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Democratic Accountability and Institutional Reform: Lessons from California's 2010 Angry Electorate

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Abstract

In 2010, California's voters responded to the state legislature's increasing delays in passing a budget by voting to shift the state budget requirement to a simple majority from a supermajority. For Republican voters, this risked the relevance of the state party in the legislature; nevertheless, in a sample drawn from before the election, many Republicans do not adopt the party line of opposing the measure. Republican voters are more likely to engage in accountability through institutional reform rather than accountability through punishing their party's candidate for governor; in this sample, more Republicans explicitly support their own candidate than oppose the measure reducing their legislative leverage.

Introduction

In 2010, California voters were angry at state politicians in Sacramento. The state had experienced political upheaval for more than a decade, including the 2003 recall election replacing Democratic Governor Gray Davis with Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger; furthermore, the legislature missed the June 15 budget due-date by a wider margin nearly every year. The national financial crisis only made the apparent dysfunction worse, and California struggled to respond effectively: in 2009, the state ran so short on cash, and was unable to reach a legislative agreement on a solution, that by July it began printing "IOU"s (a promise for future payment) rather than actually paying all of its bills (Bailey and McGreevy 2009). Although California's government seemed to lack the institutional arrangements to adequately function, it also had a low threshold for institutional innovation through direct democracy (Baldassare 2013). Thus, in the years that followed, voters approved popular ballot measures for redistricting reform, adjusting

[1] The survey data for this study was obtained through a grant to the California Institute of Technology from the John Randolph and Dora Haynes Foundation in 2010. R. Michael Alvarez, California Institute of Technology, and Ines Levin, University of California Irvine, were instrumental in the design and implementation of the original survey, as was Samantha Luks at YouGov. Eric McGhee, at the Public Policy Institute of California, and Jack Citrin, at University of California Berkeley, provided helpful comments on the paper, as did Anthony M. Bertelli, New York University – Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service.

term limits, removing the super-majority requirement to pass a budget, and changing the electoral system from partisan primaries to a nonpartisan "top-two" election procedure.[2]

In the public debate, advocates for these measures articulated a nonpartisan, "good government" rationale[3] for change: the state had to perform basic functions in an orderly fashion. The sense of crisis was palpable; Figure 1 illustrates both the increasingly late budgets and, for the period leading up to the adoption of many of the reforms, the free-falling approval ratings for the state legislature.[4] The late budgets generated considerable academic interest in both causes and possible remedies such as the relative power and performance of governors, the role of term limits in the legislature, and the role of primary elections (see, as examples, Kousser and Phillips 2012, 255; Cain and Kousser 2004; McGhee 2007, 4; McGhee et al. 2015).[5] The process of passing a budget remained a salient example of functional performance failure and a theme behind all of the reforms of this era.

Of course, there is no such thing as policy-neutral institutional change. Alinsky summarized this simply: "process is really purpose" (1971 [1989], 122). As demonstrated in the famous example of Charles Plott and the flying club, "the choice of a group is certainly not independent of the process by which it was chosen" (Riker 1986, 19).[6] In fact, we should expect "policy entrepreneurs" to look for opportunities to change policy outcomes by shifting the institutional arrangements (North 1998). The adopted reforms may, or may not, do what their proponents imagined; nevertheless, these substantial alterations to California's political institutions certainly carried with them suggested policy implications understood and discussed by the contemporary participants.

Proposition 25, lowering the threshold to pass a budget from a two-thirds legislative threshold to a simple majority, was an ostensibly nonpartisan rule with a likely partisan consequence: Republican votes would no longer be needed in the legislature in most circumstances to pass a budget. The *Los Angeles Times*, in an endorsement for Proposition 25, acknowledged the political implication: "The current two-thirds vote requirement causes budget gridlock in Sacramento

[2] The measures involved were, for June 2010: Proposition 14 (the nonpartisan primary); for November 2010: Proposition 20 (applied the citizen redistricting commission to Congress, building on 2008's Prop. 11 which did this for the state offices), and Proposition 25 (changed the threshold to pass a budget from two-thirds to simple majority); and for June 2012: Proposition 28 (changed the term limits to allow legislators to stay in one chamber or the other of the legislature).

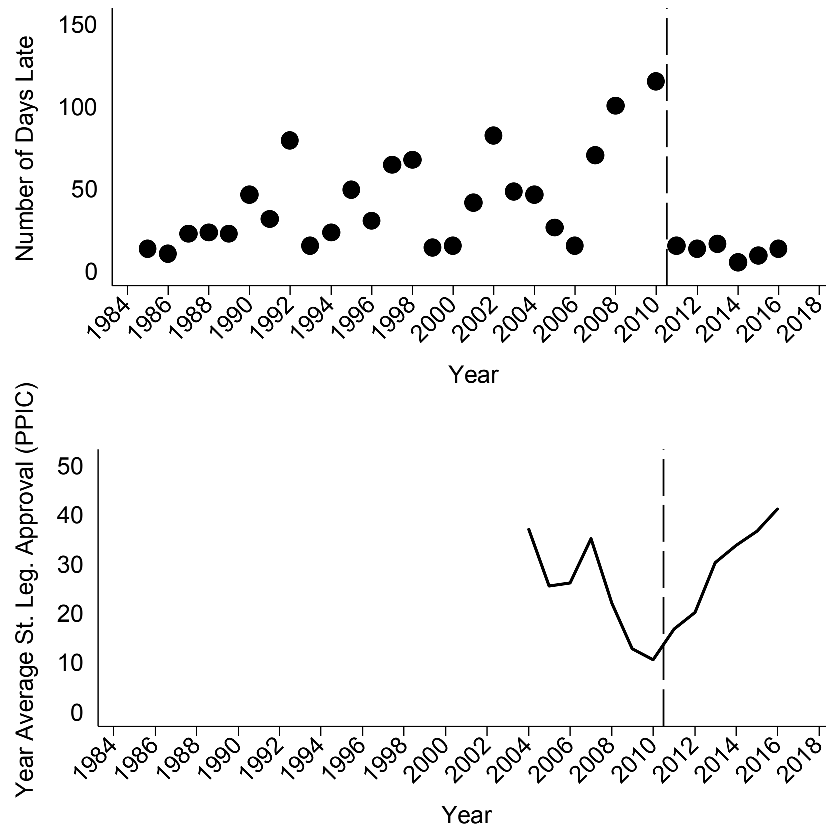
[3] For example, California Forward, with a mission to "to inspire better decision-making by governments," included a simple-majority budget as one of their 2010 Reform Principles (see: http://tinyurl.com/jzrsclq, last accessed 02/19/17), although CA FWD did not formally endorse the proposition (see: http://tinyurl.com/jzwryqs, last accessed 02/19/17).

[4] The Public Policy Institute of California regularly publishes survey data online; this data comes from a time trend of job approval ratings for the legislature, available online at: http://tinyurl.com/zj5u4vx (last accessed 09/17/16). Although PPIC asks job approval questions multiple times per year, Figure 1 shows average approval for each year.

[5] The records for on what date the governor signed the budget are available through the clerk of the California Assembly, as noted in McGhee 2007, pp. 4. See: http://clerk.assembly.ca.gov/content/historical-information (last accessed 09/17/16).

[6] Dr. Plott set up the voting procedure to ensure a certain outcome prevailed, which under alternative systems would have failed, in the decision-making of a flying club. Riker defends the morality of doing so: "given the absence of a general equilibrium of preferences, all agenda are biased toward one outcome or another" and, thus, the person choosing may as well bias it in their own direction (1986, 31).

