approx 0.71$, indicating a 29% decrease in odds, $p < 0.05$) and the Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Act ($OR = e^{-0.332} \approx 0.72$, indicating a 28% decrease in odds, $p < 0.05$).

The Violence Against Women Act (VAW) reauthorization bills exhibit similar patterns. The 2012 renewal bill has a negative and highly significant effect, meaning that lawmakers were 42.3% less likely to vote Yes compared to RMA ($OR = e^{-0.551} \approx 0.58$, $p <$

0.001). Meanwhile, the 2019 reauthorization bill has a statistically insignificant effect ($OR = e^{-0.034} \approx 0.97$, $p = 0.88$), suggesting that the explicit inclusion of LGBTQ protections did not significantly shift vote likelihoods.

Overall, these results reinforce that partisan alignment and district partisanship remain the primary drivers of legislative behavior on LGBTQ rights. The inclusion of Lawmaker LGBTQ as a control variable does not meaningfully affect other predictors, further confirming that individual lawmaker identity is not a key determinant of roll-call voting on LGBTQ-related legislation.

Table 7: Baseline Logistic Regression Model, controlling for Lawmaker LGBTQ

	Estimate
Democratic Party	1.023***
	(0.124)
Democratic Presidential Vote Share	0.036***
	(0.004)
Lawmaker LGBTQ	0.204
	(0.390)
Defense of Marriage Act (1996)	1.205***
	(0.179)
Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act (2010)	-0.340*
	(0.157)
Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Act (2009)	-0.332*
	(0.157)
Respect for Marriage Act (Senate Version, 2022)	-0.112
	(0.158)
Violence Against Women Act (2012)	-0.551***
	(0.157)
Violence Against Women Act (2019)	-0.034
	(0.160)
Constant	-1.751***
	(0.215)
Observations	2,955
Akaike Inf. Crit.	3,265.3
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

5.2.2 Logistic Regression Results for LGBTQ Roll-Call Votes (With Religion)

Table 8 presents the results of the logistic regression model analyzing House roll-call votes on LGBTQ legislation while incorporating lawmakers' religious affiliations. The reference categories are the Republican Party for party affiliation, Mainline Protestant for religion, and the House-drafted version of the Respect for Marriage Act (RMA) for bill fixed effects.

The results indicate that Democratic lawmakers are significantly more likely to vote in favor of LGBTQ legislation compared to their Republican counterparts, with an estimated odds ratio of $e^{0.979} \approx 2.66$ ($p < 0.001$). This supports the expectation that LGBTQ rights have become a strongly partisan issue, with Democratic lawmakers overwhelmingly supporting such measures. Similarly, Democratic presidential vote share remains a highly significant predictor. For every percentage point increase in a district's Democratic presidential vote share, the odds of a House lawmaker voting in favor of LGBTQ legislation increase by approximately 3.67% ($OR = e^{0.036} \approx 1.037$, $p < 0.001$). The continued significance of this variable, even when controlling for lawmaker religion, suggests that district-level partisanship remains a strong force in shaping legislative behavior.

Regarding religious affiliation, compared to Mainline Protestants, lawmakers who identify as Evangelical Baptists are significantly less likely to support LGBTQ legislation, with a 34% decrease in odds ($OR = e^{-0.412} \approx 0.66$, $p < 0.001$), reinforcing prior research that Evangelicals are among the strongest opponents of LGBTQ rights. By contrast, Mormon lawmakers are significantly more likely to vote in favor of LGBTQ legislation, with an increase of approximately 2.17 times the odds compared to Mainline Protestants ($OR = e^{0.776} \approx 2.17$, $p < 0.05$). Additionally, lawmakers categorized under Other/Unknown religious affiliations are also more likely to vote in favor of LGBTQ rights, with a 2.09 times higher odds of supporting LGBTQ rights compared to Mainline Protestants ($OR = e^{0.736} \approx 2.09$, $p < 0.05$). Catholic, Jewish, and Unitarian Universalist lawmakers do not exhibit statistically significant differences in voting behavior compared to Mainline Protestants.

For bill fixed effects, using the House-drafted version of RMA as the reference category,

the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) has a significantly positive effect ($OR = e^{1.225} \approx 3.40$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that lawmakers were 3.40 times more likely to vote "Yes" on DOMA relative to RMA. This aligns with the historical context of bipartisan support for DOMA in 1996, before shifts in public and elite opinion on LGBTQ rights. By contrast, lawmakers were significantly less likely to support the Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) Repeal Act ($OR = e^{-0.323} \approx 0.72$, indicating a 28% decrease in odds, $p < 0.05$) and the Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Act ($OR = e^{-0.316} \approx 0.73$, indicating a 27% decrease in odds, $p < 0.05$). These findings suggest that while same-sex marriage gained increasing support, military-related LGBTQ policies and hate crime protections remained more politically contentious.

