

F O U R

The House, the Senate, and the Presidency

It is said that American politicians operate within an “opportunity structure.” This is the familiar hierarchy of public offices wherein, in the most familiar scenario, they start out as state or local officials, rise to the U.S. House, aspire to the Senate, and possibly climb beyond that to a cabinet post or the vice presidency or presidency.¹ Roles in the political parties are available on the side. This chapter is designed, first, through exhibits of MC “action,” to illuminate the opportunity structure that has engaged American politicians by addressing a selection of topics that bear on it. How has the House compared with the Senate as an “action” stage? For various eras, what is the MC “action” record in terms of rising to the cabinet and other key appointive offices, meshing their Capitol Hill careers with roles as leaders of state or local party organizations, trying to influence who wins the vice presidency or presidency, or aiming for those two top offices themselves?

As earlier, the logic here is that it can be useful to examine what MCs are noticed for—by historians of public affairs and, through

1. See Joseph A. Schlesinger, *Ambition and Politics: Political Careers in the United States* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966).