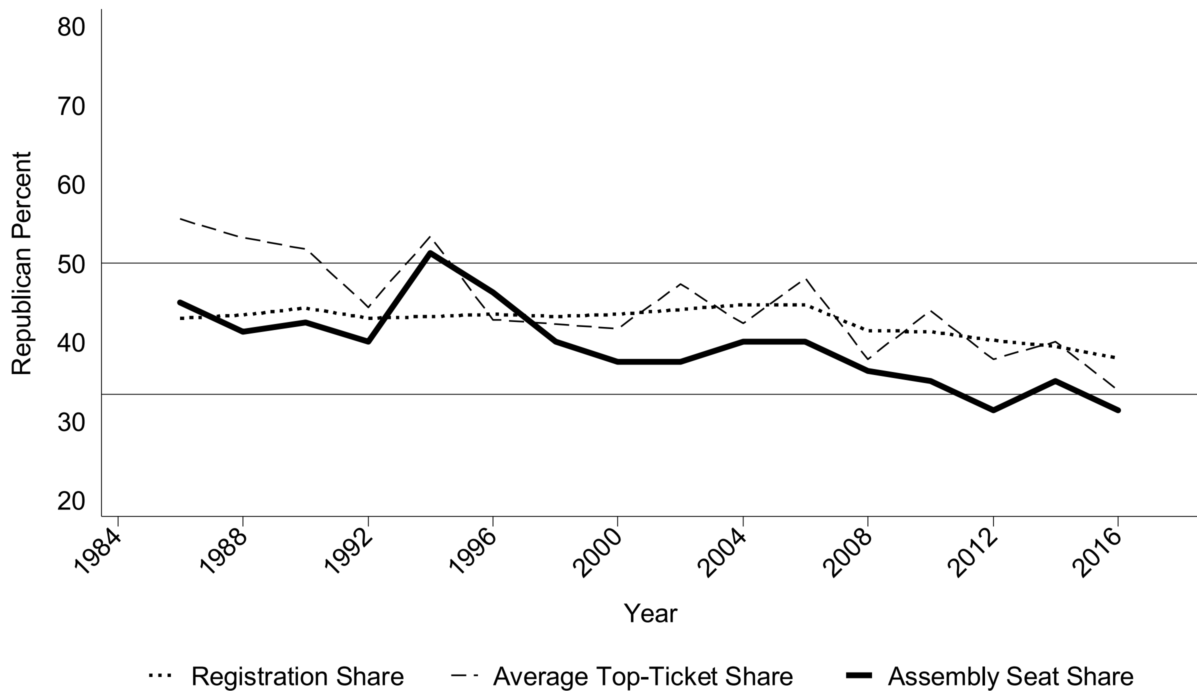
Figure 1. Number of days the CA budget was late, 1985–2016 and yearly average approval of the state legislature from Public Policy Institute of California surveys (2004–2016). Vertical line represents passage of proposition 25 in November 2010.



because unless the majority party holds two-thirds of the seats, it must win votes from the minority—which is extremely difficult to do in partisan times like these . . . " (*Los Angeles Times*, 2010). The *Times* went on to identify a likely policy consequence: "Conservatives fear that Proposition 25 would cause spending to soar because Democrats would control the purse strings" (*Los Angeles Times* 2010). Although not all scholars find that the greater constraints in California, relative to other states, kept down spending and taxation (Cain and Mackenzie 2008), at some facial level this was certainly one of the few times in each year in which Democratic legislators had to attempt to bargain with their Republican counterparts.

Although many Republican voters were as distressed as Democrats and Independents by the repeated crises, Proposition 25 presented them with a starker choice: continued dysfunction or policy irrelevance. The stakes seem particularly high in California in part because the legislature is so ideologically polarized; McGhee et al. (2015, 342) find that California led the nation in average polarization by such a wide margin that even "Congress is bipartisan in comparison." The Republican Party, measured using a variety of metrics in Figure 2, experienced a slow but fairly steady decline in strength since the 1980s, with the exception of a brief surge in 1994. Republican gubernatorial candidates have won elections: Pete Wilson was governor from 1991–1999 and Arnold Schwarzenegger from 2003–2011. Otherwise, the party has not had much success.

Figure 2. Republican strength in California, 1985–2016.
Measured using two-party voter registration share, within-year average share of top-ticket races (CA governor, U.S. senate,[7] U.S. president), and seat share in the California State Assembly. Horizontal lines indicate majority and two-thirds supermajority thresholds for Democrats.



California has had two Democratic U.S. senators, and the Democratic candidate for U.S. president has won the state, since 1992. Nevertheless, the Republican Party generally retains enough strength to be able to block, or be within plausible electoral striking distance of being able to block, measures that require a two-thirds vote. Generally, Republicans find themselves in the window of strength between one-third and one-half in which these institutional changes directly impact their ability to negotiate over anything.

On the November 2010 ballot Republicans had two very different options for expressing displeasure at the state of affairs—and could select neither, one but not the other, or both. Although there are many ways to participate in the policy process and provide an individual response, consistent with an individual's experience and type (Levin, Sinclair, and Alvarez 2016), once in the voting booth the options shrink. Supplying democratic accountability in this setting is challenging given the complex web of participants; both identification and evaluation are not easily done for candidates, political parties, and other policy workers (Bertelli 2016). A straightforward application of retrospective accountability on the executive (as in Fiorina 1981, Powell 2000) would have dissatisfied Republicans vote for the Democratic candidate for governor, replacing

[7] This leaves out the 2016 U.S. Senate race between Democrats Kamala Harris and Loretta Sanchez.

their own party in the executive role. Nevertheless, Republicans may have attributed more of the problem to Democrats in the legislature and been disinclined to give up the perceived prospective policy advantages of having someone in office from their own side.

Support for Proposition 25, however, represents an even more extreme form of accountability, as a kind of grim trigger punishment. For Republicans holding typical policy preferences to vote for the measure, the voter would likely have to view the Republican legislative resistance to the imposition of the Democrats' preferences as costly enough to make it worthwhile to sacrifice the Republican Party's relevance out into the indeterminate future. The surprising result, explored in the remainder of this paper, is that more Republican voters paired voting for their party's candidate—Meg Whitman—and against the party's interest in opposing Proposition 25 than did the reverse of holding the candidate accountable while preserving the institutions. That is, in the short run they engaged in (likely ineffective) strategies to hold the Democrats accountable (voting for a Republican for governor) while in the long run handing them the key to the castle (considering voting in favor of Proposition 25).

Retrospective Accountability, Prospective Policy Preferences, and Process Preferences

The data to answer this question comes from a survey conducted online by YouGov/Polimetrix in California before the November 2010 election (see Alvarez and Sinclair 2013, Levin, Sinclair, and Alvarez 2016). Although the original survey included 1,000 respondents each from Democratic, "Decline to State," and Republican Party registrants, this paper will focus on a smaller group of 1,260 "Republicans," defined using their party identification. This group includes Republican-leaning independents as Keith et al. (1992) argue that these voters typically have much in common with even the strong partisans; furthermore, this whole group is the relevant potential Republican voting constituency. YouGov/Polimetrix provided weights to have respondents appear in the combined sample with the types of relative frequencies they should in the California population, applied here to produce a weighted sample of 1,114 Republicans, 78.6 percent of whom are registered with the party.[8]

There is a clear party interest in voting for the Republican candidate for governor, Meg Whitman, and against the institutional innovation, Proposition 25. Table 1 shows the specific responses to each of these questions. Whitman does not have unanimous affirmative support, with only 76.9 percent support, although Democrat Jerry Brown obtains less than four percent sup-

[8] The original survey was designed to obtain one-third of its respondents from each registration category, although these were not present in equal proportions in California at the time. The weights return these groups to their appropriate registration strengths; for this subsample, the raw data includes 345 Decline to State ("DTS") voters and 915 Republican registrants who also identify as independent leaners, not-so-strong Republicans, or strong Republicans. Of the Republican registrants, 85 identified as members of some other party, or no party at all, in contrast with their registration. In the weighted subsample, we then have 238 Republican identifiers not registered with the party and 876 registered with the party for a total of 1,114. That is, the Republican registrants make up 72.6 percent of the unweighted sample and 78.6 percent of the weighted sample. All descriptive statistics in this paper use the weighted data. See the appendix for some additional information.

Table 1. Responses for Republican Identifiers (Not Registered and Registered) for the 2010 Governor's Race and Proposition 25. Column Percentages Listed, Party Response Underlined.

.	Outcome	Republican (Not Registered)	Republican (Registered)	All Republican Identifiers
Gov.	No Response Recorded	1.24	1.78	1.67
	Whitman (R.)	73.84	77.75	76.91
	Brown (D.)	3.85	3.44	3.53
	Ogden (LIB.)	7.03	2.43	3.41
	Nightingale (A.I.)	1.87	2.67	2.50
	Someone Else	4.10	1.39	1.97
	Don't Know	8.06	10.55	10.01
	Total Weighted Ns.	238	876	1,114
Prop. 25	No Response Recorded	1.34	1.71	1.63
	Support Prop. 25	45.11	37.41	39.06
	Oppose Prop. 25	40.14	43.93	43.12
	Don't Know.	13.40	16.95	16.19
	Total Weighted Ns.	238	876	1114

port.[9] For Proposition 25, marginally more Republicans affirmatively opposed rather than supported—43.1 percent to 39.1 percent—but this is a surprisingly close contest, even within the Republican electorate, given what seemed to be at stake.[10] The most striking result, though, is the difference between support for Whitman (76.9 percent) and opposition to Prop. 25 (43.1 percent) —a gap of 33.8 percentage points. Republican voters were clearly responding two these two opportunities to influence policy outcomes in very different ways.