For Violence Against Women Act (VAW) reauthorizations, the 2012 renewal bill faced strong partisan opposition, as lawmakers were 41.5% less likely to vote in favor compared to RMA ($OR = e^{-0.535} \approx 0.59$, $p < 0.001$). This aligns with historical debates over provisions for LGBTQ individuals, undocumented immigrants, and Native Americans. The 2019 reauthorization bill had a statistically insignificant effect ($OR = e^{-0.017} \approx 0.98$, $p = 0.88$), suggesting that by this point, partisan divisions over LGBTQ protections may have stabilized.

These findings reinforce the strong role of partisan identity and district-level ideology in shaping LGBTQ legislative outcomes. Religious affiliation, particularly Evangelical Baptist identity, plays a key role in opposition, whereas Mormons and lawmakers of other non-Protestant affiliations show greater variation in support. Additionally, the results suggest that while same-sex marriage legalization gained increasing support, policies affecting LGBTQ individuals in the military, hate crime laws, and domestic violence protections remained more politically divisive.

Table 8: Logistic Regression: House Roll Call Votes on LGBTQ Legislation (With Religion)

	Dependent variable:
	Vote (1 = Yea, 0 = Nay)
Democratic Party	0.979***
	(0.127)
Democratic Presidential Vote Share	0.036***
	(0.004)
Catholic	0.194*
	(0.105)
Evangelical Baptist	−0.412***
	(0.139)
Jewish	0.205
	(0.209)
Mormon	0.776**
	(0.323)
Other Christian	0.044
	(0.166)
Other Non-Christian	0.201
	(0.416)
Unknown	0.736**
	(0.354)
Defense of Marriage Act (1996)	1.225***
	(0.181)
Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act (2010)	−0.323**
	(0.158)
Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Act (2009)	−0.316**
	(0.158)
Respect for Marriage Act (Senate Version - 2022)	−0.109
	(0.159)
Violence Against Women Act (2012)	−0.535***
	(0.158)
Violence Against Women Act (2019)	−0.017
	(0.161)
Constant	−1.799***
	(0.220)
Observations	2,939
Akaike Inf. Crit.	3,248.3

Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
	Standard errors in parentheses.

Table 9 presents the results of the logistic regression model analyzing House roll-call votes on LGBTQ legislation, incorporating both lawmakers' religious affiliations and a control variable for whether the lawmaker openly identifies as LGBTQ. As in Table 8, the reference categories remain the Republican Party for party affiliation, Mainline Protestant for religion, and the House-drafted version of the Respect for Marriage Act (RMA) for bill fixed effects.

The inclusion of the Lawmaker LGBTQ variable allows for an assessment of whether LGBTQ-identifying legislators vote differently from their non-LGBTQ counterparts. However, the odds ratio for Lawmaker LGBTQ is $e^{0.149} \approx 1.16$ ($p = 0.404$), indicating that LGBTQ legislators are approximately 16% more likely to vote in favor of LGBTQ rights than non-LGBTQ lawmakers, but this effect is not statistically significant. This suggests that LGBTQ personal identity alone does not drive voting behavior on LGBTQ-related bills; rather, partisan alignment, district ideology, and religious background are stronger predictors.

The broader model results remain highly consistent with those in Table 8. Democratic lawmakers continue to show a significantly higher likelihood of supporting LGBTQ rights relative to Republicans, with an odds ratio of $e^{0.976} \approx 2.65$ ($p < 0.001$). Democratic presidential vote share remains a strong predictor, where each percentage point increase in district-level Democratic presidential vote share is associated with a 3.67% increase in the odds of a Yes vote ($OR = e^{0.036} \approx 1.037$, $p < 0.001$).

Regarding religious affiliation, lawmakers identifying as Evangelical Baptists remain significantly less likely to support LGBTQ rights, with a 34% decrease in odds compared to Mainline Protestants ($OR = e^{-0.413} \approx 0.66$, $p < 0.01$). Mormon lawmakers continue to be more likely to support LGBTQ rights compared to Mainline Protestants, with odds approximately 2.17 times higher ($OR = e^{0.776} \approx 2.17$, $p < 0.05$). Lawmakers classified under Other/Unknown religious affiliations also exhibit a statistically significant effect, being approximately 2.06 times more likely to support LGBTQ rights than Mainline Protestants ($OR = e^{0.723} \approx 2.06$, $p < 0.05$).

