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Abstract

Direct democracy, particularly the initiative process, has become an important feature of the political landscape and influences the national agenda. California candidates for governor regularly sponsor and endorse measures that appear on the ballot with their candidacies. This article combines endorsement evidence with exit polling data from five California gubernatorial elections (1982-98) to examine the effects of ballot propositions on gubernatorial elections. In the period examined, voting for winning initiatives was positively associated with voting for winning candidates. Conservative candidates who allied themselves with winning ballot initiatives often benefited. Liberal candidates tended to support losing measures and liberal voters losing candidates.

KEYWORDS: ballot initiative campaigns, issue voting, gubernatorial elections, California politics, direct democracy

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Issue Benefactors or Issue Victims? Ballot Initiative Influence on the Vote for California Governor, 1982–1998

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Direct democracy, particularly the ballot initiative process, has become an important feature of the contemporary political landscape in over two dozen states and now influences the national political agenda (Bowler, Donovan, and Tolbert 1998; Cronin 1989; Magleby 1984). Nowhere is this more evident than in California, where tens of millions are spent each election cycle for and against salient propositions (Hadwiger 1992; Lupia 1994; Thomas 1991).¹ Given the amount of issue advertising and press coverage devoted to salient measures, the ballot initiative process now vies with candidates for voter attention. Indeed, the myriad issues raised by ballot measures “have made it increasingly difficult for candidates to establish their own issue agendas” (Magleby 1988, 608). Candidates for the California governor’s office are obligated to take stands on the most visible measures and it is not uncommon for the front runners of both major parties to become closely identified with, or even sponsor, measures that will appear on the ballot at the same time as their candidacies (Smith and Tolbert 2001).

For gubernatorial candidates in a state with a high number of ballot measures at all levels of government, electoral success may depend not only on traditional electoral considerations but on the ability to discern majority sentiment on the most visible propositions and adjust campaign priorities to reflect this opinion, sometimes irrespective of ideological consistency. Anecdotally, this tactic seems to have benefited candidates on both sides of the political aisle, as when Democrat Jerry Brown embraced Proposition 9, a campaign reform measure, on his way to elec-

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tion in 1974 or when Republican Pete Wilson endorsed Proposition 140 calling for term limits during his successful gubernatorial campaign in 1990 (Block and Zeiger 1990; Magleby 1994). While considerable descriptive evidence has been offered for ballot initiative influence over election outcomes (e.g., Broder 2000; Magleby 1988; Schrag 1998), little empirical research has investigated the relationship between candidate sponsorship or endorsement of salient propositions, voter support of these measures, and gubernatorial voice choice (for an exception, see Nicholson 2005).²

Ballot Initiatives and Gubernatorial Voting

Bowler and Donovan (1994) have suggested that comparisons between direct democracy (e.g., the ballot initiative process) and candidate contests would further our understanding of campaign effects. Similarly, Magleby (1988, 608) has asserted that, in states where ballot initiatives have grown in frequency, they have had a “profound impact” on statewide elections, potentially diverting voter attention away from broad-based candidate campaigns for governor and U.S. Senate and focusing instead on such narrow issues as handgun control, toxic waste, indoor smoking, and homosexual teachers. More recently, the relationship between issue campaigns and candidate contests has been seen as potentially reinforcing rather than diversionary, and research has begun to explore the role of issue voting *in* gubernatorial elections (Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox 1994; Ensley and Bucy 2009; Nicholson 2005).

In earlier research, the study of gubernatorial voting behavior primarily focused on the influence of economic conditions and incumbency on candidate success, in part due to reliance on aggregate-level data (Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox 1994). But with the availability of media exit polls and other individual-level surveys that reveal voter preferences and perceptions, a wider range of voting determinants have been identified.³ Over the past decade, the voting behavior literature has verified a number of key influences on gubernatorial vote choice beyond economic evaluations, including party identification, ideology, presidential popularity, and attitudes toward specific hot-button issues such as abortion and gay marriage (Atkeson and Partin 1995; Carsey and Wright 1998; Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox 1994; Ensley and Bucy 2009; Howell and Sims 1993; Svoboda 1995).

In a study of issue voting in gubernatorial elections, Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox (1994) found that abortion attitudes had a greater impact on gubernatorial vote choice than evaluations of the state economy in eight out of 10 states analyzed—and was a stronger predictor than even partisanship in one state (Pennsylvania). These authors argue that state-level election studies would benefit from wider consideration of noneconomic issues, such as gun control and capital punishment.

Nicholson (2005) examined the impact of two noneconomic issues presented to voters as ballot propositions, the nuclear freeze initiative and illegal immigration, on gubernatorial and congressional elections.⁴ Voters in states with freeze initiatives were likely to consider this issue when deciding on candidates for state and federal offices during the 1982 midterm elections, with an electoral advantage for Democrats. In California, voters who sympathized with an anti-immigration measure (Proposition 187) during the 1994 gubernatorial election were likely to support Republican Pete Wilson. Thus, salient measures appear to prime voters to associate particular issue positions with specific parties and influence voting decisions across offices (Nicholson 2005).

A focus on issues and election outcomes is important for at least three reasons. First, the past two decades have witnessed growing issue polarization among political elites (Layman 2001), which has diffused to the mass public. Voters increasingly identify with parties on the basis of particular issue stands. Second, and as a consequence, issue voting in the electorate is on the rise (Abramowitz 1995). This trend is enhanced by the fact that, where initiatives and referenda are concerned, “direct legislation *is* issue voting” (Magleby 1988, 606, italics added). And third, gubernatorial elections in states with a history of direct legislation have become increasingly intertwined with initiative campaigns (Magleby 1994). As Smith and Tolbert (2001) have observed, “The dramatic rise in the use and importance of ballot initiatives in the last three decades has altered the democratic process, with candidates and state and national parties increasingly compelled to debate divisive issues during ballot campaigns” (p. 745). Indeed, not only are candidates *debating* ballot initiatives, they are increasingly *sponsoring* measures as an integral part of their overall campaign strategy.

Using a combination of candidate endorsement evidence and polling data from five gubernatorial elections between 1982 and 1998, this analysis considers the effects of voter support for salient measures on electoral outcomes in California. Are gubernatorial candidates reaping electoral rewards for their involvement in high-profile initiative campaigns, becoming “issue benefactors,” or does their involvement more often turn them into “issue victims” (Nicholson 2005)? Earlier research suggested that the success or failure of ballot measures rarely translated into “any payoff to the electoral fortunes of the party candidates in the election” (Magleby 1984, 174). However, times have changed: the parties themselves are taking an increasingly active role in initiative campaigns, using the direct legislation process to bolster voter turnout, divide the opposition with wedge issues, and promote their own platform positions and ideological agenda (Smith and Tolbert 2001). Hence, if candidates support *winning* initiatives popular with the public, does this positive association translate into support at the ballot box? Conversely, if candidates

endorse and campaign on behalf of *losing* initiatives that are unpopular, does this negative association contribute to electoral defeat?