While there are a number of potential perspectives on these responses, it is helpful to think about these choices as simultaneous and jointly considered decisions to pull a party lever or consider doing something else. Table 2 simplifies the results in Table 1 to explicit support for Whitman (or otherwise) and explicit opposition to Prop. 25 (or otherwise) and then displays the

[9] In contrast, and not shown in Table 1, are the results for the U.S. Senate candidate, Carly Fiorina; 84.9 percent of the same population reported supporting Fiorina. History has largely not been kind to Whitman's campaign, in which she spent $144 million of her own money, and $177 million overall, to lose by 13 points to Jerry Brown, who spent $36 million (see Mehta and Reston 2011). Nevertheless, Carly Fiorina lost to incumbent U.S Senator Barbara Boxer by 10 points, and these two campaigns were the last serious Republican bids for high executive office suggesting that the fundamentals displayed in Figure 2 made this a very difficult setting.

[10] The measure would ultimately pass with 55 percent of the vote. Using all of the responses from this survey, not just the Republican identifiers, and applying the weights yields an estimated result of 57.9 percent in favor, 23.0 percent opposed, 15.4 percent unknown, and the rest not recording a response. By party registration: Democrats, 72.7 percent; DTS, 57.8 percent; and Republican 37.4 percent.

Table 2. Joint Choice over Support for Gubernatorial Candidate and Opposition to Proposition 25, California Republicans. Displays percentage of total respondents in each cell.

	Other Response	Oppose Prop. 25
Other Response	14.82% (Defect: Both)	8.27% (Defect: Candidate)
Support Whitman	42.06% (Defect: Institution)	34.85% (Party Line)

joint choice. This emphasizes the magnitude of disaffection: only 34.9 percent of Republicans picked the party-line: clear support for Whitman, clear opposition to Proposition 25. Very few Republicans failed to support Whitman while simultaneously opposing the proposition which might damage the party in the long run; only 8.3 percent picked this pair.[11] Instead, the most popular combination was the reverse: supporting Whitman while either also supporting or contemplating Proposition 25: 42.1 percent of the Republicans fell into this bin.

Although Fiorina (1981) observes that voters do know much about their own circumstances, and thus can plausibly implement some kind of accountability scheme, this sort of joint choice requires voters to engage in a more difficult reasoning task. These evaluations require addressing three main criteria: (1) a retrospective evaluation wrapped in blame attribution to candidates and policy workers; (2) assessing policy preferences, either more vaguely expressed in terms of ideology or more explicitly in terms of a proposed solution to a well-defined problem; and (3) valuing aspects of a process relative to any outcome it may produce. Although Achen and Bartels suggest a voter will "feel like she is thinking" even if the signals about the world are weak at best (2016, 268), inaccuracy of perception should not completely undermine research interest in what a voter decides to do with it.

Simply knowing that something went awry with passing a budget is not enough to implement accountability: with divided government, and a supermajority requirement in any case, voters had to decide who to blame in order to have a clear path forward (Arceneaux 2003). If the Republican voters blame the Democratic officeholders, and the Democratic voters blame the Republican officeholders, the prospects for retrospective accountability are dim. Voters can, of course, blame both parties; if blaming both results in an increased probability of switching sides, the problem of blame assignment does not necessarily upend Riker's understanding of a liberal, accountable, democratic system. Riker's minimum criteria "is the notion that voting permits the rejection of candidates or officials who have offended so many voters that they cannot win an election" (Riker 1982, 242).

[11] And only half of those were actively voting for Jerry Brown, 4.6 percent of the respondents in total.

To explore the details with the most surprising choice—failure to oppose Proposition 25—Table 3 presents some summary statistics for the independent variables we use in the full analysis in the next section. In our sample, about equal numbers of Republican voters blame only the Democrats for the budget impasse and assign the Republican Party a share of the blame. Very few, about three percent, blame the Republicans alone (see Table 3). Nevertheless, the majority assign at least some blame to their own side. Assigning the Republican Party any share of the blame for the situation should decrease the probability of sticking with the party line on both issues. While the direction of the finding is relatively easy to predict (and predict successfully, as shown in the results), the interesting question is really the magnitude of the effect for each choice. Given that these two types of responses have differential impacts, one might expect differential changes in probability for each question as well. We might expect a greater impact on the candidate rather than the proposition if this is truly about accountability; using the proposition as a means for accountability for Republican politicians does not make as much sense because it gives up opportunities to meaningfully impact accountability later.

Blame attribution is distinguishable from preference or ideology.[12] While some perspectives contemplate political ideologies as something developed by parties to facilitate easily passing information to voters (Downs 1957, 96), they also do represent some reduced-dimension version of voter preferences. More moderate Republicans should mind less the actions of a Democratic majority in the legislature than more conservative Republicans. Contrary to some depictions of the California Republican side, the middle-of-the-road and somewhat conservative Republicans outnumber the very conservative Republicans (see Table 3). This characteristic plausibly impacts both questions in the same direction, although unlike with an accountability story, this suggests relatively lower long-run costs to lowering the budget requirements.

Beyond a general ideological sense of preference, we can also directly access preferences on the main issue at hand: means of dealing with the budget gap. The survey asked respondent views on the key policy choices to deal with the California shortfall: increase taxes only, cut spending only, a mix of taxes and cuts, or something else. Table 3 shows the responses, combining the "something else" category with the mixture bin. This is clearly a defining issue for the Republican coalition: an overwhelming majority favor only spending cuts. State Senator (and then Lieutenant Governor) Abel Maldonado, involved both in breaking a budget stalemate and in putting the top-two primary on the ballot, was denounced in conservative circles as a "tax traitor" (Park 2010). Still, approximately 17 percent of the Republican electorate was willing to consider some solution beyond spending cuts alone.[13] Given that the direct claim is the loss of the super

[12] This is not just an intellectual distinction; this is reflected in the data in ways that may be surprising. 23 percent of the (weighted) sample identified as very conservative and blamed only the Democrats; 32 percent identified in some way as ideologically moderate in the party (somewhat conservative, middle of the road, and a handful of liberals) and assigned at least some of the blame; and the remainder mixed ideology and blame. That is, 21 percent of the sample paired a very conservative ideology with assigning the Republicans at least some of the blame while 24 percent were ideologically moderate but blamed only Democrats. There is not much of a relationship between these at all.

[13] This is correlated with ideology. Only nine percent of the very conservative Republicans deviated from the party line on taxes while 24 percent of the other Republicans deviate on taxes. This question isolates a specific dimension of the larger (dimension-reduced) question about ideology. Downs explicitly considers the problem of budgeting and spending as a critical dimension in the development of spatial models: "the government increases its spending until the vote gain of the marginal dollar spent equals the vote loss of the marginal dollar of financing" (1957, 69). When filtered through representatives in party

Table 3. Bivariate statistics, explanatory variables and position on proposition 25 for Republican identifiers. Displays weighted data; due to rounding, totals may vary in rows and columns.

		Other	Oppose	Total
Overall		56.90%	43.10%	1114
Blame	Democratic Party	258	271	529
	Equal Responsibility	351	198	549
	Republican Party	24	12	36
Ideology	Center (or Left)	165	36	201
	Somewhat Conservative	226	197	423
	Very Conservative	239	247	486
Policy Sol'n	Increase Taxes Only	5	0	5
	Mix Tax/Cut Spending (or Other)	160	30	190
	Cut Spending Only	469	450	920
Reform	Not Selected	574	456	1030
	Constitution is Problem	60	25	84
Distrust	Not Selected	380	246	627
	People Limited Impact on Gov't	254	234	488
Registration	Registered Rep.	491	385	876
	Not Registered Rep.	143	96	238
Gender	Male	287	295	582
	Female	347	185	532
Race	Otherwise	176	119	295
	White	457	362	819
Age	Otherwise	373	254	627
	Age 55+	261	227	488
Income	Otherwise	413	287	700
	80,000 +	221	194	415

majority requirement could result in tax increases, because of actions taken by Democrats, a willingness to accept tax increases also theoretically aligns with a willingness to vote against the party line on both issues.