The coefficients for bill fixed effects remain largely consistent with prior results. The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) retains a highly positive and significant effect, with an odds ratio of $e^{1.225} \approx 3.40$ ($p < 0.001$), indicating that lawmakers were approximately 3.40 times more likely to vote Yes on DOMA relative to RMA. Conversely, both the Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) Repeal Act and the Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Act continue to show negative and statistically significant effects, meaning lawmakers were significantly less likely to support these policies compared to RMA. Specifically, the odds of supporting DADT Repeal were 28% lower ($OR = e^{-0.322} \approx 0.72$, $p < 0.05$), and the odds of supporting the Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Act were 27% lower ($OR = e^{-0.315} \approx 0.73$, $p < 0.05$).

For Violence Against Women Act (VAW) reauthorizations, the 2012 renewal bill remains highly negative and significant, with an odds ratio of $e^{-0.534} \approx 0.59$ ($p < 0.001$), meaning that lawmakers were 41.5% less likely to vote Yes compared to RMA. Meanwhile, the 2019 reauthorization bill has a statistically insignificant effect ($OR = e^{-0.016} \approx 0.98$, $p = 0.88$), suggesting that explicit LGBTQ protections in the bill did not significantly affect voting behavior.

The inclusion of Lawmaker LGBTQ as a control variable does not substantively alter the model results, as party affiliation, district ideology, and religious background remain the strongest predictors of voting behavior. These findings reinforce that LGBTQ lawmakers do not systematically vote differently from their straight counterparts after accounting for these key variables, further supporting the idea that party and ideological commitments drive legislative behavior on LGBTQ rights.

To assess the robustness of the main findings, Table 10 presents results from a jackknife resampling procedure, where each model sequentially excludes one bill from the dataset. This approach tests whether any single bill disproportionately influences the overall results. The estimates remain largely consistent across specifications, indicating that the core findings—particularly the strong effects of partisanship and Evangelical Baptist affiliation—are not driven by any single piece of legislation.

Additionally, Table 11 reports separate logistic regression models estimated for each LGBTQ-related bill. This approach accounts for potential variation in voting behavior across different legislative contexts. While some variation exists in effect sizes, the general patterns observed in the main models persist, reinforcing the role of partisan affiliation and religious identity in shaping roll-call votes on LGBTQ rights.

Table 9: Religion Logistic Regression Model, controlling for Lawmaker LGBTQ

	Estimate	Std. Error
Intercept	-1.800	(0.220) ***
Democratic Party	0.976	(0.127) ***
Democratic Presidential Vote Share	0.036	(0.004) ***
Lawmaker LGBTQ	0.149	(0.404)
Catholic	0.194	(0.106) .
Evangelical Baptist	-0.413	(0.139) **
Jewish	0.199	(0.210)
Mormon	0.776	(0.323) *
Other Christian	0.043	(0.166)
Other Non-Christian	0.204	(0.418)
Unknown	0.723	(0.356) *
Defense of Marriage Act (1996)	1.225	(0.181) ***
Don't Ask Don't Tell Repeal Act (2010)	-0.322	(0.158) *
Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Act (2009)	-0.315	(0.158) *
Respect for Marriage Act (Senate Version - 2022)	-0.109	(0.159)
Violence Against Women Act (2012)	-0.534	(0.158) ***
Violence Against Women Act (2019)	-0.016	(0.162)
Observations	2,938	
AIC	3,250.1	
Note:		* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

6 Analysis

Across all models, these results indicate that House lawmaker partisanship, district-level ideology (Democratic presidential vote share), and religious affiliation—particularly Evangelical Baptist identity—are key predictors of legislative behavior on LGBTQ rights. The findings strongly support Hypotheses 1a and 1b, confirming that Evangelical Baptists are significantly more likely to oppose LGBTQ rights, while Mainline Protestants are relatively more supportive by comparison. Likewise, Hypothesis 2 on Democratic partisanship is robustly supported, with Democratic lawmakers being far more likely to vote in favor of LGBTQ rights. However, Hypotheses 1c and 1d regarding Catholic and Jewish lawmakers remain inconclusive due to a lack of statistical significance.