California's Ballot Initiative Process

A product of Progressive Era-reforms in the early 1900s, direct democracy generally takes three forms: the ballot initiative, popular referendum, and recall election (Key and Crouch 1939).⁵ The ballot initiative was established in California in 1911 as a mechanism of direct legislation to allow citizens to oppose powerful interests (Dwyre, O’Gorman, Stonecash, and Young 1994), particularly the influence of the Southern Pacific Railroad, over state government in the early part of the century (California Commission on Campaign Financing [CCCCF] 1992). The popularity of direct democracy grew throughout the twentieth century and is now practiced in some form in over two dozen states and hundreds of municipalities nationally (Broder 2000; Lacey 2005). Historically, Californians have used the initiative mainly to address questions of governance and taxation (CCCCF 1992). In the 1990s, however, in California and other states, ballot initiatives became the focus of several well-publicized battles over social and moral issues, including social services for illegal immigrants, affirmative action, bilingual education, school vouchers, the minimum wage, and gay marriage (Allswang 2000; Ensley and Bucy 2009; Smith and Tolbert 2001).⁶

The diversity of policy concerns addressed through the initiative process prompted one political observer to describe the ballot initiative as “the prime generator of policy in California” (Walters 1991). As a form of direct democracy, the initiative process represents a type of bottom-up prioritizing of issues ostensibly from the grassroots. In practice, however, initiative campaigns are typically sponsored by elite backers, organized interest groups (sometimes from out-of-state), activists, or candidates themselves seeking to circumvent the conventional legislative process (Broder 2000; Karp 1998; Smith and Tolbert 2001)—a point recognized early by Key and Crouch (1939).

In a state the size of California, much is at stake for the proponents of a measure; on the other hand, opponents seek to defeat the idea before it can take hold and, sometimes, expand into a national movement (Zisk 1987). This occurred most famously with Proposition 13, the property tax relief measure overwhelmingly passed by California voters in 1978. Described by Broder (2000, 51) as “the emblem of conservative populism, a nationwide tax revolt, [and] the signal act of repudiation of the era of liberal big government,” Proposition 13 helped push taxes to the forefront of the national political debate and contributed to the rise of fiscally conservative candidates for governor and president, including Ronald Reagan.

Within two years of its adoption, 43 states had implemented some form of property tax limits or relief, 15 states had lowered their income tax rates, and 10 states had indexed their state income taxes to inflation (Hayward 1998).

Although the initiative process has been described as a remedy for addressing difficult questions left unresolved by the legislature and executive branch (CCCF 1992), facilitating “political choices that are stymied in the normal legislative process” according to former California Governor Jerry Brown (quoted in Roberts and Yoachum 1990), ballot measures are increasingly used by interest groups and policy entrepreneurs to bypass the legislature altogether. At the same time, the myriad issues addressed by initiatives have made it difficult for candidates who are not sponsoring or endorsing measures to establish their own campaign issue agendas (Magleby 1988). As a consequence, policy debates in initiative-intensive states have increasingly come to reflect activist or special interest group priorities rather than candidate-driven priorities. “In this sense the initiative has become much more than a remedy for legislative inaction or abuses; it has become a driving force in the political and electoral process” (Magleby 1988, 608).

Since the passage of Proposition 13, use of the ballot initiative in California has become much more frequent; between 1980 and 1990, more than 270 ballot initiatives were circulated for qualifying signatures (Garamendi 1990).⁷ The number of initiatives that actually *qualified* for the ballot was much smaller, but from June 1980 to November 1988 voters faced almost as many initiatives (48) as they did during the previous four decades (50 between 1940 and 1978). A majority of initiatives that appeared on the ballot during the 1980s and 1990s were defeated, but voters did approve 41.3% (45) of the 109 measures put before them (Allswang 2000; CCCF 1992). Even if a particular measure is defeated, or is later declared unconstitutional (and the issue advocated does not develop into a wider cause), it may still attract more attention than it would have as a legislative proposal alone, especially if well-financed. High-profile propositions thus play an important role in setting political priorities (Broder 2000; Magleby 1994).

The “powerful agenda-setting possibilities” (Magleby 1994) of direct legislation have thus encouraged greater use of the initiative process by issue advocates, candidates, and political parties seeking to gain visibility and political influence. No longer insulated from the process, gubernatorial challengers and incumbents alike now sponsor and campaign on behalf of selected measures (Broder 2000; CCCF 1992; Dwyre et al. 1994; Guskind 1994; Magleby 1994). In 1990, California officeholders, including two candidates for governor (Democrat John Van de Kamp and Republican Pete Wilson) sponsored 11 of 18 initiatives that appeared on the state ballot (CCCF 1992), prompting Los Angeles media consultant Sidney Galanty to remark that initiatives “are becoming a candidate’s issue papers” (quoted in Bradley 1990).⁸

The sheer number of voters who cast ballots for salient measures speaks to their electoral influence. While some less publicized ballot initiatives are susceptible to voter drop off due to fatigue or disinterest (Magleby 1984), a California Commission on Campaign Finance (1992) analysis revealed that, between 1978 and 1992, California voters were equally apt to vote for initiatives as they were candidates. In fact, in two primary elections during this time, more people cast votes for ballot initiatives than they did for governor—Proposition 13 in 1978 and Proposition 51 limiting tort liability in 1986 (CCCCF 1992). Table 1, showing percentages of votes cast in general elections during nonpresidential election years from 1982 to 1998, illustrates California voters' high propensity for voting on salient ballot initiatives. In 1994 and 1998, more votes were cast for salient measures than for the major party candidates.

The trend of both activists and elected officials using ballot initiatives to shape Californian policy continues this decade. Although ballot measures did not play a decisive role in the lackluster 2002 campaign between Democrat Gray Davis and Republican Bill Simon, direct democracy returned with a vengeance in 2003 with the successful recall of Davis and election of Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger. In 2004 Schwarzenegger helped to pass two ballot measures, an economic recovery and balanced budget act. But in an unpopular special election he called a year later, four “reform” measures that Schwarzenegger sponsored, including redistricting, parental notification for abortion, curtailing political activities of unions, and state spending limits, were all rejected by voters (Vogel and Finnegan 2005).⁹ Schwarzenegger subsequently worked within the traditional legislative process to fund stem cell research, enact minimum wage legislation, and introduce new emissions controls, and won reelection with 56% of the vote over Phil Angelides.