Finally, three perspectives on the process of policymaking have potentially differential effects. A handful (under 10 percent) of Republicans checked the box next to reforming the state constitution on a "check all that apply" list of "most important problems." Given the fraction of the respondents who would ultimately support the budget reform, this suggests a certain shallowness of feeling on this issue. That is, presented with the option, it is favored; nevertheless, reform was not the first thing on the minds of many voters. In contrast, when asked about trust in

coalitions, though, it was often hard to find any Republican legislator in a position to balance this policy so neatly given the distribution of voters in districts.

government, a large number of voters expressed skepticism about their ability to influence the process at all ("Most of the time people cannot affect what government does"). Finally, party registration can be seen in light of views on the political process as well: approximately one-fifth of the Republican-identifying coalition examined here had not registered with the party. Although there remains considerable interest in the substantive meaning of California's no-party-preference (or "decline to state") voters—are they "independent"? (Lascher and Korey 2011, Alvarez and Sinclair 2013)—it at least represents a position that these voters do not feel that formally joining a political party is important to advance their own ends.

These perspectives on process carry with them slightly different connotations. The relatively rare Republican who identified constitutional reform as a most important problem may put a greater emphasis on process than on holding the candidates of the party responsible for what had gone on before. A sense that individuals have a limited impact on what government does measures a different aspect of politics, capturing a complaint about individual agency in a large policy process. Absence of formal party affiliation may signal disapproval of policymaking through partisan conflict (or, at least, capture this in a unique way unmeasured by other variables included in this study). There are certainly risks in using any of these individual points as a way to measure a preference for, or understanding of, the meaning of fair and efficient institutions in a way that is distinguishable from the nuances of policy preferences.[14] In the following section, the multivariate results control for some specific policy preferences while examining the identifiable relationships between these variables and the outcome of interest. The process measurements are still imperfect, if the best available in this data.

Taken together, all of these points about accountability through blame assignment, policy preferences, and opinions on process could sway Republican voters in a similar fashion on both measures, or encourage picking particular combinations of the questions. The next section presents the results of a multinomial logistic regression model using the four cells of Table 2 as the potential outcomes.[15] The details should not hide the main point (and lesson of Tables 1 and 2): the baseline probability of support for Whitman greatly outstrips the baseline probability of opposition to Proposition 25. Even if the dynamics are similar, the total impact on one measure is much greater than the other, despite very little direct emphasis on procedural reform in the list of most important problems.

Results

The multinomial logit model allows for a comparison across a set of choices. The results presented in Table 4 should be compared to the reference outcome interpreted as party-line preferences: explicitly opposing Proposition 25 and supporting Whitman. Some variables drive defection of all types (candidate, institution, or both); for example, assigning to the Republican Party at least some of the blame for the budget is associated with a positive and statistically significant

[14] Separating policy from process, as Alinsky suggests is impossible, requires thinking through something like a constitutional application of Rawls "veil of ignorance" in which the person developing preferences over the political institutions is uncertain about role assignment in some future process using this rule (see Moore 1979).

[15] A supplemental appendix presents a different methodological approach treating the questions as distinct but with potentially related errors, following Abrajano, Nagler, and Alvarez (2005).

Table 4. Multinomial logit results (reference outcome: party line preferences)

	Defect: Candidate		Defect: Institution		Defect: Both	
Variable	Coef.	p-value	Coef.	p-value	Coef.	p-value
Own Party Shares in Blame	1.103	0.00	0.647	0.00	1.413	0.00
Not Very Conservative Rep.	-0.299	0.20	0.191	0.17	0.462	0.04
Budget Gap Policy Deviation	1.129	0.00	1.213	0.00	2.278	0.00
Reform Most Important Prob.	0.700	0.09	0.762	0.01	1.235	0.00
People Limited Impact on Gov't	0.380	0.09	-0.341	0.01	0.003	0.99
Not Registered in Party	0.340	0.18	0.304	0.05	0.584	0.01
Race: White	-0.260	0.34	-0.166	0.33	-0.141	0.58
Gender: Female	0.274	0.25	0.718	0.00	1.149	0.00
Age: 55 or Older	-0.248	0.28	-0.109	0.43	-0.793	0.00
Income: 80,000 or More	-0.141	0.54	-0.260	0.06	-0.311	0.14
Constant	-2.138	0.00	-0.509	0.02	-2.798	0.00
Population %	8.27%		42.06%		14.82%	

coefficient for all three alternative categories. Similarly, and unsurprisingly, deviating from the party line on policy also increases the probability of deviating from the party line on voting as well. Importantly, thinking ordinary people have a limited ability to impact government has opposite impacts on the two options to defect on just the candidate or the institution.

Figures 3a to 3d illustrate the changes in outcome probability for an otherwise median-individual for changes in each variable. An individual with each variable set to the mean does assign to the Republican Party a share of the gridlock blame (recall Table 3: this is just barely the case) and does not self-identify with a very conservative ideology, although also does not deviate from the cut-spending position, does not emphasizes constitutional reform, and does not have higher distrust of government.[16] Despite the existence of four available combinations, the most important relationship is between party-line positions and defecting on the institutions alone—as those two options are much higher probability outcomes relative to the others.

Assigning to the Republican Party a share of the blame for the budget situation increases the probability of choosing all the alternative options and is one of the larger negative effects on party-line voting. An otherwise median moderate who does not blame the Republican Party has a 56 percent chance of sticking with the party-line and a 35 percent chance of defecting on the institutions alone. Blaming the party changes the probability to only 36 percent for party-line responses and to 43 percent defecting on Proposition 25, with corresponding increases in the probability of the other responses as well. This reflects a general desire to implement accountability but not a clear prediction about accountability strategy.

This data includes two measures of ideology—one more closely tied to the expected domain of the institutional change and the other more general. The general ideological question, about

[16] Unsurprisingly, the other traits are: registered with the party, white, male, under age 55, and an income under $80,000.

identifying as "very conservative" or not, has little impact on all but the final choice of defecting on both, increasing the odds of doing so. Overall, though, the domain-specific policy question, about a solution to the state budget crisis, carries with it much more predictive information—although deviations from orthodoxy on this question were relatively rare in the data (see Table 3). This had a similar impact across all the defection alternatives much in the same fashion as blame attribution; for the otherwise-median individual, a change in this variable has the largest negative impact on the probability of sticking to the party line in Figure 3a. It should not be surprising that a Republican willing to consider a tax increase is also willing to consider actions running against the party line.

The process questions yielded some interesting variation. Very few respondents selected reform as a most important problem (refer back to Table 3) but, for those that did, it was a strong signal of willingness to break with the party and choose one of the other alternatives. To the extent that this is not about policy in a way captured by the other variables, those who declined to register with the party are also systematically different from those who did in a fairly predictable way: a positive coefficient (though not significant in all cases) for all three of the defection alternatives. This is more meaningful than the reform question because it is more prevalent (and, indeed, nonpartisan registration has been increasing in California over time), although the impact is smaller and not as cleanly observed.

In contrast, the process question focused on the view that "most of the time people cannot affect what government does" splits across candidate and institutional defection—a kind of process distrust. For an otherwise median individual (so, one who assigns the Republican Party some blame and who is not very conservative), switching the distrust variable from negative to affirmative *increases* the probability of party-line voting by about 3.5 percentage points, *increases* the probability of defecting only on the candidate by about 4.5 percentage points, *decreases* the probability of defecting only on the institution by 9.5 percentage points, and *increases* the probability of defecting on both by a small amount. The relative impact on the two most likely outcomes is not only statistically significant but also important because just under half of the Republican constituency expressed this view. This contains a clue about defection on the institution beyond immediate policy preferences: those who do not think people have a limited ability to impact what government does may be more confident in the electorate's ability to constrain a simple majority.

Of the remaining control variables, women were less likely to give the party-line and much more likely to defect on the institution alone or both candidate and institution. Of the individuals in the sample with a greater predicted probability than 0.50 of failing to oppose Proposition 25 and supporting Whitman, almost all are women.[17] Selecting a profile of characteristics to maximize the probability of party-line answers and, then, switching the variable from male to female produces a 14 percentage-point decrease in the probability of giving party-line responses.[18] Generally, those with lower incomes were also less likely to hold the party line, although this was

[17] Volden, Wiseman, and Wittmer (2013) argue that positioning in the majority or the minority is important for understanding female legislators, whom they argue to be more inclined towards consensus-building activities. In a direct democracy setting, as with Proposition 25, the voters here are acting like legislators.

[18] The profile: Blame Democrats only, very conservative, no deviation on tax/spending policy, reform not a most important problem, high distrust, registered with the party, white, above 55, with an income of more than $80,000; male party-line probability is 0.732 while female party-line probability is 0.589.