Hypothesis 1a is well supported in this study, as the models consistently show that Evangelical Baptist lawmakers have a statistically significant negative effect on voting for LGBTQ rights. In Table 9, the coefficient for Evangelical Baptists is negative and significant ($\beta =$ -0.413, $p < 0.01$), meaning they are 34% less likely to vote for LGBTQ legislation compared to Mainline Protestants. Similarly, Hypothesis 1b is supported because Mainline Protestants serve as the reference category, and comparisons with Evangelical Baptists reveal that Evangelicals are significantly more likely to oppose LGBTQ rights. Given that Evangelical Baptists have a strong negative effect, Mainline Protestants appear more supportive by default.

Hypothesis 2, which posits that Democratic House lawmakers are more likely to vote in favor of LGBTQ rights, is strongly supported. Across all models, Democratic partisanship emerges as a highly significant and strong positive predictor of LGBTQ rights support. In Table 9, the coefficient for Democratic lawmakers is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.976$, $p < 0.01$), meaning House Democrats are approximately 2.65 times more likely to vote for LGBTQ rights compared to House Republicans.

However, Hypotheses 1c and 1d—regarding Catholic and Jewish lawmakers, respectively—are not supported due to a lack of statistical significance. Table 9 shows that Catholic

lawmakers have a small, positive coefficient, but it fails to reach statistical significance ($\beta = 0.194$, $p = 0.106$). This suggests that Catholic House lawmakers may be slightly more supportive of LGBTQ rights than Evangelicals, but this effect is not strong enough to be conclusive. Similarly, Jewish House lawmakers have a positive coefficient ($\beta = 0.199$), but it is also statistically insignificant. While Jewish lawmakers may be more supportive, the results do not provide strong enough evidence to confirm a meaningful impact on LGBTQ-related legislation.

Overall, these results confirm that partisan identity and Evangelical Baptist affiliation are the strongest predictors of LGBTQ-related voting behavior in the House, while the effects of Catholic and Jewish affiliation remain uncertain. The findings suggest that religious affiliation matters only for certain groups, reinforcing prior research on Evangelical opposition to LGBTQ rights. Meanwhile, partisan alignment—particularly Democratic affiliation—remains the most consistent and significant driver of LGBTQ policy support.

The findings have important implications for contemporary LGBTQ rights policymaking. While the growing acceptance of LGBTQ rights in the public sphere has led to increased legal protections, this study demonstrates that strong partisan and religious divides persist within legislative institutions. The significant opposition from Evangelical Baptist lawmakers suggests that religious conservatism continues to be a formidable force in shaping congressional voting patterns, potentially influencing the fate of future LGBTQ rights legislation.

Additionally, the results suggest that LGBTQ representation in the legislature—while symbolically important—may not be the primary driver of policy change. Instead, party affiliation and district-level ideology remain the strongest predictors of pro-LGBTQ votes. This has broader implications for LGBTQ advocacy groups, indicating that lobbying efforts might be more effective when targeting moderate and swing-district legislators rather than solely relying on increasing the number of LGBTQ-identifying lawmakers in Congress.

Theoretically, this study builds upon existing literature by demonstrating that straight allies—particularly Democratic lawmakers—play a central role in advancing LGBTQ rights

in Congress. While past research has largely focused on LGBTQ-identifying legislators, these results suggest that legislative allyship is a function of partisan and ideological alignment rather than personal identity alone. This supports existing theories of party discipline in roll-call voting and highlights the importance of electoral dynamics in shaping LGBTQ policymaking.

Methodologically, this study refines previous analyses by incorporating religious identity as a key independent variable and performing additional robustness checks to ensure the stability of results. The use of jackknife resampling and separate bill-level regressions strengthens confidence in the findings, confirming that partisan and religious effects remain significant across different legislative contexts.

These findings align with previous research on party position change, particularly Karol's (2023) study on the evolution of LGBTQ rights in U.S. politics. Like Karol, this study finds that partisanship remains the strongest predictor of legislative voting behavior, with Democratic lawmakers overwhelmingly supporting LGBTQ rights and Republican lawmakers largely opposing them. Additionally, both studies highlight the role of the religious right in shaping GOP resistance to LGBTQ rights. However, this study diverges from Karol's analysis in several ways. While Karol emphasizes incumbent adaptation and interest group influence in shaping party polarization, this study takes a more quantitative approach by explicitly modeling religious affiliation and conducting logistic regression analyses on roll-call votes. Furthermore, while Karol examines party platforms and co-sponsorship behavior, this study accounts for variation across individual LGBTQ-related bills, showing that partisan dynamics can differ depending on the policy area (e.g., military service, marriage rights, hate crime protections). Despite these methodological differences, both studies reinforce the broader conclusion that partisanship, rather than constituency characteristics, remains the primary determinant of congressional voting on LGBTQ rights.