Initiative Campaign Dynamics

During an initiative campaign, the potential influences on ballot measure support include sponsorship or endorsement of a particular measure, interest group advertising, and media coverage. Figure 1 presents a stage model of initiative campaign influence on candidate issue stands and gubernatorial vote choice. The potential driving forces behind salient ballot measures—interest groups, activists, and candidates—directly contribute to the issue articulation stage of the model (prior to this, real world conditions create the political environment in which initiatives are formulated). The various political actors involved in the direct legislation process in turn influence the information dissemination stage, where media coverage, issue advertising, political advocacy, and citizen deliberation have an impact not just

Table 1. Differential Between Governor’s Race and Ballot Measure Turnout

Year	Governor’s Race Turnout ^a	Ballot Measure Turnout ^b	Differential ^c	
1982	Bradley (D)	3.72	Prop. 12* 7.23	.26 (.03%)
	Deukmejian (R)*	3.77	Prop. 15 7.47	.02 (.002%)
	Total	7.49		
1986	Bradley (D)	2.72	Prop. 63* 6.85	.27 (.04%)
	Deukmejian (R)*	4.40	Prop. 64 6.87	.25 (.04%)
	Total	7.12	Prop. 65* 6.87	.25 (.04%)
1990	Feinstein (D)	3.50	Prop. 128 7.31	-.05 (-.007%)
	Wilson (R)*	3.76	Prop. 131 7.16	.10 (.01%)
	Total	7.26	Prop. 140* 7.12	.14 (.02%)
1994	Brown (D)	3.19	Prop. 186 7.58	-.03 (-.004%)
	Wilson (R)*	4.36	Prop. 187* 7.82	-.27 (-.03%)
	Total	7.55	Prop. 188 7.73	-.18 (-.02%)
1998	Davis (D)*	4.63	Prop. 5* 7.95	-.26 (-.03%)
	Lungren (R)	3.06		
	Total	7.69		

^a Votes cast for the two major party candidates in the general election (in millions).

^b Total votes cast for and against salient ballot measures (in millions).

^c Difference between total votes cast for gubernatorial candidates and individual ballot measures (in millions).

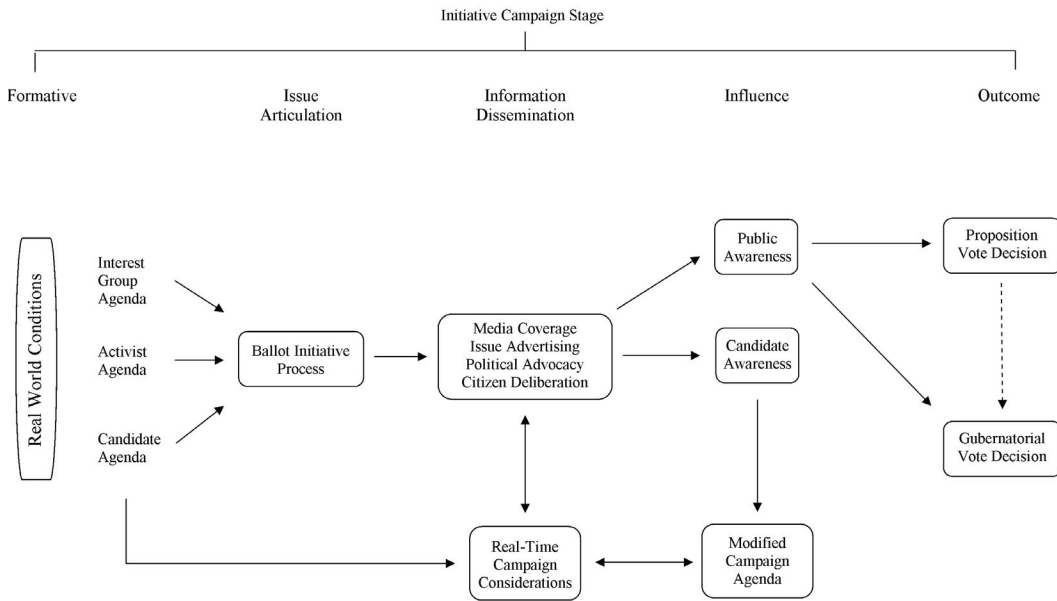
*Indicates winning candidates and ballot measures.

Source: *California Journal*.

on public awareness of salient measures but candidate awareness of propositional momentum.¹⁰

At the influence stage of the model, real-time campaign considerations stemming from candidate awareness of initiative popularity may result in a modified campaign agenda, enabling candidates to calibrate their positions with public sentiment. In the meantime, citizen awareness of high profile initiative campaigns translates into support for or opposition to salient measures, influencing voting decisions at the outcome stage. The dotted line between proposition vote and gubernatorial vote represents the potential influence of initiative support on candidate choice—the central relationship this study seeks to examine. In essence, the model posits that salient issues in the form of ballot initiatives may prime voters through media coverage and other information sources to think about candidates as either like-minded or issue-distant, and therefore worthy of support or not.¹¹

Figure 1. A Stage Model of Initiative Campaign Influence



An account of ballot initiative influence has been advanced by Nicholson (2005), who argues in his theory of “agenda voting” that candidate efforts to couple issue stands with salient ballot measures offer voters an evaluative basis for decision making. Not all issues connect with the public but emphasis of a direct legislation issue, if embraced and actively promoted by a campaign, may subsequently influence candidate vote choices through the mechanism of priming. Repeated exposure to a salient issue promotes cognitive accessibility, which in turn prompts voters to assign greater weight to this issue when evaluating candidates. Thus, voters in elections with high-profile initiative campaigns are primed to evaluate candidates across different offices with common criteria. Nicholson contends that candidate visibility on particular ballot propositions, more than the general campaign issues from a given race, account for the association between initiatives and candidate success.

The central role that the initiative process now plays in gubernatorial elections raises several questions and expectations about the relationship between ballot measure support and the vote for governor. First, it is hypothesized that winning candidates for governor will endorse or be closely associated with winning ballot propositions, and that losing candidates will endorse or be closely associated with losing ballot propositions. In addition, it is expected that voters who favor winning gubernatorial candidates will express more support for winning propositions than

“losing-candidate voters.” Conversely, voters who favor losing candidates should support losing propositions more than “winning-candidate voters.” Lastly, the analysis considers whether support for salient measures is positively associated with support for winning gubernatorial candidates while controlling for other important determinants of the vote.

