THE EFFECT OF BALLOT INITIATIVES ON VOTER ENGAGEMENT: DO BALLOT INITIATIVES AFFECT WHETHER VOTERS CARE ABOUT THE PARTISAN OUTCOME OF CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS?

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Public Policy
in Public Policy

By

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Washington, DC
April 13, 2011
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ABSTRACT

While ballot initiatives have existed in the United States since the Progressive Era, their popularity has risen in the past few decades as more initiatives qualify to be placed on the ballot. Numerous studies have examined whether the political environment created by the presence of initiatives influences the way people participate in and pay attention to elections. This paper analyzes what effect, if any, ballot initiatives have on voter engagement using a multivariate regression model. The dependent variable expresses voter engagement through partisan preferences in the outcome of elections. This paper examines whether adding a ballot initiative influences whether respondents in the American National Election Study (ANES) Cumulative Time Series Study from 2002, 2004, and 2008 care about which party wins the Congressional election. These results show that, nationally, increasing the number of ballot initiatives changes the likelihood of respondents’ expressing a preference for one party to win. Particularly at the upper and lower ends of initiative use, I found that an additional initiative is associated with a decrease in partisan engagement, even when controlling for respondents’ partisan leanings and various demographic characteristics.
This thesis is dedicated to a number of people who helped me along the way.

To my advisor, Dr. Arnie Quinn, whose knowledge of econometrics and Stata was invaluable to me during this process.
To my parents, who have supported me and cheered me on in achieving all of my goals and aspirations, especially this one.
To Eddie, for always listening, loving, and encouraging me.

I am thankful for all of your help.
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INTRODUCTION

Today, over half of the fifty states allow their residents one of the three primary forms of direct democracy – recall, referendum, and initiative. Recall allows citizens to vote unpopular politicians out of office, and referendum gives the voters a chance to vote a piece of legislation up or down. Ballot initiatives, however, require an extra push from the American citizenry to enact change. Citizens or organizations must write the initiative language, collect signatures for a petition, qualify for the ballot, and campaign for months in order to circumvent the traditional legislative process. The actual content of these ballot initiatives highlights the priorities and opinions of the people; high profile issues like gay marriage, abortion, and tax increases are often debated in the context of a ballot initiative campaign before they are addressed by government actors. While the number and salience of issues on state ballots change from year to year, use of the initiative process is on the rise. According to Ellis, some political scientists believe that the number of initiatives per cycle has increased due to corporations and special interest groups using them as a tool to further their own agendas; others believe that California’s 1978 proposition to cut property taxes showcased the power of the initiative to the American public and encouraged its use as a catalyst for change (Lowenstein et al. 2008).

This paper examines the relationship between ballot initiatives and voter engagement in general elections. I will analyze whether adding an additional initiative encourages more people to be connected to political parties and feel that they have an interest in the outcome of elections. My dependent variable is a binary measure of whether or not American National Election Survey (ANES) election year respondents care about which party wins the Congressional election. By examining interest in partisan outcomes, I look at how voters feel engaged in the political
process via their involvement with and connection to political parties. Bartels points out that many political scientists recognize the importance of the ties Americans feel to their political parties and subscribe to the “Michigan model,” which includes the idea that political affiliation is a major driver in voter choice and behavior, and Bartels asserts that a strong connection still exists (Bartels 2000). The dataset I am using is the American National Election Studies Time Series Cumulative Study, which includes the responses from ANES’ biennial election year surveys conducted 1948-2008; my analysis will only include data from the years 2002, 2004, and 2008. This survey is conducted at the individual level of a nationally representative sample of adults.

The question of whether ballot initiatives affect other aspects of politics has important policy implications; if the states that allow direct democracy have citizens who feel less attached to partisan outcomes and more interested in policy outcomes, then other states would be wise to consider implementing initiative processes in their own systems. Additionally, the states that have prohibitive initiative processes might be encouraged to relax the requirements for an initiative to qualify for the ballot if citizens engaging in the initiative process has the positive result of encouraging interest in policy. The results of my study show that adding an additional initiative could cause voters to be less attached to partisan outcomes; this relationship is present in the full sample as well as limited models that only examine the upper and lower ends of initiative use. Based on previous studies conducted on the effects of ballot initiatives, I believe that these findings signify a decrease in respondents’ partisan attachments because they become more interested in issues and public policy.

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1 There was no ANES Election Year Survey conducted in 2006. The center instead ran a pilot study to test new questions.
BACKGROUND

Citizen-sponsored ballot initiatives appear to have grown in popularity over the past few decades, but only in a few heavy usage states. Ellis reports the average number of initiatives per two-year election cycle in the 1960’s, 1970’s, and 1980’s as 19, 35, and 50, respectively; recently there has been a strong uptick in the average number of initiatives, with an average of 76 per cycle in the 1990’s and 2000’s (Lowenstein et al., 2008). However, this pattern of growth has not been experienced evenly across the country. Ellis points out that some states, including Arkansas, North Dakota, and Oklahoma, actually used initiatives less often in recent decades than they have in the past. On the other hand, California, Oregon, and a few other heavy usage states have seen their use of initiatives increase. Few states have added initiatives to their democratic process since the initial flush of states in the first half of the 20th century (Lowenstein et al., 2008).

As academics and the media scrutinize disclosure laws and unlimited issue advocacy spending, ballot initiatives have entered the campaign finance reform debate. California’s 2008 Proposition 8 spurred a lawsuit from proponents of the measure because they were being harassed following the disclosure of their contributions to support the measure, which outlawed gay marriage (Klein, 2009). As overall campaign spending grows with every new election, up to approximately $4 billion dollars in 2010 according to National Public Radio, spending on ballot measures has increased as well (2010). According to the Ballot Initiative Strategy Center, the 2004 election saw $393 million spent on initiative campaigns, including both citizen and legislature-sponsored issues. In 2006, the two sides of a single renewable energy initiative in California spent a total of $153 million (Wilfore, 2008). Not only do campaigns spend a lot of money on initiatives, but the state costs of conducting such votes are high due to the need to print
voter information packets and ballots. Some argue that this sharp increase in spending, particularly spending by corporations in cases where industries are affected, shows how initiatives are being overtaken by financial interests, undermining the initiative’s purpose as a mouthpiece for citizen concerns.