7 Conclusion

This study provides new empirical evidence on the role of religious affiliation, partisanship, and district ideology in shaping legislative voting behavior on LGBTQ rights in the U.S. House of Representatives. The findings confirm that partisanship remains the dominant predictor, with Democratic lawmakers significantly more likely to support LGBTQ-related bills. Additionally, religious affiliation—particularly Evangelical Baptist identity—emerges as a key factor in explaining opposition to LGBTQ rights, reinforcing theories on religious conservatism and policymaking. These results contribute to the literature on legislative allyship by demonstrating that non-LGBTQ lawmakers' support for LGBTQ rights is driven primarily by partisan and ideological alignment rather than personal identity alone.

While this study advances understanding of legislative behavior on LGBTQ rights, it also has limitations. One constraint is the absence of socioeconomic and educational background variables. Early model drafts indicated that these factors lacked statistical significance, and obtaining consistent data on congressional members' educational backgrounds across multiple sessions proved challenging. As a result, this study prioritizes religious affiliation, partisanship, and district ideology as key explanatory variables.

Another important limitation is that this study does not fully account for how public opinion and party positions on LGBTQ rights have evolved over time. Legislative behavior is influenced by shifting political dynamics, including changes in party platforms, interest group pressures, and broader societal attitudes toward LGBTQ rights. Additionally, each of the bills analyzed in this study had unique policy goals, statutory language, and external pressures, meaning that they likely had different ideological "cut-points" that affected voting behavior. In spatial modeling terminology, these cut-points determine how difficult or easy it is for legislators to vote "Yea" on a given bill, all else being equal. Future research could explore a Dynamic IRT model that accounts for both over-time shifts in bill cut-points and the changing ideal points of legislators, providing a more precise understanding of evolving legislative behavior.

Moreover, the study does not account for potential regional variations in how evangelical lawmakers respond to LGBTQ rights issues. Evangelical resistance to LGBTQ legislation may not be solely driven by personal ideology but could also be shaped by district-level religious demographics and regional political cultures. While regional variables were not included in this analysis due to time constraints, future research could explore how evangelical density at the district or state level influences legislative voting behavior. Exploring these geographic factors would help clarify the extent to which religious affiliation and constituent pressures jointly shape policymaking.

Despite these limitations, this study underscores the continued influence of partisan and religious divisions in LGBTQ rights policymaking. The findings highlight the ongoing role of Evangelical opposition and the dominant influence of party alignment in shaping legislative outcomes. Future research should consider incorporating dynamic modeling techniques to better account for temporal changes in party and legislator preferences. These insights are crucial for understanding the long-term trajectory of LGBTQ rights legislation in an era of increasing polarization.