Data and Methods

This study utilizes data from Voter News Service General Election exit polls conducted for the news media during the California general elections of 1982, 1986, 1990, 1994, and 1998. These polls are archived and made available by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan.¹² The analysis examines whether support for winning gubernatorial candidates is influenced by support for salient ballot initiatives while controlling for other variables known to influence voting behavior in candidate elections. Each exit poll contained political, economic, demographic, and issue-related questions, including questions about voting for at least one ballot proposition.¹³ Given the decision by major news organizations to highlight certain ballot propositions and not others on the exit questionnaires, these measures are assumed to be the most salient initiatives of each election year.

Since the dependent variable is dichotomous (0 = support for losing candidate, 1 = support for winning candidate), logistic regression models are used to determine the influences on candidate support. Analyses were conducted using the binary logistic procedure in SPSS. Covariates selected for inclusion in the models were chosen from among those items shown to be relevant to gubernatorial vote choice (see Chubb 1988; Holbrook 1987; Stein 1990; Svoboda 1995) and on the basis of consistency across data sets. Political variables included proposition vote, presidential approval, partisanship, and ideology. Economic variables included state economic condition or responsibility for the state’s economic problems (whichever question was asked) and the respondent’s present financial status as compared to previous years. Demographic variables included income, education, race, and gender. (See the Appendix for question wording of key variables.)

In the logit models, proposition vote (0 = against, 1 = for) and presidential approval (0 = disapprove, 1 = approve) were dichotomously coded. Ideology (0 = liberal, 1 = moderate, 2 = conservative), partisanship (0 = Democrat, 1 = Independent, 2 = Republican), and financial status (0 = worse, 1 = about the same, 2 = better) were treated as categorical variables to minimize missing values.¹⁴ State economic condition (0 = not so good/poor, 1 = good/excellent) and responsibility for the state’s economic problems (0 = governor, 1 = president), a question on the

1982 survey, were collapsed into dummy variables. Income, education, race, and gender were each included as controls, dummy coded, and, if necessary, collapsed to take on a dichotomous value. Responses were coded as follows: income (0 = low to middle, 1 = middle to upper), education (0 = less than a college degree, 1 = college degree or higher), race (0 = non-white, 1 = white), and gender (0 = male, 1 = female).

The degree to which gubernatorial candidates associated themselves with different ballot measures during these five elections was assessed through an examination of candidate endorsements of high-profile measures. Endorsement evidence was gleaned primarily from archival issues of the *California Journal* and supplemented with an online search of the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *San Francisco Examiner*. The ballot proposition and campaign analyses from these publications mentioned major candidate positions on, and (if applicable) sponsorships of, salient measures. Additional endorsement information was obtained by consulting Allswang (2000) and the UC Hastings College of the Law Library online database of California ballot propositions and initiatives (<http://traynor.uchastings.edu/Welcome.html>).

Results

Cross-tabulations for ballot measure support by gubernatorial vote revealed significant associations between winning candidates and winning measures and losing candidates and losing measures. In all but one instance (nuclear freeze), a majority of winning-candidate voters favored winning initiatives (see Table 2). By contrast, losing-candidate voters supported winning measures by a clear majority only half the time, and never after 1986. Mean support for winning measures among winning-candidate voters was higher (64.1%) than for losing-candidate voters (52.9%). A similar pattern emerged for losing candidates and measures, with a majority of losing-candidate voters supporting losing measures in three out of six cases (see Table 3). None of the losing measures received majority support from winning-candidate voters.

That supporters of winning candidates tended to back *winning* initiatives lends support for the idea that voters who favored winning gubernatorial candidates will support winning ballot propositions more than losing-candidate voters. Overall, mean support for *losing* initiatives was substantially higher among losing-candidate voters than among winning-candidate voters, 43.8% compared to 30.1%. These results are consistent with expectations. On the whole, supporters of losing candidates tended to back losing initiatives more than supporters of winning candidates.

Table 2. Support for Winning Ballot Measures by Vote for Governor

Year	Measure	Vote for Governor	Support for Proposition	χ^2	p
1982	Prop. 12 (nuclear freeze)	Bradley (D)	68.0% (1,034)	343.42	.001
		Deukmejian (R)*	33.6% (464)		
1986	Prop. 63 (English only)	Bradley (D)	51.8% (536)	240.51	.001
		Deukmejian (R)*	82.1% (1,021)		
	Prop. 65 (toxic disclosure)	Bradley (D)	77.6% (444)	89.85	.001
		Deukmejian (R)*	52.1% (377)		
1990	Prop. 140 (term limits)	Feinstein (D)	45.3% (617)	79.24	.001
		Wilson (R)*	63.9% (629)		
1994	Prop. 187 (immigrant services)	Brown (D)	28.5% (243)	431.10	.0001
		Wilson (R)*	77.4% (732)		
1998	Prop. 5 (tribal casinos)	Davis (D)*	75.7% (997)	178.00	.0001
		Lungren (R)	46.6% (348)		

*Indicates winning candidates. Number of exit poll respondents (n) in parentheses. $df = 1$.

Next, the analysis considers candidate positions on salient ballot propositions to determine whether losing candidates tend to support losing measures and, conversely, whether winning candidates support winning measures. Candidate positions on salient measures are summarized in Table 4. Candidate endorsement information was available for every measure except Proposition 12, the nuclear freeze initiative, which appeared on the ballot in 1982.¹⁵ Winning candidates endorsed winning measures in just two out of six cases (Pete Wilson in 1990 and 1994) but *opposed losing measures* in all six cases. Losing candidates, on the other hand, supported losing measures in two out of six cases and *opposed winning measures* in four out of six cases.