If the initiative process is so expensive and, in some states, sparsely used, why should state governments abdicate some of their power to write legislation to the people they serve? There are three main arguments in favor of the initiative process. Ellis identifies the two major rationales that surfaced in the Progressive Era in the early 20th century, when most states enacted their initiative laws. At the time, the most radical proponents, the millenials, advocated adoption of the initiative process in order to wage class warfare; these individuals accused the legislature of being monopolistic and insensitive to the needs of working class people, so initiatives were needed to ensure all Americans were heard. The other supporters, the minimalists, also took a populist view of the initiative but had less aggressive intentions for its use. They believed that the initiative was a tool to be used only when necessary as a check or “safety valve” in the rare occasion that the government lost its way (Lowenstein et al., 2008).

The third rationale is the one most political scientists are interested in studying today: the educational environment created by initiatives. In states without the initiative process, election debates are centered around candidates and their feelings on issues. As Smith and Tolbert conclude, citizens’ discussion of ballot issues, which they will be directly voting on in lieu of their elected representatives, leads to a “rich information environment,” that harkens back to the Ancient Greeks debating in the agora. The authors argue that this environment leads citizens to grow in their political participation and engagement (D. Smith and Tolbert, 2005). Other political
scientists have tested the effects of ballot initiatives on voter turnout, political knowledge, and various measures of political engagement, which is what my analysis will address.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ballot initiatives have a unique place in political science literature. Several authors have looked at the effects of initiatives on voter engagement and knowledge, turnout, and trust in government institutions. Short term studies of the effects of initiatives on political knowledge and engagement show a noticeable increase, mostly during midterm election years. Some authors argue that a longer period of time, these effects seem to flatten out. M. Smith claims that, even if ballot initiatives do not have significant effects on individual elections, their long term use increases the political aptitude of residents (2002). On the other hand, Schlozman and Yohai argue that those effects may not exist at all (2008). Tolbert, McNeal, and D. Smith analyzed ANES data for 1996, 1998, and 2000 to measure the effect of ballot measures on political participation and knowledge, finding that “exposure to ballot initiatives increases the probability of voting, stimulates campaign contributions to interest groups, and enhances political knowledge,” (2003). M. Smith’s study concluded that respondents who lived in states where initiative power was exercised over the preceding twenty years were more politically knowledgeable than residents of other states (2002). Schlozman and Yohai’s results from a 1978-2004 study show a modest increase in political knowledge of voters due to the presence of initiatives, but no increase among non-voters (2008).

Other authors have measured the effects of ballot measures on other aspects of the political environment. D. Smith and Tolbert examine the “rich information environment created
by ballot measures,” and the effects that environment has on candidate elections using the 2006 midterm election. They assert that the discussion created by the presence of ballot measures intensified support and opposition of the issues at stake.

Three key studies find a positive correlation between increased ballot initiative use and voter turnout. M.A. Smith’s 2001 study observes the effects of initiatives in presidential and midterm election years from 1972 to 1996, finding that highly salient initiatives increase turnout by 4% in midterm election years but do not have a significant effect on turnout in presidential elections. Tolbert et al. corroborated Smith’s findings in their 2003 study of the 1996, 1998, and 2000 elections. In addition to measuring the effects of initiatives on voters’ political knowledge, the authors claim that respondents living in states with ballot initiatives were less affected by initiatives during a contested presidential race when compared to a midterm or low-turnout presidential election, meaning that initiatives might stimulate voter interest more in those midterm years (Tolbert, McNeal, and Smith, 2003). Tolbert and D. Smith conducted another study on ballot initiatives and turnout during 1980-2002, again finding an increase in turnout. The authors posit that the turnout increase occurred due to ballot initiative campaign efforts and information adding to the election dialogue (Tolbert and Smith, 2005).

Studies of ballot initiatives on citizens’ trust in government show mixed results. Tolbert, McNeal, and Smith quote previous studies that claim initiatives and other forms of participatory democracy engender more trust in government because citizen participation improves government institutions (2003). While many political scientists agree that ballot initiatives have a positive impact on the electoral environment, some believe that the use of initiatives breeds distrust in government. In his 2009 study, Dyck argues that “direct democratic institutions put citizens in an adversarial relationship with their governments.” Challenging the notion that ballot
initiatives lead to a healthier policy environment, he finds that both living in an initiative state and an increase in the average number of initiatives is associated with citizens’ decreased trust in state government.

There are a number of important demographic characteristics that influence voters’ investment in politics and elections, including gender, education and income, and ethnicity. Women tend to be less politically engaged than men, even when voter turnout in an election is practically the same for both genders. Verba et. al perform a multivariate analysis to investigate why women are less politically engaged than men and find that differences in education and occupation account for some of the disparity that exists in political participation but not turnout. The authors also found that the presence of a female candidate or incumbent increased women’s recognition of female senators and state elected officials (Verba, Burns, and Schlozman, 1997). Atkeson examines the effect of statewide female candidates on women’s political engagement, finding that all competitive elections increase the likelihood of women to discuss politics and to attempt to sway others, but competitive elections with female candidates cause an increase in internal efficacy (2003). The U.S. Census reported that in the 2008 election, as is the pattern in most years, highly educated voters tended to vote more often than their less educated counterparts; similarly, wealthier income groups voted more consistently than low income groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Hillygus tests three hypotheses to find the relationship among cognitive ability, formal education, and political engagement. He finds a correlation between political engagement, measured by voting and other electoral participation, and SAT scores in adults with varying levels of formal education as well as an increase in political engagement with each additional year of education (2005). Various models have been tested to show support for the hypothesis that some ethnic groups participate more in the electoral process
than others. The most intricate is that of Leighley and Vedlitz, who tested five different “participation theories” - Socioeconomic Status, Psychological Resources, Social Connectedness, Group Identity or Consciousness, and Group Conflict – across four different ethnic groups in Texas, finding some variation across ethnic groups.