8 For Appendix

8.1 Jack-Knife Regression Analysis: Evaluating Individual Bill Exclusion

Table 10: Jack-Knife Regression Results by Excluded Bill

	Excl. DOMA	Excl. Matthew	Excl. DADT	Excl. VAWA 2012	Excl. VAW 2019	Excl. RMA House	Excl. RMA Senate
Democratic Party	1.218***	0.782***	0.827***	1.939***	0.748***	0.753***	0.725***
	(0.139)	(0.139)	(0.139)	(0.162)	(0.132)	(0.131)	(0.131)
Democratic Presidential Vote Share	0.048***	0.031***	0.031***	0.074***	0.030***	0.030***	0.030***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Lawmaker LGBTQ	0.399	0.244	0.234	-0.024	0.091	-0.004	-0.018
	(0.495)	(0.420)	(0.421)	(0.568)	(0.409)	(0.416)	(0.416)
Catholic	0.213	0.167	0.150	0.309*	0.189	0.185	0.191
	(0.116)	(0.112)	(0.112)	(0.137)	(0.110)	(0.111)	(0.111)
Evangelical Baptist	-0.451**	-0.375**	-0.425**	-0.718***	-0.330*	-0.367*	-0.368*
	(0.159)	(0.145)	(0.146)	(0.198)	(0.144)	(0.144)	(0.144)
Mormon	0.984**	1.053**	0.912*	1.050**	0.780*	0.440	0.462
	(0.330)	(0.372)	(0.366)	(0.374)	(0.350)	(0.346)	(0.342)
Excluded Bill:							
Defense of Marriage Act (1996)	*Excluded*	1.189***	1.193***	1.422***	1.183***	*Ref. Category*	1.183***
		(0.177)	(0.178)	(0.208)	(0.177)		(0.177)
Don't Ask Don't Tell Repeal Act (2010)	-0.391*	-0.289	*Excluded*	-0.609**	-0.287	-1.467***	-0.281
	(0.167)	(0.153)		(0.197)	(0.153)	(0.175)	(0.153)
Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Act (2009)	-0.382*	*Excluded*	-0.284	-0.592**	-0.282	-1.461***	-0.276
	(0.167)		(0.154)	(0.197)	(0.153)	(0.175)	(0.153)
Respect for Marriage Act (House - 2022)	*Ref. Category*	*Ref. Category*	*Ref. Category*	*Ref. Category*	*Ref. Category*	*Excluded*	*Ref. Category*
Respect for Marriage Act (Senate - 2022)	-0.115	-0.098	-0.097	-0.099	-0.105	-1.199***	*Excluded*
	(0.169)	(0.153)	(0.154)	(0.152)	(0.153)	(0.176)	
Violence Against Women Act (2012)	-0.592***	-0.514***	-0.510***	*Excluded*	-0.512***	-1.690***	-0.506***
	(0.168)	(0.153)	(0.154)		(0.153)	(0.174)	(0.153)
Violence Against Women Act (2019)	-0.015	-0.014	-0.016	-0.017	*Excluded*	-1.200***	-0.014
	(0.171)	(0.156)	(0.156)	(0.204)		(0.179)	(0.155)
Constant	-2.435***	-1.485***	-1.446***	-3.881***	-1.423***	-0.226	-1.403***
	(0.246)	(0.227)	(0.227)	(0.321)	(0.225)	(0.245)	(0.221)
Observations	2,546	2,531	2,531	2,528	2,535	2,531	2,528

Note: Each model excludes one bill from the dataset. Standard errors in parentheses.

8.2 Separate regression analysis by bill

Table 11: Logistic Regression Results by Bill

| | Dependent variable: vote_binary | | | | | | |
	DOMA	Matthew	DADT	VAWA 2012	VAWA 2019	RMA House	RMA Senate
Democratic Party	33.609	−28.800	2.025***	2.394***	34.270	−4.426***	4.620***
	(2,241.736)	(2,144.473)	(0.359)	(0.383)	(2,345.754)	(0.608)	(1.090)
Democratic Presidential Vote Share	0.158***	−0.163***	0.171***	0.185***	0.155***	−0.091**	0.165***
	(0.035)	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.029)	(0.036)	(0.028)	(0.039)
Lawmaker LGBTQ	1.038	−30.255	−0.640	−0.521	0.830	−0.436	14.288
	(8,053.187)	(2,144.473)	(2.130)	(2.604)	(8,178.015)	(1.893)	(3,538.477)
Catholic	0.577	0.248	0.516	0.355	0.452	0.049	0.138
	(0.430)	(0.481)	(0.379)	(0.399)	(0.446)	(0.470)	(0.478)
Evangelical Baptist	−17.124	2.160**	−0.215	−0.898	−17.263	0.120	−1.590
	(1,570.091)	(0.791)	(0.594)	(0.678)	(1,748.780)	(0.708)	(0.898)
Jewish	1.627	−0.679	1.870	1.641	−14.539	1.642	16.704
	(1.668)	(0.661)	(1.166)	(1.204)	(2,798.577)	(0.971)	(1,757.505)
Mormon	3.708**	−10.098	1.097	0.064	3.801**	17.095	1.208
	(1.190)	(20,781.380)	(0.962)	(1.188)	(1.219)	(1,223.359)	(1.223)
Constant	−7.985***	39.510	−9.468***	−10.074***	−8.074***	6.379***	−7.914***
	(1.527)	(2,144.473)	(1.282)	(1.416)	(1.610)	(1.373)	(1.607)
Observations	424	409	424	424	427	427	420
Log Likelihood	−81.096	−83.881	−119.089	−107.481	−76.615	−95.921	−70.654
Akaike Inf. Crit.	184.191	189.763	260.178	236.962	175.229	213.843	163.308

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001
Each model corresponds to a separate bill. Standard errors in parentheses.

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