The association that losing candidates Bradley and Feinstein, both Democrats, had with failed initiatives in 1982 and 1990 supports the contention that losing candidates will support losing measures. The opposition to these losing measures

Table 3. Support for Losing Ballot Measures by Vote for Governor^a

Year	Measure	Vote for Governor	Support for Proposition	χ^2	p
1982	Prop. 15 (gun control)	Bradley (D) Deukmejian (R)*	51.8% (806) 26.5% (374)	196.86	.001
1986	Prop. 64 (AIDS quarantine)	Bradley (D) Deukmejian (R)*	21.5% (221) 32.7% (400)	34.84	.001
1990	Prop. 128 (Big Green)	Feinstein (D) Wilson (R)*	64.7% (1,100) 24.3% (301)	467.06	.001
	Prop. 131 (term limits ^b)	Feinstein (D) Wilson (R)*	44.6% (617) 43.9% (434)	.12	<i>n.s.</i>
1994	Prop. 186 (health care)	Brown (D) Wilson (R)*	50.3% (416) 17.9% (167)	207.79	.0001
	Prop. 188 (public smoking)	Brown (D) Wilson (R)*	30.0% (251) 35.2% (330)	5.57	.02

^a In 1998, Voter News Service asked about just one proposition (5) in the California exit poll. Since Prop. 5 was a winning measure, it is reported in Table 2.

^bIn 1990 there were two term limits measures on the ballot. Prop. 140, which passed, was sponsored by Los Angeles County Supervisor Pete Schabarum. Prop. 131, which failed, was sponsored by outgoing California Attorney General John Van de Kamp.

*Indicates winning candidates. Number of exit poll respondents (n) in parentheses. $df = 1$.

by winning candidates Deukmejian and Wilson, both Republicans, is consistent with this argument. On the winning side, the endorsements by Wilson of Proposition 140 in 1990 and Proposition 187 in 1994 offers some evidence that winning candidates will endorse winning measures. Candidate issue stands, including both support for winning measures and opposition to losing measures, conformed with expectations in 13 out of 24 instances. On the surface, this outcome is only slightly better than chance; however, in the most controversial and highly charged initiative campaigns—gun control (Prop. 15) in 1982, term limits (Prop. 140) and Big Green (Prop. 128) in 1990, and illegal immigration (Prop. 187) in 1994—endorsements

Table 4. Candidate Positions on Salient Ballot Measures

Year	Winning Measures	Candidate Position		Losing Measures	Candidate Position	
		Supported	Opposed		Supported	Opposed
1982	Prop. 12	None	None	Prop. 15	Bradley (D)	Deukmejian (R)*
1986	Prop. 63	None	Bradley (D) Deukmejian (R)*	Prop. 64	None	Bradley (D) Deukmejian (R)*
	Prop. 65	Bradley (D)	Deukmejian (R)*			
1990	Prop. 140	Wilson (R)*	Feinstein (D)	Prop. 128	Feinstein (D)	Wilson (R)*
				Prop. 131	None	Feinstein (D) Wilson (R)*
1994	Prop. 187	Wilson (R)*	Brown (D)	Prop. 186	None	Brown (D) Wilson (R)*
				Prop. 188	None	Brown (D) Wilson (R)*
1998	Prop. 5	None ^a	Lungren (R)			

^a Democratic candidate Gray Davis, who won election in 1998, declared himself neutral on Prop. 5 during the campaign.

*Winning candidate.

Source: *California Journal, San Francisco Chronicle, San Francisco Examiner.*

followed the expected pattern in all eight instances. These cases are discussed below.

Finally, a series of logit models were run for each election year (see Table 5). Logistic regression coefficients provide an estimate of the log odds of an event occurring after adjusting for other independent variables. Influential variables are those that are both significant and have a relatively high regression coefficient to standard error ratio. After holding constant demographic characteristics, economic and political variables, support for ballot propositions significantly predicts can-

didate preference in nine out of 12 instances. Two propositions in particular, Big Green in 1990 and the so-called “Save Our State” illegal immigration initiative in 1994, had noticeably high log odds ratios (-8.65 and 8.06 respectively, compared to an average of 3.25 for the seven other statistically significant measures). As indicated by the negative coefficient, supporters of Big Green were unlikely to vote for Wilson in 1990; on the other hand, supporters of Proposition 187 were partial to Wilson in 1994.

Support for *winning measures* (highlighted in bold) was positively associated with winning candidate vote in four of six instances. The two exceptions were Proposition 12 (nuclear freeze) in 1982 and Proposition 65 (toxics disclosure) in 1986, which the winning candidate (Deukmejian) either opposed or did not take a position on. Support for *losing measures* was either negatively or not significantly associated with winning candidate vote. Changing the coding of the dependent variable to 0 = winning candidate and 1 = losing candidate revealed that support for losing measures (Propositions 15, 128, and 186) was significantly associated with support for losing candidates. Thus, winning candidates did not seem to be strongly affected by public opinion for losing measures. By contrast, there were significant associations between winning measures and winning candidates.

Discussion

Political Uses of the Initiative Process

The political use of the initiative process by California gubernatorial candidates to broaden their electoral appeal dates to 1974, when then-Secretary of State Jerry Brown promoted Proposition 9, a post-Watergate campaign reform initiative, to help secure the Democratic nomination (Magleby 1994; Nicholson 2005). The measure was approved and Brown won the nomination and, ultimately, the governorship. For incumbents and challengers, involvement in the ballot initiative process promises at least three tangible benefits: (1) heightened visibility through association with a popular issue; (2) reaching and mobilizing issue constituencies that might not otherwise vote in an election; and, (3) raising money from issue activists and campaign supporters who might be willing to donate to a related cause (CCCF 1992; Magleby 1994). These pragmatic motivations together offer a convincing rationale for candidate participation in the ballot initiative process.

The 1978 California election, a watershed in the history of the initiative process, illustrates the dilemma gubernatorial candidates can find themselves in when a popular initiative gains momentum. During the primary, candidates of all stripes were obliged to contend with Proposition 13, the influential property tax reform

Table 5. Logit Estimates of Individual Level Voting for Winning Candidates^a

1982			1986		
Variable	<i>B (SE)</i>	<i>B/SE</i>	Variable	<i>B (SE)</i>	<i>B/SE</i>
Income	.02 (.16)	.10	Income	-.15 (.21)	-.71
Gender	.02 (.15)	.11	Education	.27 (.22)	1.21
Race	.71 (.22)***	3.30	Gender	-.22 (.20)	-1.07
Personal situat.			Race	1.48 (.29)***	5.04
Worse	-.36 (.22)†	-1.67			
About same	-.12 (.19)	-.62	State econ.	.64 (.31)*	2.08
Econ. problems	-.93 (.17)***	-5.52	Ideology		
Ideology			Liberal	-1.37 (.31)***	-4.44
Liberal	-.81 (.24)***	-3.38	Moderate	-.55 (.24)*	-2.25
Moderate	-.67 (.18)***	-3.81	Party ID		
Party ID			Democrat	-1.93 (.26)***	-7.56
Democrat	-1.54 (.18)***	-8.35	Independent	-1.32 (.30)***	-4.37
Independent	-1.07 (.21)***	-5.13	Pres. approval	2.03 (.22)***	9.29
Pres. approval	1.37 (.18)***	7.47	Prop. 63		
Prop. 12			English only	.76 (.23)***	3.32
Nucl. freeze	-.49 (.16)**	-3.11	Prop. 64		
Prop. 15			AIDS	.14 (.24)	.58
Gun control	-.64 (.16)***	-3.96	Prop. 65		
			Toxic disclosure	-.87 (.22)***	-3.95
Constant	1.02 (.34)**	2.97	Constant	-.89 (.51)†	-1.74
<i>R</i> ² = .61			<i>R</i> ² = .68		
Model Chi-square = 958.27***			Model Chi-square = 711.64***		
Unweighted <i>N</i> = 1,552			Unweighted <i>N</i> = 1,014		