Partisanship remains an important factor to consider in today’s political environment, and political scientists debate exactly how much influence political parties have in America today. Green et al. look at a number of studies, mostly using data from ANES surveys, and report that voters’ self-identified political affiliation is strongly correlated with voting habits. Surprisingly, they also mention that voters’ affiliation is only weakly related to stances on various issues. The authors claim that aligning oneself with a political party is similar to making an attachment to any other religious or social group in that the results are a sense of belonging and self-awareness; sometimes the draw to one group has less to do with ideology and more to do with family, geographic, or religious attachments (2002). Bartels challenged the claims of some political scientists who say that voters do not feel the same connection to political parties as they have in the past. He found that partisan attachments actually grew more pronounced over the time period that he studied, 1972-1996 (2000).

From a statistical perspective, using survey research data for analysis invites complications due to its potential unreliability. Bertrand and Mullainathan describe how question order and wording, in addition to the respondent’s desire to appear socially acceptable, can affect the way that a respondent answers questions. The inaccurate self-assessment that results from this misreporting is likely correlated with certain demographic characteristics, leading to measurement error (2001). Some of the bias can be accounted for through the use of control variables that account for the characteristics that may cause some groups to misrepresent their
beliefs. Similarly, Zaller and Feldman argue that survey responses often do not accurately depict the issue preferences of respondents, but rather reflect what issues and positions are top of mind due to the questions previously asked and the respondents’ activities that day (1992). Due to the necessity of using survey data to study political motivation and behavior, my analysis is unavoidably subject to these biases.

This paper differs from previous papers in a few ways. While other researchers have used the ANES dataset in combination with other data to look at ballot initiatives, most publicly available papers use data before 2000. A more important distinction is that I have intersected studies of partisanship and voter engagement in relation to ballot initiatives by measuring the effect that adding initiatives to the ballot has on voters’ interest in partisan outcomes. Many authors have studied the effects of initiatives on voter turnout and political knowledge, and others interested in partisanship have tried to gauge the influence that political affiliation has on voter behavior. My thesis uses voters’ ties to political parties as a measure of how engaged they are in the political process, looking at the intersection of how partisan engagement is affected by ballot initiative use.

**HYPOTHESIS AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The primary purpose of this paper is to test whether the number of ballot initiatives in a state has a significant effect on whether respondents care about which party wins the Congressional election that year. My hypothesis was that the coefficient on the ballot initiative variable would be positive, indicating that partisan engagement rises with the number of ballot initiatives. I also hypothesized that the presence of initiatives on the ballot has a positive effect
on whether voters care about the partisan outcome of the election. I originally expected the outcome to be a positive relationship because I thought that initiatives would increase all forms of political engagement, including partisan attachments. Because my research suggested that ballot initiatives could increase political participation, knowledge, and voting habits, I thought that partisan engagement would also increase with additional initiatives.

Political engagement can be measured in a number of ways. My dependent variable measures how interested respondents are in which way that year’s Congressional elections turn out. I chose this measure for voter engagement in the political process because it shows an awareness of the American party system and personal vestment in that election. Most voters involved in the political process beyond casting a vote do so through party-sponsored activities, including volunteering, fundraising, and making donations. By measuring whether voters care about the partisan outcome of the election, I am able to capture the effect of adding an initiative on how voters engage in the political process through partisan affiliation. While not all voters self-identify as a member of a party, theoretically all voters understand the consequences when a particular party wins an election, such as one party gaining or losing control of the House of Representatives or creating a divided government.

My policy variables, which measure ballot initiatives, are part of the environmental factors that influence voter engagement. In this analysis, I use different specifications of how many ballot initiatives are present on the ballot in each respondent’s state that year. Additionally, I included the presence of ballot initiatives to distinguish between states that have the process yet do not use it and those that do. Other environmental factors that influence voter engagement include what kind of election is occurring (Presidential year or midterm) and details about the candidates on the ballot; however, I can only account for the type of election in my analysis.
Multiple studies I have cited found that ballot initiatives have a stronger effect in midterm election years than in presidential years. The candidates on the ballot can also have an effect on how voters vote; Atkeson suggests that women vote differently based on how their gender is represented on the ballot (2003). Personal political motivations that impact engagement are political knowledge, voting history, and self-efficacy, or feeling that one’s vote matters. All of these personal notions encourage voters to engage and participate in the political system out of feelings of civic duty and the ability to effect change.

Most of the other factors that influence partisan engagement are demographic in nature. Age is an important factor to include, as older voters tend to vote and participate in elections more often than their younger counterparts. Other personal characteristics need to be accounted for, such as gender, education, and income, which are widely recognized as factors that contribute to a person’s civic participation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010) (Hillygus, 2005). I expected to need to account for ethnicity in my analysis as certain groups tend to be more engaged than others, and the diversity of the electorate changed between 2002 and 2008 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Additional information about how demographics affect engagement can be found in my literature review.

DATA AND METHODS

Voter motivation and behavior is hard to quantify. Americans vote using a secret ballot for all elections, and even if one could track who citizens vote for, it is impossible to collect observational data that measured how, why, and when voters make those decisions. Survey research is the only tool political scientists have to ascertain how voters feel about issues, what
political groups they align with, and how they feel about politics and government. Surveys can produce biased results due to sampling error and social concerns that affect how respondents answer questions posed by an interviewer either in person or on the phone. While the observations in my dataset are subject to this same bias, my analysis of voter motivation must be conducted using survey data in order to measure how voters think and feel.