Figure 3a. First differences for "party line" outcome. For each variable, first differences reflect change from X_k=0 to X_k=1; others held at (weighted) medians.
Note: P(Y=1| Median X) = 0.36.

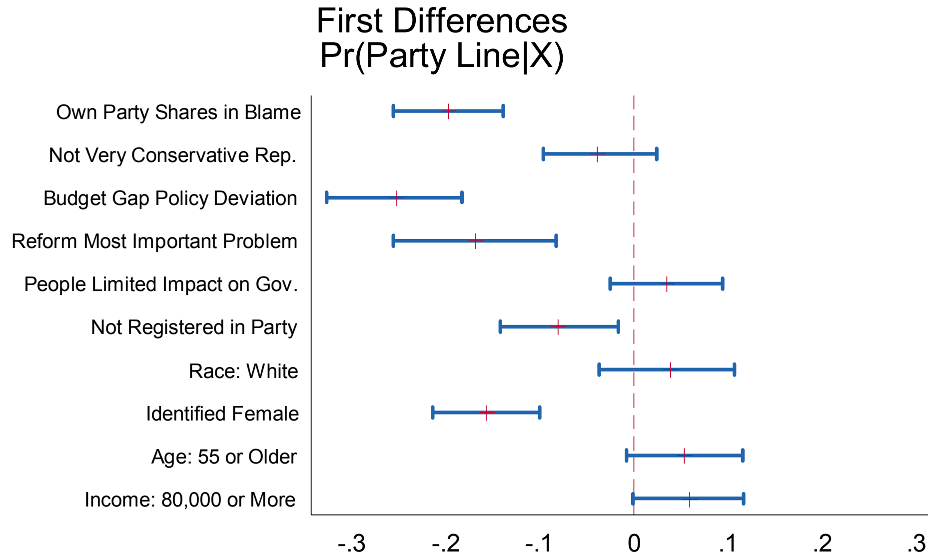


Figure 3b. First differences for "defect: candidate" outcome. For each variable, first differences reflect change from X_k=0 to X_k=1; others held at (weighted) medians.
Note: P(Y=2| Median X) = 0.08.

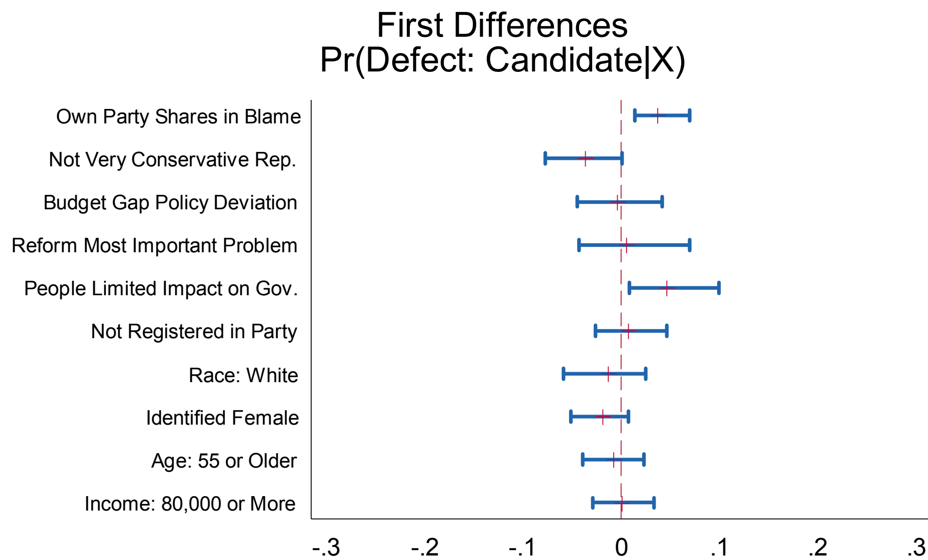


Figure 3c. First differences for "defect: institutions" outcome. For each variable, first differences reflect change from X_k=0 to X_k=1; others held at (weighted) medians. Note: P(Y=3| Median X) = 0.43.

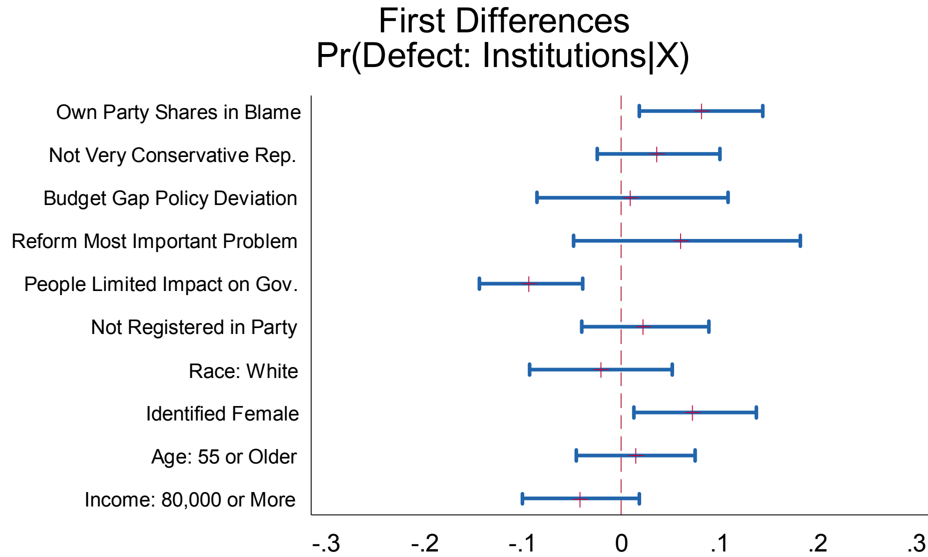
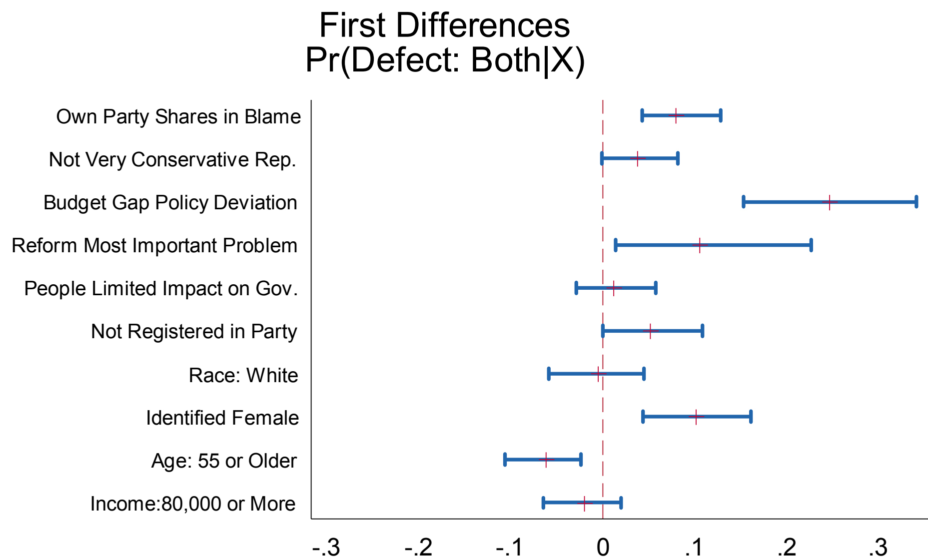


Figure 3d. First differences for "defect: both" outcome. For each variable, first differences reflect change from X_k=0 to X_k=1; others held at (weighted) medians. Note: P(Y=4| Median X) = 0.13.



only significant for the institution-only defection; age also has negative coefficients across Table 4 but is only significant for the defect-on-both alternative.

Discussion

Overall, Republican voters simply found opposing Proposition 25 to be less desirable than voting for Meg Whitman. One possible interpretation is that Republicans in general perceived the potential Brown administration—Jerry Brown was once dubbed "Governor Moonbeam" (McKinley 2010)—as more threatening than a diminished ability for the party to obstruct the budget. Still, in a world where gridlock intervals shape important legislation (Krehbiel 1998), it is surprising that Republican voters would give away an institutional advantage.