^a The exit poll did not ask for respondents' education level or about the condition of the state economy in 1982; personal financial situation was omitted in 1986. To minimize missing values, state economic condition is not included in the 1994 analysis. In 1998, the exit poll asked about just one proposition. Winning measures are bolded.

B = regression coefficient. *SE* = standard error. *R* = Nagelkerke R Square.

****p*<.001 ***p*<.01 **p*<.05 †*p*<.10

measure that passed with 65% of the vote. Brown, who initially opposed the conservative measure, only changed his stance once the initiative passed (California Center for Research and Education in Government 1978; Salzman 1978b). As public opinion crystallized in favor of property tax limits, Brown became the tax reform movement's most visible advocate, earning the nickname "Jerry Jarvis" after the initiative's main sponsor, Republican activist Howard Jarvis (Rennert 1978).

Table 5. continued

1990			1994		
Variable	B (SE)	B/SE	Variable	B (SE)	B/SE
Income	.03 (.15)	.18	Income	-.21 (.20)	-1.07
Education	-.33 (.15)*	-2.17	Education	-.35 (.19)†	-1.78
Gender	-.36 (.14)*	-2.49	Gender	-.30 (.18)	-1.61
Race	.76 (.18)***	4.18	Race	1.23 (.22)***	5.71
Personal situat.			Personal situat.		
Worse	-.35 (.21)†	-1.68	Worse	.06 (.26)	.22
About same	-.23 (.16)	-1.44	About same	.30 (.22)	1.34
State economy	-.10 (.15)	-.64			
Ideology			Ideology		-
Liberal	-.99 (.23)***	-4.38	Liberal	1.57 (.28)***	5.66
Moderate	-.44 (.17)**	-2.64	Moderate	-.57 (.23)*	-2.47
Party ID			Party ID		
Democrat	-2.66 (.17)***	-15.46	Democrat	-2.86 (.24)***	-11.70
Independent	-1.39 (.19)***	-7.51	Independent	-1.85 (.28)***	-6.68
Pres. approval	1.34 (.15)***	8.76	Pres. approval	-1.25 (.20)***	-6.31
Prop. 128			Prop. 186		
Big Green	-1.30 (.15)***	-8.65	Health care	-.58 (.20)**	-2.86
Prop. 131			Prop. 187		
Term limits	.10 (.16)	.65	Immigrant services	1.52 (.19)***	8.06
Prop. 140			Prop. 188	-.03 (.20)	-.17
Term limits	.39 (.16)*	2.47	Smoking		
Constant	.01 (.31)***	3.26	Constant	1.98 (.39)***	5.03
<hr/>			<hr/>		
$R^2 = .64$			$R^2 = .72$		
Model Chi-square = 1,193.59***			Model Chi-square = 1,028.32***		
Unweighted $N = 1,831$			Unweighted $N = 1,327$		

B = regression coefficient. SE = standard error. R = Nagelkerke R Square.

*** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$ † $p < .10$

That same year, Brown, a liberal, was overwhelmingly re-elected by voters in the general election, receiving 1.3 million more votes than his Republican opponent (*California Journal* 1978).

During the 1978 Republican gubernatorial primary, then-San Diego Mayor Pete Wilson publicly opposed the measure capping property taxes and finished fourth with only 9% of the vote (Claiborne 1995). Wilson supported another measure that would have weakened public employee labor unions that year, but it failed to

Table 5. continued

1998		
Variable	<i>B (SE)</i>	<i>B/SE</i>
Income	-.04 (.18)	-.22
Education	.22 (.17)	1.28
Gender	.12 (.16)	.72
Race	-.47 (.20)*	-2.35
Personal situat.		
Worse	-.24 (.27)	-.88
About same	-.46 (.18)**	-2.58
State economy	-.21 (.24)	-.90
Ideology		
Liberal	1.98 (.28)***	7.19
Moderate	1.20 (.19)***	6.48
Party ID		
Democrat	2.45 (.20)***	12.57
Independent	1.09 (.21)***	5.10
Pres. approval	1.71 (.17)***	10.11
Prop. 5		
Tribal casinos	.51 (.17)**	3.06
Constant	-2.24 (.35)***	-6.40
<hr/>		
<i>R</i> ² = .67		
Model Chi-square = 1,088.65***		
Unweighted <i>N</i> = 1,636		

B = regression coefficient. *SE* = standard error. *R* = Nagelkerke R Square.

****p* < .001 ***p* < .01 **p* < .05 †*p* < .10

qualify for the ballot. The failure of the union measure to catch on, according to political observers at the time, dealt a blow to Wilson's campaign and "was a setback for the gubernatorial aspirations of the San Diego mayor, who had hoped to use the measure as the spearhead of his campaign, especially among conservative Republicans" (Salzman 1978a, 28).

In the 1982 election cycle, Republican gubernatorial candidate George Deukmejian adopted resonant stands on two criminal justice initiatives. In the primary, he incorporated support for Proposition 8, a "Victim's Bill of Rights" measure, into his successful bid for the 1982 Republican nomination (Magleby 1988). And in the general election he opposed an unpopular gun control measure, Proposition 15 (Brazil 1982), which was defeated with 63% of the vote. The Democratic challenger, Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley, supported the losing measure and wound up narrowly losing to Deukmejian (Brazil 1982). Bradley's support for the gun con-

trol initiative, according to the *California Journal*, “hit a nerve in rural California and provoked a reaction which may have cost [Bradley] the governorship” (Brazil 1982, 442).¹⁶

In 1986, Deukmejian opposed all three initiatives asked about in the VNS exit poll: winning Proposition 63 (English only), losing Proposition 64 (AIDS quarantine), and winning Proposition 65 (toxics disclosure), calling the latter measure a “transparently political” vehicle for his once-again Democratic opponent, Tom Bradley, whose aides helped draft the measure (*California Journal* staff, 1986). Proposition 65, which was successful, did not seem to provide Bradley with much of a platform for attracting votes.