For my analysis, I used the American National Election Study’s Time Series Cumulative file downloaded from the organization’s website. The American National Election Study, a combined effort of Stanford University and the University of Michigan, conducts biennial election year surveys that consist of mostly in-person interviews of a nationally representative sample of adults ages 17+. In each study year, a survey is conducted immediately following Election Day, and in some years a survey is also conducted before the election. The original merged data set contains information from the survey’s beginnings in 1948 up to 2008, but I am only using the years 2002, 2004, and 2008. These three years have both pre and post-election surveys, but all of my variables of interest come from the pre-election surveys. In addition to the ANES data, I created a variable for the number of initiatives in a state/year collected from each state’s Board of Elections. I manually added this variable before computing descriptive statistics and running my statistical analysis.
The following table includes pertinent statistics about each survey year:

**Table 5.1 Dataset statistics.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Method Used</th>
<th>Mode Administered</th>
<th>Sampling Strategy</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Telephone interviews</td>
<td>CATI</td>
<td>Random digit dialing</td>
<td>1,511</td>
<td>Maximum response rate 63.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>In-person interviews</td>
<td>CAPI</td>
<td>Cross-section probability sample/List-based sampling</td>
<td>1,212</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>In-person interviews</td>
<td>CAPI with one ACASI section</td>
<td>Cross-section probability sample/List-based sampling</td>
<td>2,322</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*CATI = Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing; CAPI = Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing; ACASI = Audio Computer Assisted Self Interview*

I eliminated all observations in the cumulative dataset collected before 2002, leaving 5,045 observations for use. I used probit analyses to determine the probability of an individual caring about which party wins the Congressional election based on the presence of ballot initiatives, the number of initiatives, and my control variables; I also ran logit analyses and found virtually identical results. I have chosen probit/logit because my dependent variable is binary, and I am interested in predicting the probability that a person is interested in which party wins that year’s Congressional election.

My primary regression equations are:

1. \[ \Pr(\text{WHICHPARTYWINS}) = \Phi(B_0 + B_1 \times \#\text{BALLOTINITIATIVES} + B_2 \times \text{PRESENCEOFINITIATIVES} + B_3 \times \text{GENDER} + B_4 \times \text{AGE} + B_5 \times \text{INCOME} + B_6 \times \text{HIGHSCHOOL} + B_7 \times \text{SOMECOLLEGE} + B_8 \times \text{COLLEGEDEGREE} + B_9 \times \text{MIDTERM}) \]
2. \( \Pr(\text{WHICHPARTYWINS}) = \Phi(B0 + B1 \times \text{ONE/TWOINITIATIVES} + B2 \times \text{THREETOSEVENINITIATIVES} + B3 \times \text{EIGHTPLUSINITIATIVES} + B4 \times \text{PRESENCEOFINITIATIVES} + B5 \times \text{GENDER} + B6 \times \text{AGE} + B7 \times \text{INCOME} + B8 \times \text{HIGHSCOOLEAN} + B9 \times \text{SOMESECOLLEGE} + B10 \times \text{COLLEGEDEGREE} + B11 \times \text{MIDTERM}) \)

Dependent variable:

- **WHICHPARTYWINS**: This variable measures whether the respondent cares about which party wins the outcome of that year’s Congressional election. The question language for my three years of interest was “As you know, representatives to Congress in Washington are being chosen in this election from congressional districts all around the country. How much would you say that you personally care about the way the election to the U.S. House of Representatives comes out: do you care very much, pretty much, not very much, or not at all?” This question was asked after a series of questions concerning respondents’ political views. In my dataset, a designation of “0” includes negative responses, such as “not very much,” “not at all,” “don’t know,” etc., and “1” responses include the positive responses “very much” and “pretty much.” This question was asked in the pre-election survey in all three years and was repeated in the post-election survey of 2002, but only the pre-election observation is recorded in this dataset.

Policy variables:

- **#BALLOTINITIATIVES**: My independent variable of interest is my manually created variable, the number of ballot initiatives in each state for my three years
of interest. I’ve collected this data from the Board of Elections and/or Secretary of State offices from the twenty-four states that have an initiative process; this variable includes the number of initiatives in each state on the November general election ballot in that year. States are codified in this dataset using FIPS codes.

- **ONE/TWOINITIATIVES, THREETOSEVENINITIATIVES, and EIGHTPLUSINITIATIVES:** These binary variables, used in my second primary regression, were generated by breaking up \#BALLOTINITIATIVES into three categories based on a pattern of initiative use that I noticed in my dataset.
  
  ONE/TWOINITIATIVES is equal to 1 if the respondent lived in a state where there were one or two initiatives, and 0 otherwise.

  THREETOSEVENINITIATIVES is equal to 1 if the respondent lived in a state where there were between three and seven initiatives, and 0 otherwise.

  EIGHTPLUSINITIATIVES is equal to 1 if the respondent lived in a state where there were eight or more initiatives, and 0 otherwise.

- **PRESENCEOFINITIATIVES:** This is an indicator variable for the presence of ballot initiatives in a state, which will separate out the effect between states that do not have the initiative process at all and those that have the process yet do not use it. This is another manually created variable based on data from state Board of Elections and/or Secretary of State offices in addition to consulting a list from the Ballot Initiative Strategy Center website.

Control variables:

- **GENDER:** This variable was interviewer-recorded, and I recoded it as 0 for males and 1 for females.
• **AGE:** Respondent age was measured by asking respondents to give their year of birth, and their ages were recorded from ages 18 to 99 years old.

• **INCOME:** Household income was measured differently in 2002 than it was in 2004 and 2008; in 2002, multiple questions were asked to determine the respondents’ yearly household income, and the results were condensed into a summary variable with nine options. To correct for this change, I merged the income variables from the three original year datasets to create one four-category income variable that spans across my three surveys of interest and put that variable in this dataset. A value of 1 indicates household income less than $14,999, 2 includes incomes between $15,000 and $34,999, 3 includes incomes between $35,000 and $49,999, and a value of 4 indicates household income of $50,000 or above.

• **EDUCATION:** The education variable was measured the same way in all three surveys, with respondents reporting the highest degree they have earned: grade school or less, high school, some college, or college/advanced degree. I created binary variables that indicate whether or not a respondent is a high school graduate, completed some college, and whether he or she has completed an undergraduate degree.

• **MIDTERM:** I have added the midterm election indicator variable for all observations collected in the year 2002, since that is the only midterm election I am including.

There are a number of environmental factors that contribute to voter engagement but that I cannot account for in my analysis. Individual voting history, which gives more information
about a respondent’s political interest and participation, cannot be included because the information simply does not exist in the ANES dataset, and I am unsure as to what the nature of this bias might be. Additionally, I cannot measure the long term effects of having ballot initiatives in a state due to the difficulty of collecting that information and the fact that I am only using the three most recent years of data from the cumulative file. Excluding this long term information will likely cause bias in my results by understating the environmental effects of initiatives and any other residual knowledge that accumulates with voters after several years of being exposed to initiatives.