It is not obvious that the Republican voters made a mistake, at least from the perspective of protecting their tax policy goals. Formal authority to raise taxes still required a supermajority; the arguments about taxation in the budget had to do with sequence-of-player concerns, as Democrats could potentially generate conditions that would require future tax hikes. Had the supermajority requirement worked to keep down spending? Cain and Mackenzie (2008) express skepticism. Furthermore, the ease-of-access for direct democracy in California always opens that route as a means of establishing tax increases, like Proposition 30 from 2012 and its potential future extension (Megerian 2016); on the flip-side, it is also possible to use direct democracy to lower taxes as well, as was most famously done with 1978's Proposition 13 (Chapman 1998). The residual supermajority requirement may make raising taxes by ballot proposition the weaker point for tax-increase advocates in any event.

There is a democratic theory argument in favor of easing gridlock as well from a Republican perspective. Powell observes that retrospective voting only works if citizens know "who was responsible for policymaking. They cannot make retrospective judgments about the incumbents unless it is clear which incumbents made the policies" (2000, 11). This point was made publicly at the time. The *Los Angeles Times* (2010) endorsement of Proposition 25 made a nearly precisely this argument: "no longer able to hide behind Republicans, Democrats would have to answer to the voters for their budgets, and unhappy voters could replace them with Republicans or more fiscally conservative Democrats." That is, especially for Republicans with somewhat moderate preferences—of the sort many Republicans in this sample expressed—accepting the proposition might mean a general left-ward drift in the enacted legislation, but not an uncontained one, and one that came with gains from having a slightly more orderly decision-making process.

The spectacular legislative impasses of 2008, 2009, and 2010 have not reappeared. It is certainly the case that budgets now arrive much closer to the deadline (as in Figure 1). As McGhee (2015) observed, it is difficult to know precisely to what this can be attributed, as multiple reforms occurred at once. Reexamining the shift from a supermajority to a simple majority budget requirement, though, may also highlight a different aspect of this problem: one reform may also mask the potential impact of another. In particular, scholars examining the nonpartisan top-two primary (obtained through 2010's Proposition 14) have struggled to identify large changes in legislative behavior and attribute those to the new election rules (McGhee 2015). Part of the argument with the nonpartisan primary, however, is that it will have its largest impact on legislators coming from highly partisan districts (Alvarez and Sinclair 2015, Sinclair 2015). In what may be something of a great irony, Abel Maldonado and the other centrist Republicans who leveraged the 2009 budget crisis to get Proposition 14 on the ballot may have had its impact preempted by the passage of Proposition 25, a proposition that would remove the very sort of

budget crisis that the Republicans used as leverage to get a (theoretically) moderating reform. With the key legislators now located around the median, instead of part-way out into the wings, a reform which hits the wings the most will not produce a lot of observable changes in behavior. If one of the goals of the top-two primary in Proposition 14 was to give centrist or process-oriented Republicans (those willing to make a deal) a chance to win their primary elections, Proposition 25 made those legislators largely irrelevant.

Although the lessons from this case should not be carried too far, there are still some larger points for future consideration. This subset of voters turned out to be more positive on Proposition 25 than election result would suggest the general population was on election day: 45 percent of all voters opposed Proposition 25, and 40 percent voted for Meg Whitman—not enormous differences in the rates, if still noticeable. The survey data suggest some of the dynamics: for a number of reasons, Republicans were more willing to consider changing the rules than voting against their own candidate, although many of the same concerns prompted them to do both, just at differing levels of probability. This reluctance to engage in serious candidate-centered accountability, but openness to procedural reform, suggests that in other circumstances procedural reforms might be a more successful "stick" with which to deliver accountability than regular electoral politics.

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Supplemental Appendix
Weighted and Unweighted Data; Alternative Model Information

This section covers two important supplemental issues: weighting the survey data and using an alternative model. The data used in this study was also used in Alvarez and Sinclair (2013) and Levin, Sinclair, and Alvarez (2016). Further details can be found there, although it should be noted that Alvarez and Sinclair (2013) focused entirely on the decline-to-state (nonpartisan) registrants and paired the online sample to a telephone sample using the same questions. This study does not include the telephone respondents because the telephone sample did not include registered Republicans. Levin, Sinclair, and Alvarez also use only the online respondents but focused on blame attribution and diverse types of participation; for example, individuals blaming just one party for the budget situation increases the probability of engaging in a variety of types of political activity, like expressing opinions online, donating to campaigns, etc. (2016, 219).

Weighting the Data

Andrew Gelman accurately summarized the problem as follows: "survey weighting is a mess" (2007, 153). For a project of this nature there are several options for evaluating the reasonableness of the (weighted) data and the conclusions drawn from it. First: there is the unweighted data, so it is possible to get a sense of the direction the weights are driving the results. Second: there are other contemporary surveys using different methodologies, so the results can be compared.

What are the consequences of the weights? In this particular sample they mainly serve to de-emphasize the identifying Republicans who are not registered with the party, who were effectively oversampled relative to the registered Republicans. Figure S1 plots the distribution of the weights for both registered Republicans and nonpartisan respondents. Few of the weights are "large," but some are: 222/1,260 individuals with a weight over a value of 1.5. The percentages in the affirmative category for the variables used in the model are presented in Table S1 in both their weighted and unweighted form. It is important to use the weighted data to at least account for the survey design which captured equal numbers of unaffiliated and Republican voters (even though these are not present in equal numbers in the population).

The surprising result in the data is that so many in the pool of potential Republican supporters favored Whitman but failed to oppose Proposition 25 (Defect: Institution). This group is slightly larger in the weighted data: 42.06 percent to 38.81 percent. Nevertheless, this is not a large distinction. Table S2 repeats Table 2 but includes both the weighted and unweighted totals.

Weighting is, of course, only a partial solution to challenges of obtaining a good sample: it possible that the weights still leave the results wide of the mark. Comparing the results of this survey to the results of another can be a useful reality check. The Public Policy Institute of

California (PPIC) also polled in both of these contests. The October PPIC report on their own survey data had 39 percent of Republicans voting yes on Proposition 25, with 16 percent unsure (total "other" = 55 percent) with 45 percent voting no—quite close to our weighted results of 57 percent "other" and 43 percent voting no (Baldassare et al. 2010, 13). The same PPIC survey had 73 percent of Republicans directly supporting Whitman with 27 percent giving 'other' answers, including 11 percent supporting Brown. Our weighted data has 77 percent supporting Whitman and 23 percent giving 'other' answers (Baldassare et al. 2010, 7). Especially for two surveys with different questions, and employing different approaches, this is somewhat reassuring.

Figure S1: Distribution of Weights in Republican-Identifiers, Split by Registration Type

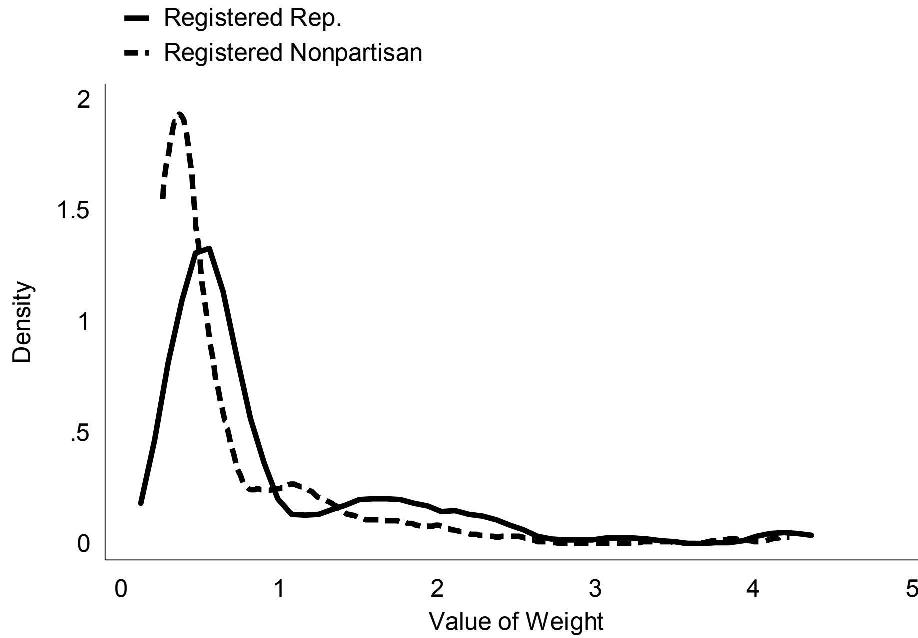


Table S1: Independent Variables, Weighted and Unweighted. Data reflects percent of observations with X=1 rather than X=0.