Pete Wilson, who succeeded Deukmejian as governor in 1990, offers a case study in the strategic use of the initiative process. As both a challenger and incumbent, Wilson was an ardent proponent of conservative ballot measures and aggressively campaigned on their behalf (Broder 2000). As a candidate in 1990, Wilson sponsored a winning criminal justice reform initiative and endorsed winning Proposition 140 calling for term limits in a televised debate with Democratic opponent Diane Feinstein (Block and Zeiger 1990; CCCF 1992). In that election, Feinstein belatedly supported the losing environmental initiative, Big Green, which was defeated by 63% of voters; Wilson was opposed to the measure (Zeiger 1990).

During his 1994 reelection effort, Wilson found himself trailing in early polls to Democrat Kathleen Brown and decided to throw “the full weight of his office” behind Proposition 187 (Broder 2000, 100), a controversial measure that would have denied education, health, and other social services to illegal immigrants (Guskind 1994). Wilson labored throughout the 1994 campaign to keep the economic impact of illegal immigration visible, arguing that social and medical costs of illegal immigration were responsible for shortfalls in the state budget (Guskind 1994). Indeed, Wilson became Proposition 187’s strongest proponent, ultimately spending \$2 million from his campaign finances to promote the measure (Nicholson 2005; Smith and Tolbert 2001). Although the measure was immediately challenged in court upon passage, Wilson was able to focus attention on the economic impact of illegal immigration while promoting his political stance against such costs, linking the two in the minds of voters.¹⁷

Wilson’s opponent, on the other hand, Democrat Kathleen Brown, avoided the measure for most of the campaign, only outright repudiating the initiative a few weeks before the election. Brown, who was consistently leading in the polls during the election—by 20 points at one juncture—lost to Wilson by a 14-point margin. By the time her stance against Proposition 187 became widely known, support for the measure had grown to roughly two-thirds of the state’s voters; thus, Brown positioned herself at odds with popular sentiment. Wilson’s comeback can be attributed

in part to his early definitive stance in favor of Proposition 187 and consistent public support for the measure (Nicholson 2005).¹⁸ As Broder (2000) observed,

The measure passed and was immediately tied up in the courts. But it helped Wilson win a second term, and it gave him a national issue that appealed to nativist elements in the GOP, who resented the changing population mix of the country—and to a broader swath of voters alarmed by the costs of illegal immigration (p. 101).

By promoting the initiative, Wilson ignited controversy but also seized control of the debate. And, despite the measure's unconstitutionality—only the federal government, a court later ruled, can legislate on immigration (Allswang 2000)—the issue provided voters with an outlet for their economic frustration and a campaign issue to seize on. California for most of Wilson's first term as governor had been in the grip of recession. Though controversial, Wilson's strategy of seizing on political issues that appealed to a winning majority while energizing the conservative Republican base was lauded by conservative commentators (see Horowitz 2003).

As awareness of and support for Proposition 187 increased, so did Wilson's poll ratings (Guskind 1994), and on election day three-fourths of Californians who voted for Proposition 187 supported Wilson (Noble 1994).

Four years later, in an open-seat election, Democrat Gray Davis declared himself neutral on Proposition 5, which would have expanded the number of tribes allowed to operate casinos on California's Indian reservations. The measure passed with 63% of the vote. By not opposing the popular and visible initiative (as did his Republican rival, Dan Lungren), Davis avoided Kathleen Brown's mistake of positioning himself at odds with voter sentiment. As noted earlier, Davis would eventually succumb to another direct democracy procedure, the recall election, which he lost. Davis was the first governor in California history to be recalled and only the second governor in American history to be removed from office by the recall procedure. Lynn Frazier of North Dakota was the first, in 1921.

Initiative Campaigns and Information Shortcuts

Absent any candidate association or party endorsement, a defining characteristic of many propositions is their complexity and wordiness (Lupia 1994; Magleby 1984). Yet because of the condensed manner in which initiatives are advertised by proponents and covered in the media (CCCF 1992; Magleby 1988), ballot initiative *campaigns* are often presented in much simpler terms. Salient measures are frequently reduced to what Seymour-Ure (1974) has labeled "clear-cut" issues—those that neatly divide supporters and opponents, provoke conflict, and can be stated in simple terms, usually by short-hand labels such as "nuclear freeze," "English only," "Big Green," or "immigration reform." Although at times misleading, espe-

cially when there are counterpropositions or competing initiatives, these labels provide voters with information shortcuts that, when paired with candidate endorsements, helps them to stake out their own position on these frequently confusing measures.

As Table 1 revealed, high-profile initiatives tend to attract more voter attention than many statewide candidate races, especially in primary elections. These data contradict earlier arguments (see Magleby 1988; Wyer et al. 1991) that citizens are less apt to vote for ballot measures than candidates because issue voting is generally more difficult and time-consuming than candidate voting. Are California voters therefore exceptionally civic-minded and uniquely motivated to seek out issue information? Probably not. The high voting rates for salient measures speak instead to the possibility that voters may associate readily identifiable gubernatorial candidates (or party standard bearers) with salient ballot initiatives. Together, candidate endorsements and media labels serve the heuristic function of reducing the amount of cognitive effort voters must expend to decide their position on an issue, particularly if it is unfamiliar. Such economizing devices, Lupia (1994, 64) has argued, allow voters who have not acquired “encyclopedic knowledge” of issues to vote as though they had. At least with salient measures, voting along party lines is becoming increasingly easy to figure out.

For candidates, ballot measure advocacy lends itself to campaign use since it helps attract media coverage, which primes attentive voters to think about candidates in relation to their initiative stances. With a visible candidate advocating or renouncing an important ballot measure, issues can be covered in a way that is consistent with journalistic values that emphasize conflict and controversy. Given that media focus on certain initiative campaigns can reduce attention paid to candidates in an election (Magleby 1994), statewide office seekers in a direct democracy environment such as California are increasingly obliged to clearly associate themselves with, or distance themselves from, salient ballot measures in order to remain newsworthy. At times, visibility on an issue may be achieved not just by advocating for a consequential measure but by “stressing an opponent’s unpopular or noncredible position on an initiative issue” (Nicholson 2005, 92), enabling candidates to sharpen distinctions between themselves and opponents.