The three election years that I have chosen are the midterm election before and the first two presidential election years following the implementation of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act in 2002. The Supreme Court’s decision in McConnell v. FEC following the law changed the nation’s campaign environment and opened the floodgates to an increase in independent expenditures by corporations and political action committees. The increase in all campaign advertisements has likely had an effect on how much attention citizens are paying to elections and public affairs. The ANES survey was not conducted in 2006, therefore measuring the effect of BCRA will be complicated by the fact that the only available data following the legislation comes from presidential elections. There are two different weights that can be used with the years I have chosen, a post-stratified and a not post-stratified household variable. The codebook lists the FIPS county codes as the strata for previous years, but is not clear about how they have been specifically designed in more recent years. I will use the post-stratified weight in my analysis in order to ensure more balanced and accurate. These household weights were included in the study to correct for racial oversampling. Because I could not control for long-term initiative effects in my regressions, there could be a problem with heteroskedasticity. My
regressions may have less accurately predicted the values for respondents from states with a regular history of initiative use relative to than respondents in states with few or no initiatives. I corrected this issue by using robust standard errors.

The following tables show the relevant descriptive statistics for the variables that will be included in my model.

**Table 5.2 Descriptive statistics for all variables.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th># of Observations</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interest in who wins Cong. Election</td>
<td>Does the respondent care which way the Congressional election comes out?</td>
<td>5034</td>
<td>0.6951</td>
<td>0.4604</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of ballot initiatives</td>
<td>Raw number of ballot initiatives in respondent's state in that year</td>
<td>5045</td>
<td>2.0410</td>
<td>3.6432</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of initiative process</td>
<td>Indicator for whether respondent's state has a citizen-sponsored initiative process</td>
<td>5045</td>
<td>0.4509</td>
<td>0.4976</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Nominal variable for gender</td>
<td>5045</td>
<td>0.5582</td>
<td>0.4967</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Raw age of respondents</td>
<td>4989</td>
<td>48.111</td>
<td>17.030</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Ordinal variable for yearly household income</td>
<td>4666</td>
<td>2.7803</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>Indicator for high school diploma being highest educational level attained</td>
<td>5045</td>
<td>0.3768</td>
<td>0.4846</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>Indicator for some college being highest educational level attained</td>
<td>5045</td>
<td>0.3100</td>
<td>0.4656</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>Indicator for college degree being highest educational level attained</td>
<td>5045</td>
<td>0.2750</td>
<td>0.4467</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>Indicator for observation from midterm election year (in this case, 2002)</td>
<td>5045</td>
<td>0.2995</td>
<td>0.4581</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following table shows the number and percentages of each number of ballot initiatives as they appeared in my dataset.

**Table 5.3 Frequency Table for Number of Ballot Initiatives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>3,094</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(61.3%)</td>
<td>(7.1%)</td>
<td>(7.1%)</td>
<td>(5.1%)</td>
<td>(3.3%)</td>
<td>(2.3%)</td>
<td>(1.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>315</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.8%)</td>
<td>(0.6%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(2.0%)</td>
<td>(2.7%)</td>
<td>(6.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following cross-tabulation shows the relationship between my dependent variable and independent variable of interest. This preliminary cross-tabulation shows that a positive response in caring about which party wins varies somewhat across the number of ballot initiatives in a respondent’s state. The relationship shows a non-linear pattern, with values of one, indicating that a respondent cares which party wins the Congressional election, occurring more often at two, five, eight, and twelve initiatives. Interest peaks around eight ballot initiatives, with 86% of respondents caring very much or pretty much about who wins; however, there are only 28 observations collected where there are eight initiatives in that state. Before and after that peak, respondents’ interest hovers around six percentage points above and below the mean of 70%.
Table 5.4 Overall Cross-tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Initiatives</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Column %</th>
<th>Row %</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Column %</th>
<th>Row %</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Row %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>941</td>
<td>30.47</td>
<td>18.69</td>
<td>2,147</td>
<td>69.53</td>
<td>42.65</td>
<td>3,088</td>
<td>61.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>31.65</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>68.35</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>7.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>25.84</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>74.16</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>7.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>33.46</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>66.54</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>5.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>34.13</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>65.87</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>3.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25.66</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>74.34</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>66.67</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35.71</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>64.29</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14.29</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>85.71</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33.67</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>66.33</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36.23</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>63.77</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>28.57</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>71.43</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>6.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,535</td>
<td>30.49</td>
<td>30.49</td>
<td>3,499</td>
<td>69.51</td>
<td>69.51</td>
<td>5,034</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I ran additional cross-tabulations by gender, age, income, race, and education to see if the variation across the number of initiatives changed among the different categories, but did not see any difference in the pattern. Notably, when looking at only the respondents living in initiative states, the pattern stays the same, with little difference in interest between all respondents in states with no initiatives on the ballot and those in states that have the initiative process but none on the ballot. The same modest increases at two, five, eight, and twelve initiatives appear.
INTRODUCTION

I performed four probit analyses, two using my entire dataset and two that were limited; logit analyses produced very similar results. In all models, I used the sample weights recommended by ANES and used robust standard errors to correct for heteroskedasticity. The first two models used 4,589 observations from the total of 5,405 in my dataset due to some respondents refusing to give their age and income. The second two models were restricted to use only observations collected where there were more than eight and two or fewer initiatives on the November ballot, respectively. I also ran additional models to test whether my analysis was sensitive to the inclusion of party identification, the discussion of which follows the analysis of the results from my four models.