Variables	Unweighted	Weighted
Own Party Shares in Blame	47.70	52.51
Not Very Conservative Rep.	57.78	56.03
Budget Gap Policy Deviation	14.92	17.49
Reform Most Important Prob.	7.70	7.57
People Limited Impact on Gov't	46.27	43.77
Not Registered in Party	27.38	21.40
Race: White	80.00	73.52
Gender: Female	42.86	47.77
Age: 55 or Older	55.40	43.77
Income: 80,000 or More	42.30	37.20

Table S2: Joint Choice over Support for Gubernatorial Candidate and Opposition to Proposition 25, California Republicans. Displays percentage of total respondents in each cell. Weighted and Unweighted Version.

	Other Response	Oppose Prop. 25
Other Response	Weighted: 14.82% Unweighted: 12.54% (Defect: Both)	Weighted: 8.27% Unweighted: 7.86% (Defect: Candidate)
Support Whitman	Weighted: 42.06% Unweighted: 38.81% (Defect: Institution)	Weighted: 34.85% Unweighted: 40.79% (Party Line)

So, then, what about the election itself? Proposition 25 passed with 55 percent of the vote in favor and 45 percent opposed: if "no" is the Republican position, then "no" outperformed Whitman, who got 41 percent, by four percentage points. County-level vote totals on the two measures are clearly closely related (see Figure S.2) although there is an odd trend in the aggregate results: in more Republican areas of the state, Whitman runs ahead of the Republican position ("no") on the Proposition. In more Democratic areas, opposition to the proposition runs ahead of Whitman. One should be extremely careful in drawing conclusions about individual behavior from aggregate data due to the ecological inference problem (King 1997). This does suggest an additional check on our own data—looking at the results by type of county and investigating the potential for an omitted geography variable in the main result. Including an indicator variable for the respondent being in one of the 10 counties with the lowest Whitman vote percentages does not change the results; the variable is statistically insignificant (the smallest p-value is greater than 0.20 for the three estimated parameters). The distribution of responses among Republicans does not change much, as demonstrated in Table S3.

The main lesson to draw from including the final vote totals is a word of caution about the potential for unobserved (and thus not accounted for by the weights) differences between the types of individuals who took this survey and the actual voting population. While there are many advantages to this method of gathering data, it comes with some risks (Baker et al. 2010, Yeager et al. 2011). It is possible that there is a greater degree of party-line voting among individuals not likely to be captured in this kind of online panel. The reverse could also be true for Democrats: support for the proposition among Democrats and nonleaning Independents (not explored in the main section of the paper) could be lower than it is in our data; our data has only 7.4 percent of Democrats opposing Proposition 25 and 29.5 percent of true Independents. If there is a segment of voters of all types likely to vote "no" on propositions as a matter of course, or for some other

Figure S2. By County, Percentage of Vote Against Proposition 25 and Percentage of Vote (out of the total Whitman and Brown vote) for Whitman.

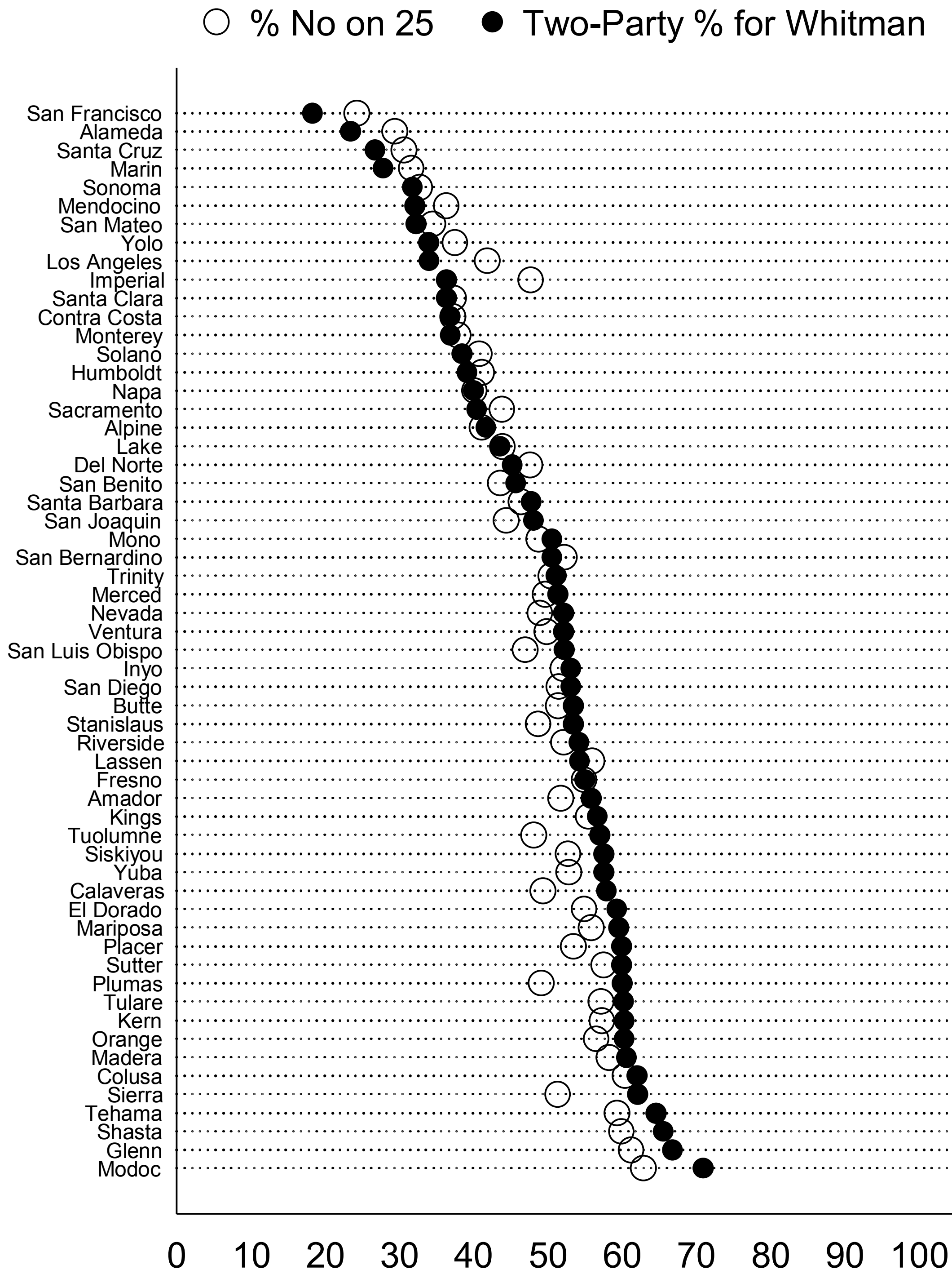


Table S3. Republican Responses by County Type

Weighted N	10 Counties with Lowest Whitman % 126 Observations	Other Counties 988 Observations
Party Line	32.5	35.2
Defect: Candidate	6.0	8.6
Defect: Institutions	47.2	41.4
Defect: Both	14.4	14.9
	100%	100%

reason disinclined to support this one, the impact magnitude of Republican defections on the proposition (bot not on the candidate) as in Table S2 would be muted.

Alternative Model

Other scholars have thought about similar situations in a slightly different way. Taken together, all the points about accountability through blame assignment, policy preferences, and opinions on process could sway Republican voters in a similar fashion on both measures—treated as separate questions, not a joint choice, with errors potentially correlated across both questions. Abrajano, Nagler, and Alvarez (2005) used a bivariate probit to analyze the factors contributing to two choices at the ballot box.

The bivariate probit model allows for the errors in two separate binary probit models to be correlated by some parameter, ρ. In this case, we can conceptualize this parameter as some underlying and unmeasured willingness to either buck the party or support it in this instance. Since each question can be reoriented in a binary sense—supporting the party line or *considering* doing something else—there is enough information here to estimate the parameters for both halves of the model.

The results, displayed in Table S4, are broadly consistent with the approach in the main text of the paper. The correlation between the errors is sufficiently small as to not necessitate the bivariate probit at all; using separate binary probits will yield nearly identical parameter estimates.[19] Furthermore, as one should expect from the main text, most of the variables have effects in a similar direction for both questions. Assigning some blame for the gridlock to the Republican Party decreased the probability of supporting the party position on both questions. Deviation specifically on policy yielded a decreased probability of supporting the party position on both questions. Although few respondents actually selected this item, identifying reform as a most important problem also corresponded with a decrease in probability of supporting the party on both questions. Similarly, the respondents not registered with the Republican Party were weaker supporters as well.

[19] Therefore it is largely of no consequence that Figures S3 and S4 are created with the same model but individual binary probits.