The coefficients on my control variables remained relatively stable across the four models. The coefficient on age was statistically significant in all four regressions, and the coefficients on the education indicator variables are significant at the 95% confidence level in all regressions except the third, in which my analysis is limited to observations where there were eight or more initiatives on the ballot in that state/year. The midterm variable was only significant in the final regression, which was limited to observations with two or fewer initiatives on the ballot, and gender was significant in the third regression. Income was not significant in any model but remained in my regressions in order to prevent omitted variable bias. Originally, my models also contained indicator variables for ethnicity, but since they did not add anything substantive to my model or correct any bias, I chose to omit them from my final regressions.
The following table shows the outcome from my four probit analysis models:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1. Raw number of initiatives</th>
<th>2. Initiative categories</th>
<th>3. Observations with eight+ initiatives</th>
<th>4. Observations with two or fewer initiatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.022 (0.168)</td>
<td>-1.033 (0.169)</td>
<td>0.822 (0.800)</td>
<td>-1.110 (0.189)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of initiatives</td>
<td>0.009 (0.009)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.126** (0.057)</td>
<td>-0.117* (0.066)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of initiatives</td>
<td>-0.068 (0.061)</td>
<td>0.109 (0.096)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.080 (0.088)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or Two</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.203* (0.112)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three to Seven</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.223** (0.111)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight +</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.018 (0.113)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.022 (0.022)</td>
<td>0.024 (0.022)</td>
<td>-0.062 (0.057)</td>
<td>0.011 (0.026)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>0.052 (0.057)</td>
<td>0.070 (0.057)</td>
<td>-0.388 (0.294)</td>
<td>0.141** (0.064)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.017** (0.001)</td>
<td>0.017** (0.001)</td>
<td>0.013** (0.004)</td>
<td>0.018** (0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.009 (0.048)</td>
<td>0.010 (0.048)</td>
<td>0.222* (0.131)</td>
<td>-0.039 (0.056)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>0.902** (0.148)</td>
<td>0.900** (0.149)</td>
<td>0.607 (0.424)</td>
<td>0.963** (0.164)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>0.690** (0.144)</td>
<td>0.689** (0.147)</td>
<td>0.281 (0.418)</td>
<td>0.822** (0.158)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>0.465** (0.140)</td>
<td>0.466** (0.141)</td>
<td>0.053 (0.409)</td>
<td>0.581** (0.152)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N size                     | 4589                         | 4589                     | 562                       | 3424

Standard errors are reported in parentheses following the coefficients. Statistics that are significant at the 90% confidence level are marked with an asterisk, and those significant at the 95% level have two asterisks. The following paragraphs include interpretations of my results and the policy implications, with the most detail following my second probit model, which I consider to be the strongest primary regression.
Primary Models

My first regression examines initiative use through a raw ballot initiative variable and a separate measure for presence of the initiative process in a state’s law. In this regression, 4,589 observations are used. Holding the control variables at their means, the marginal effect of turning on the ballot initiative presence indicator and the first initiative is -2.21%, and each additional initiative added has an approximate marginal effect of 0.33%.2 However, neither measure of initiative use is statistically significant here. Each additional initiative seems to have a positive effect on the engagement/partisanship variable, as the majority of the confidence interval resides on the positive side of zero, but the negative coefficient on the presence of ballot initiatives drives the relationship downward. This was the only regression model that suggested the relationship between initiatives and caring about the partisan outcome of the election might be positive, however, as I’ve stated, association is very weak.

I believe that the weak relationship in the first model is due to the fact that the real relationship between initiatives and partisan engagement is not linear. In this model, the marginal effect moving from 2 to 3 initiatives is similar to moving from 8 to 9; realistically, I do not believe that is true. My subsequent limited models and the research I conducted prior to this study both suggest that there are environmental factors that differ between low initiative and high initiative states. Adding a quadratic term to this model does not adequately capture the complex relationship between initiatives and partisan engagement either; for this reason, I decided to break the number of initiatives into categories to better determine the relationship. I initially suspected that the relationship between initiatives and partisan engagement changed as the number of initiatives in a state/year changed, and by using these categories I could single out the

---

2 The marginal effect of moving from 1 to 2 initiatives is 0.34%, and the marginal effect between 11 and 12 initiatives is 0.33%.
effect of having a few initiatives has on engagement and partisanship in comparison to the effect of a large or moderate number of initiatives and produce a stronger model. I decided to use categories of initiative numbers for each state/year; these categories include one-to-two initiatives, three-to-seven initiatives, and eight-plus initiatives.

The second probit model is similar to the first, except that I replaced the raw ballot initiative variable with a set of indicator variables for the three initiative categories. The cross-tabulation of my independent and dependent variable (see table 5.4) showed peaks at a few intervals that suggested some kind of change at those points; at two, five, eight and twelve initiatives, over 70% of respondents reported being interested in which party won the Congressional election. I used these peaks to create categories large enough to include a valid subsample of my data, with state/years having two or fewer initiatives falling into the low use category, those observations with three to seven initiatives condensed into a moderate use category, and those observations with eight or more initiatives being considered high use. In this regression, the initiative presence indicator is not statistically significant, but some of the initiative category indicators are. As I suspected, there is an observable relationship between certain categories of initiatives and whether respondents care about which party wins that year’s Congressional election. Both one-to-two and three-to-seven initiatives are statistically significant, with one-to-two at the 90% level and three-to-seven at the 95% level, and both coefficients are negative.

Initially I predicted that the relationship between initiatives and my dependent variable would be positive, but these results show something else; adding one or two initiatives has a marginal effect of -3.52%, and increasing the number of initiatives from one or two to three-to-seven has a marginal effect of -0.76%. Increasing the number from three-to-seven to eight or
more has a marginal effect of 7.57%. The coefficients on the two initiative variables that are statistically significant are both negative. The negative relationship between each initiative category and partisan engagement suggests that an initiative environment and its accompanying policy discussions might eclipse some of the usual attention that goes to parties and their candidates, causing partisan interest in the election to go down. The relationship between initiatives and caring about who wins the Congressional election seems to be stronger for the three-to-seven variable than it does for the one-to-two variable, as the p value of the three-to-seven indicator variable is 0.044, and the p value for one-to-two indicator is 0.069. At the greatest initiative category, eight-plus, the relationship is not at all significant, with a p value of 0.875. However, having more observations in my dataset, perhaps including additional years, could show more significant associations. The coefficients on one-to-two and three-to-seven initiatives suggest that having a low or moderate number of initiatives actually makes voters less interested in the partisan outcome, but does not necessarily mean that they are less interested in the election overall. I initially thought that the effect of initiatives would taper off after a certain point where adding additional initiatives did not have any effect on voter engagement; the results of my regression show that initiatives have less of an effect on partisan engagement after seven initiatives. However, as I will explain later, adding additional initiatives at the extremes of low and high use of initiatives drives the probability of caring about which party wins the election downward. Again, the presence of ballot initiatives is not significant in this model – the p value is 0.255 – but its inclusion in my model completes its specification and increases the statistical significance of the one-to-two and three-to-seven variables. The same constants are statistically significant in my first two models, which reassures me that my model is not overly sensitive to how ballot initiatives are specified.
I used the prchange command in Stata to test for changes in the marginal effects and see if there are any areas that my primary model predicts incorrectly. Holding all of my independent variables at their means, none of the marginal effects cross the 50% threshold that indicates a single variable is determining whether an individual care which party wins the election. The following table shows the predicted probabilities for moving from zero to one and the marginal effect of a one unit change holding all variables at their means. Moving most of the variables from their minimum to their maximum, either an increase from missing to 1 or 0 to 1, resulted in a very small change. However, a respondent’s attaining a college degree or turning out to vote in an election both turned out to be strong drivers in changing my dependent variable. This result is not surprising, education is a good cue to signify whether a person is politically engaged or not.

The following are the results of my prchange analysis:

**Table 6.4 Prchange results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Min-Max</th>
<th>Marginal Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ballotpres</td>
<td>0.0385</td>
<td>0.0386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>onetwoini</td>
<td>-0.0740</td>
<td>-0.0716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>threesevenini</td>
<td>-0.0814</td>
<td>-0.0785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eightplusini</td>
<td>-0.0063</td>
<td>-0.0063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vinc</td>
<td>0.0252</td>
<td>0.0084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>midterm</td>
<td>0.0243</td>
<td>0.0245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age</td>
<td>0.4215</td>
<td>0.0060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>0.0034</td>
<td>0.0034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collegegrad</td>
<td>0.2721</td>
<td>0.3171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>somecoll</td>
<td>0.2236</td>
<td>0.2429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>highsch</td>
<td>0.1592</td>
<td>0.1643</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Limited Models

My third regression model looks similar to the first probit analysis, except that I’ve limited the sample to include just the respondents in the high use state/year, those with eight or more initiatives on the November ballot. The coefficient on the eight-plus category is not statistically significant in my second regression, but I suspect there is a difference in the relationship with initiatives to respondents caring about who wins the Congressional election within the eight-plus category. In this model, I specified ballot initiatives using the raw initiative number variable because I was interested in seeing an incremental change by adding another initiative. Due to the limited scope of my research and the fact that I only used three election years to make up my dataset, only a few state/year fell into this category: California in 2004 and 2008, Colorado in 2008, and Oregon in 2002 and 2008. The total number of observations for this regression was 562 out of the total 5,046 in my whole dataset. National surveys conducted by the media typically use 1,000 respondents for a nationally representative sample with a 97% confidence margin. Since this regression needs only to be a representative sample of the few states that regularly have a high number of initiatives on the ballot, I feel that I have enough observations to correctly interpret the results.

In the third regression, the coefficient on ballot initiatives is negative and statistically significant, mirroring the behavior of the low and moderate initiative number categories in the previous regression. The average marginal effect of each additional initiative is -4.94%. In looking at the first three regression models and where the number of ballot initiatives is statistically significant, I found that being in a state where there are eight or more initiatives on the ballot that year does not make a citizen more likely to care about the elections outcome than

---

someone who is in a state with no initiatives; however, this regression shows that within that
eight-plus group, adding additional initiatives to the ballot does have a statistically significant
effect. This finding has important implications for the few states previously mentioned such as
California, Oregon, and Colorado that tend to have many initiatives in an election year; my
results show that adding additional initiatives actually decreases partisan motivation in voting
and voter interest in those states when there are many initiatives on the ballot. This finding is
particularly interesting because roughly the same percentage (62%) of respondents in this
subsample identify with one of the two main parties as the rest of the national sample population,
meaning that respondents from these three states are not inherently less partisan than the
population as a whole. Instead, their higher responsiveness to an additional initiative on the
ballot could be due to the amount of advertising and media attention surrounding high profile
initiatives; issues like gay marriage, abortion, and tax increases can drum up controversy and
drive people to vote not out of the interest of voting for a particular candidate or party, but
possibly for religious or moral convictions. For example, California’s 2008 proposition to define
marriage as a heterosexual institution drew national attention from religious groups, Hollywood
celebrities, and others who spent millions on television advertisements. Either through
advertising or ballot information distributed by the state, voters learn how different social groups
feel about issues; religious affiliation, professional interests, and political leanings can affect
one’s voting behavior. It is possible that, in these states where residents are asked to vote directly
on issues, the process of self-informing and voting on issues increases voters’ awareness of their
own political leanings and proclivities.

I found a few different results among my control variables in comparison to the other
three regressions. This is the only regression in which gender was statistically significant, which
is interesting because of my research that showed that women engage in politics differently than men. Additionally, none of the education variables were statistically significant in this model, nor did they even approach significance. The marginal effects for changes in education for the first and third regressions are mirror images with similar slopes; additional educational attainment results in an increase in partisan engagement in the overall regression, while additional attainment results in a decrease in the eight or more regression. A few of the articles I encountered in my research, specifically M.A. Smith (2002) and Tolbert and Smith (2010), spoke of the environment created in these states where citizens traditionally voted on several initiatives each year. I suspect that the “rich information environment” mentioned is the reason why formal education becomes seemingly less important in these states than others when it comes to initiatives. Because voters are presented with lots of advertisements and they have become accustomed to educating themselves on the issues they are expected to vote on, the effect that traditional, formal education has on voting behavior matters less. This change is also compounded by the effects of long-term initiative use that I am unable to account for in my analysis.

The final regression resembles the third one in that I ran the first model on a restricted set of observations; in this case, I only used the low initiative observations. This regression narrows the scope of my research question, as it shows the difference between observations where there are no initiatives and observations where there are just a few, while controlling for whether the respondent’s state allows citizen-sponsored initiatives. The total number of observations used in this probit model was 3,424 out of the total 5,045 in my dataset. The control variables in this

---

4 I also conducted a probit analysis of observations with between three and seven initiatives, but did not find any relationships worth reporting.
model resemble the first two regressions a little more in that age and education variables are statistically significant, while gender and income are not.