Table S4. Bivariate Probit Results. Estimated simultaneously for (1) binary question on explicitly supporting Whitman and (2) explicitly opposing Proposition 25. N=1,260 unweighted observations.

	Vote Whitman		Oppose 25	
Variable:	Coef.	p>|Z|	Coef.	p>|Z|
Own Party Shares in Blame	-0.520	0.00	-0.364	0.00
Not Very Conservative Rep.	-0.004	0.97	-0.182	0.02
Budget Gap Policy Deviation	-0.658	0.00	-0.727	0.00
Reform Most Important Prob.	-0.306	0.04	-0.430	0.00
People Limited Impact on Gov't	-0.210	0.01	0.215	0.00
Not Registered in Party	-0.185	0.05	-0.178	0.04
Race: White	0.062	0.55	0.071	0.45
Gender: Female	-0.206	0.02	-0.460	0.00
Age: 55 or Older	0.277	0.00	0.118	0.12
Income: 80,000 or More	0.056	0.53	0.150	0.05
Constant	1.292	0.00	0.334	0.01
ρ	0.023			
σ_ρ	0.054			

The differences appear with two criteria. Ideological strength had no observable impact on support for Whitman over considering alternatives. Of course, budget policy preferences do, so one way to interpret this coefficient in a multivariate setting is that it is capturing the aspects of ideology unrelated to the tax/spend dimension, potentially including attitudes about combativeness; that both variables have an identifiable negative impact on Proposition 25 opposition would at least make sense with this explanation.[20] The belief that people cannot affect what governments do has a differential impact on both questions as well: it reduces the probability of supporting the Republican for governor while increasing the probability of supporting the party position on Proposition 25—a similar split result as in the main text. These voters may be dissatisfied with the candidate alternatives but also concerned about their ability to impact a Democratic majority in the legislature.

For outcomes with similar dynamics, the magnitude of the effects should also matter. Figure S3 shows the first differences for Whitman support, calculated using the median (weighted) characteristics for each other variable and then simulating outcomes with the variable in question shifted from 0 to 1.[21] An individual with these characteristics has a predicted probability of affirmatively supporting Whitman of 0.80. The *largest* effect comes from the relatively small group of Republicans willing to deviate from the cut-spending-only orthodoxy. Similarly the effect from identifying constitutional reform as a most important problem has a large negative impact (but also a wide confidence interval, reflecting the even smaller number of respondents who

[20] Much more sense than an alternative, such as social moderation explaining the difference.

[21] Using CLARIFY (Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 2003) and Fredrick Boemke's *plotfds* (see: http://myweb.uiowa.edu/fboehmke/methods.html, last accessed 02/23/17).

Figure S3. First Differences for Separate Probit on Supporting Whitman. For each variable, first differences reflect change from X=0 to X=1; others held at (weighted) medians. P(Y=1| Median Xs) = 0.80.

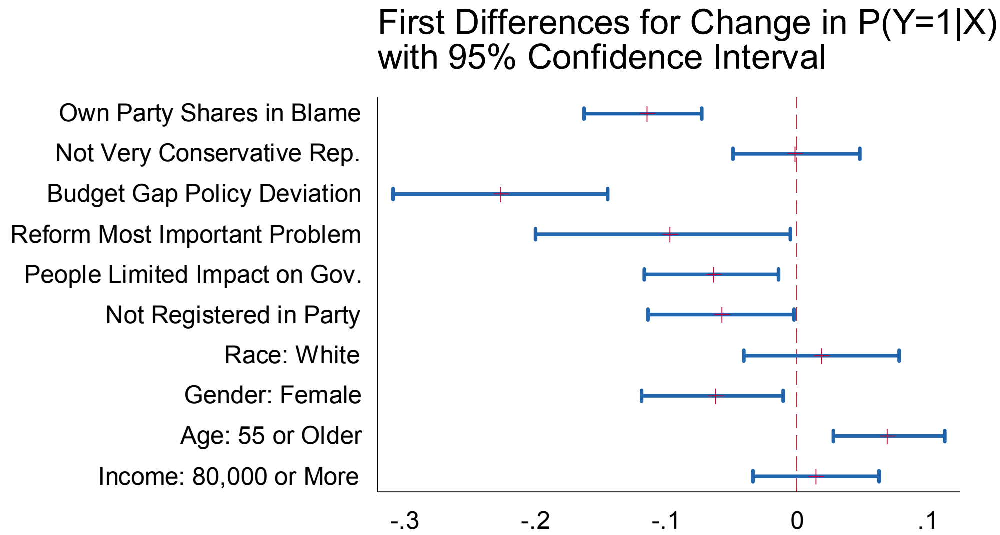
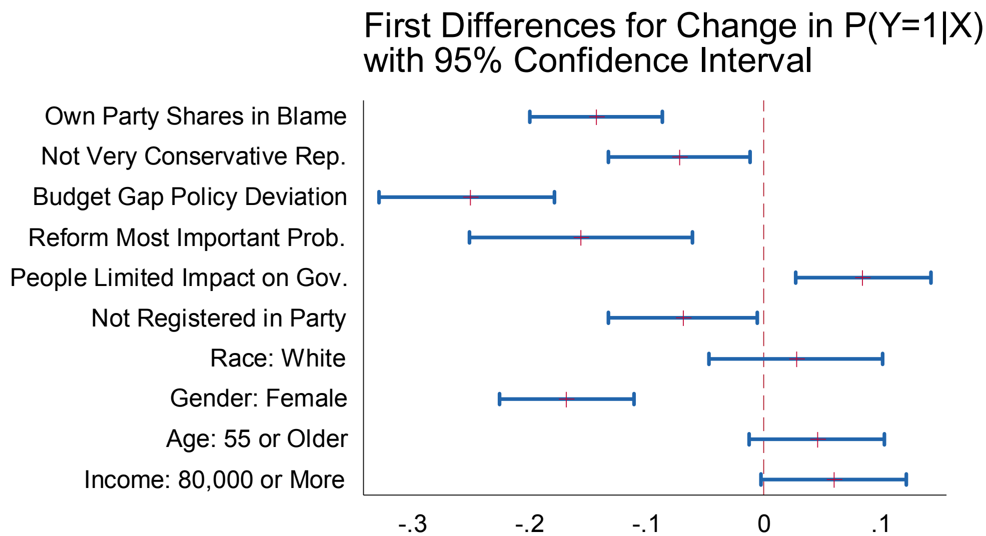


Figure S4. First Differences for Separate Probit on Opposition to Proposition 25. For each variable, first differences reflect change from X=0 to X=1; others held at (weighted) medians. P(Y=1| Median Xs) = 0.45.



gave this answer). A large, negative, and meaningful—given the number of Republicans holding this view—effect for assigning the party some of the blame for the budget process stands out as an important finding. Those three all come with magnitudes of greater than 10 percentage points. The belief that citizens can have a limited impact on their government and the absence of party registration both have smaller but still meaningful results.

In many ways, the first differences computed for opposition to Proposition 25 look similar, even though the baseline is much lower. For the same individual, the baseline probability is only 0.45. In this context, the increase of about 10 percentage points for believing that citizens had limited ability to impact what the government does is remarkable, although in-line with Dyck's (2010) observation that conservative voting on ballot propositions is connected the a belief that it is hard for government to deliver what people want. The ideology component does have a smaller impact than deviations on preferred budget policy, belief reform is a most important problem, and blame attribution.

In both cases, the dynamics of the control variables are interesting as well. The Abrajano, Nagler, and Alvarez (2005) application of a bivariate probit exploited a natural experiment of sorts with two concurrent elections in the city of Los Angeles that allowed them to test the relative importance of racially polarized voting and voting for spatial (ideological) reasons. There are aspects of this present in these two questions as well for Republican women; for one question is explicitly framed in terms of a female candidate (Meg Whitman) and the other question has to do with the mass of a legislative majority. In both cases the female Republican respondents were less likely to go along with the party position. Age corresponds with towing the party line in both cases as well. Income is more likely to matter for Proposition 25 (with a p-value that rounds to 0.05) than for Whitman's election.

While there are many aspects of the story that are quite similar in using this model, as opposed to the multinomial logit in the paper, the main model is the best approach. It explicitly allows making direct comparisons across accountability categories. In both modeling approaches, the role of the question about ordinary people having a limited way to impact what governments do—and connecting that belief to a preferred institutional arrangement—connects to larger theories of democracy, such as Powell (2000). It should be encouraging that this result is robust to an alternative way of estimating a model.