This is the only regression where the coefficient on the midterm variable was statistically significant, which corroborates what other researchers have found, namely that whether or not the election in question is a midterm, non-Presidential one does have an effect on the relationship between initiatives and partisan engagement. Similar to the other regressions, the coefficient on the presence of ballot initiatives in the final regression is not statistically significant; however, the coefficient on the raw number of ballot initiatives is significant at the 90% level (p value of 0.078). The marginal effect of going from zero initiatives to one is -1.33%, and the effect of going from one initiative to two is -4.35%. The negative sign on the coefficient matches the findings in the previous regressions, which means that respondents living in a state with just one or two initiatives on the ballot that year are less interested in the partisan outcome of the election than the respondents living in states with no initiatives on the ballot, regardless of whether those states have initiative capabilities. The policy implication of this regression is that even one or two initiatives have an effect on whether respondents care about the partisan outcome of the election. A state does not have to be a California or Oregon where there are always several initiatives on the ballot in order to see the kind of participation in policy that ballot initiatives engender; this is important because most states with the initiative process only have a few initiatives on the ballot each year.

**Sensitivity to the Inclusion of Partisanship**

I initially chose not to use party identification variables in my regression because I wanted to measure voter motivation independent of partisanship. As Green et. al report in
Partisan Hearts and Minds, party identification is not the only determinant of voter preference and behavior, but party affiliation certainly does affect decisions voters make when casting their votes (2002). I chose to run sensitivity analysis models where I included an indicator variable for partisanship to see if that specification affected the relationships between ballot initiatives and partisan engagement. Using the survey question where voters were asked, “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?” I coded the responses of “Republican” and “Democrat” as a 1, and the responses of “Independent,” “No preference,” and “Don’t know,” as a 0. This resulted in a total of 3,114 respondents identifying as partisans, and 1,903 indicating that they had no preference.

The following are the truncated results from these regressions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1. Raw number of initiatives</th>
<th>2. Initiative categories</th>
<th>3. Observations with eight+ initiatives</th>
<th>4. Observations with two or fewer initiatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of initiatives</td>
<td>0.011 (0.008)</td>
<td>-0.115** (0.056)</td>
<td>-0.109 (0.067)</td>
<td>-0.109 (0.067)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of initiatives</td>
<td>-0.079 (0.061)</td>
<td>0.101 (0.097)</td>
<td>-0.062 (0.089)</td>
<td>-0.062 (0.089)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or Two</td>
<td>-0.206* (0.113)</td>
<td>-0.210* (0.112)</td>
<td>-0.210* (0.112)</td>
<td>-0.210* (0.112)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three to Seven</td>
<td>-0.220* (0.114)</td>
<td>-0.210* (0.112)</td>
<td>-0.210* (0.112)</td>
<td>-0.210* (0.112)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight +</td>
<td>0.010 (0.114)</td>
<td>-0.200* (0.114)</td>
<td>-0.200* (0.114)</td>
<td>-0.200* (0.114)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisan</td>
<td>0.268** (0.050)</td>
<td>0.267** (0.050)</td>
<td>0.283** (0.136)</td>
<td>0.280** (0.058)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N size</td>
<td>4570</td>
<td>4570</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>3412</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The partisan variable is significant in all regressions, but a little bit less so in the third, high initiative use model; the p value is 0.037 in the third model and 0.000 in the others. This result lends credence to the idea that respondents in high initiative use states are less driven by partisanship than the rest of the country.
If adding partisanship to my models noticeably changes the coefficients on my independent variables of interest, then the relationships I observed in my data lose validity, as the results would be sensitive to holding respondents’ partisanship constant. The addition of partisanship to the first model increases the coefficient on the number of ballot initiatives and pushes the value toward statistical significance, but the p value is 0.171; this differs little from the regression without the partisan variable. In the second regression, both the one-to-two and three-to-seven coefficients are statistically significant, and the coefficients are slightly larger here than in the original regression. The three-to-seven coefficient does drop from being significant at the 95% level to the 90% level, and the one-to-two coefficient remains significant at the 90% level. This means that the relationship I originally found is not too sensitive to holding partisanship constant. The coefficients on ballot initiatives in the third and fourth regressions decrease with the addition of partisanship, yet they remain statistically significant. These findings suggest that the statistically significant relationships I observed in my original regressions are only somewhat sensitive to the inclusion of whether respondents have partisan loyalties.

Completing this analysis with the addition of partisanship also helps to address issues with reverse causality in my paper. There are differences in the permissiveness of initiative qualification laws by state and the populations that live in each state, so it seems possible that there could be a problem with reverse causality, where voters in high initiative use states have so many initiatives due to the fact that they are less concerned with party than residents of other states. However, the fact that approximately the same number of respondents in the high use states (California, Colorado, and Oregon) expressed partisan affiliation as did the national group
of respondents, 62%, reassures that voters in high use states are not simply writing more initiatives because they are less partisan than the United States as a whole.

**Conclusion**

These findings suggest that, generally, ballot initiatives do have an effect on whether people care about which party wins the Congressional election in 2002, 2004, and 2008, but the results are nuanced. While initiatives do not affect engagement in the sense that having more public policy discussions that citizens will be voting on drives them to be more involved, it seems that those who do become more involved care less about partisan outcomes. Overall, I found that having a low to moderate number of initiatives on the ballot does significantly decrease partisan engagement, and the validity of that relationship is bolstered by the model’s lack of sensitivity to respondents’ previously held partisan leanings. Among states that regularly have many initiatives, each additional initiative in those states does seem to have a negative effect on whether a person cares about which party wins a Congressional election, even when controlling for the presence of initiative laws, partisanship, and demographics. Similarly, adding an additional initiative on the ballot for states that had zero, one, or two initiatives is associated with a decrease in partisan engagement when controlling for the same characteristics.

This study suggests a causal link between a state’s having ballot initiatives and an observed decrease in partisan engagement, and it has policy implications for all states. While I would not recommend that a state implement the initiative process simply to encourage issue voting and decrease partisan voting behaviors, I would suggest that states could relax prohibitive laws that severely limit the number of initiatives that qualify for the ballot. All states, especially those at either the low or high end of the initiative use spectrum could see a decrease in straight-
party voting and other partisan behaviors when they allow more initiatives to be added to the ballot.
REFERENCES