Conclusion

This analysis found support for the idea that leading candidates with the agenda-setting ability to shape public opinion about ballot initiatives can benefit from the very opinion they help to create. Moreover, the association between gubernatorial candidates and ballot measures seems to be increasing over time. Gubernatorial

torial candidates in California routinely endorse and sponsor ballot propositions, occasionally bringing obscure issues to the fore while at other times responding to popular groundswell for a cause. Even a celebrity governor such as Arnold Schwarzenegger cannot ignore the influence of the initiative process.

While the results of this study may not generalize to other states, evidence has been presented to show that losing candidates gravitate towards losing initiatives and that their supporters, perhaps following cues from the candidates, tend to support losing measures. The net result is that voters on the losing side of California's statewide elections end up with neither the governor nor the ballot measure they supported. Winning candidates in the period examined consistently *opposed* losing measures and were associated with winning initiatives in a majority of cases analyzed. Voting for winning initiatives was significantly associated with voting for winning candidates.

Concerns about direct democracy have been raised since the founding of the republic. The question typically asked with regard to plebiscites and referenda is whether elites are at "the mercy of the masses," as the framers of the Constitution feared they would be.¹⁹ From this analysis, it appears instead that elites are at the mercy of other *elites*, who use the initiative process to shape the issue agenda and influence public opinion. In the case of competitive contests, strategic support of a popular ballot initiative may help deliver the extra votes necessary to edge out an opponent. Conversely, taking an unpopular position on an unpopular measure like Big Green or gun control may (along with other campaign-related factors) precipitate defeat, as suggested by Diane Feinstein's loss to Pete Wilson in 1990 and Tom Bradley's unsuccessful campaign against George Deukmejian in 1982. Although there are undoubtedly other reasons for these losses, both Feinstein and Bradley were within a few percentage points of their winning opponent.

Interestingly, following Bradley's 1982 loss to Deukmejian, California entered into a prolonged (16-year) era of conservative control. During this time, salient propositions favored by conservatives passed and Republican gubernatorial candidates generally prospered. Wilson, in particular, was able to use the initiative process to shape the issue agenda and then ride the momentum from his association with particular issues to electoral success. Perhaps more than any other recent Golden State governor, Wilson seemed able to harness popular sentiment surrounding high-profile initiative campaigns to his electoral advantage. Democratic candidates Bradley, Feinstein, and Brown, by contrast, were all victimized to a greater or lesser extent by their association with losing measures.

Yet in an initiative campaign, there are other influences at play besides candidate endorsements, including the amount of money raised for and against a particular measure, the amount of media coverage and positive or negative advertising a given measure receives, and support by political parties or interest groups. This

study did not consider these latter influences, although they may well play an important role in the process. What the results do help explain is the central position initiative campaigns occupy in California's gubernatorial elections. Candidates for governor must consider the risk involved in campaigning against a measure that winds up popular with voters or aligning with an initiative that is doomed for defeat—and adjust their election strategy accordingly.

Ballot initiatives and other forms of direct democracy place substantial information demands on citizens, who in cities like Los Angeles are sometimes presented with over 100 different candidates and propositions on a single ballot (Bowler, Donovan, and Happ 1992). This complexity is compounded in many elections when competing measures addressing the same issue—often with misleading titles—appear simultaneously. In such situations, which can be confusing to voters, candidate and party endorsements serve as a valuable heuristic device, informing citizens whether to support, oppose, or possibly ignore a particular proposition on the basis of partisan cues.

For candidates, running on “the issues” as represented by ballot initiatives requires careful consideration to avoid issue victimization where endorsement decisions are concerned. Although initiative contests now define California's gubernatorial races, candidates have no way of knowing whether measures that seem popular in early polling will maintain their appeal throughout the course of the election. In states that practice democracy by initiative, identifying ballot measures that voters will ultimately support by a winning margin is now one of the central tasks of running an effective campaign.

Appendix: Key Variables

Financial status

“Compared to two years ago, is your family’s financial situation better today, worse today, or about the same?” Answers were coded 0 for worse, 1 for about the same, and 2 for better. In 1982, the question compared financial situation with a year prior. Not asked in 1986.

Economic responsibility

“Who’s more responsible for economic problems in California: President Reagan, Governor Brown, both, or neither?” Answers were coded 0 for Governor Brown and 1 for President Reagan. Asked in 1982 only.

State economic condition

“These days, do you think the condition of California’s economy is excellent, good, not so good, or poor?” The response set in 1986 was very good, fairly good, fairly bad, and very bad. Answers were coded 0 for not so good/poor (fairly bad/very bad) and 1 for good/excellent (fairly good/very good). Not asked in 1982.

Ideology

“On most political matters, do you consider yourself a liberal, moderate, or conservative?” Answers were coded 0 for liberal, 1 for moderate, and 2 for conservative.

Party identification

“Do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?” Preceded in 1990, 1994, and 1998 by the phrase, “No matter how you voted today . . .” Answers were coded 0 for Democrat, 1 for Independent, and 2 for Republican.

Presidential approval

“Do you approve or disapprove of the way [Ronald Reagan/George Bush/Bill Clinton] is handling his job as president?” Answers were coded 0 for disapprove and 1 for approve.

Proposition vote

“How did you just vote on Proposition [number]: yes, no, didn’t vote on Proposition [number]?” Question accompanied by a brief description of each measure (e.g., handgun control, toxics, the AIDS initiative, environment, gambling on Indian lands). Answers were coded 0 if the respondent voted against and 1 if the respondent voted for the proposition.

Governor vote

“In today’s election for governor, did you just vote for: [names of two major party candidates], other, or didn’t vote for governor?” Answers were coded 0 for losing candidate and 1 for winning candidate.

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Notes

¹ In reference to direct legislation questions that appear on the ballot, this article uses the terms “initiative,” “proposition,” and “measure” interchangeably. Technically, initiatives are added to the ballot by a signature drive among the voters, while propositions arrive by acts of the state legislature.

² The ballot initiative process has attracted considerable scholarly interest more generally, with analyses of initiative campaign influence on voter turnout (Lacey 2005; Smith 2001; Tolbert, Grummel, and Smith 2001) and civic engagement (Tolbert, McNeal, and Smith 2003), the relationship between partisanship and issue voting (Donovan, Bowler, McCuan, and Fernandez 1998; Smith and Tolbert 2001), the information costs of direct democracy (Bowler, Donovan, and Happ 1992), and the influence of the ballot initiative process on political knowledge (Smith 2002).

³ Previous research may have ignored the role of noneconomic issues due to the scarcity of individual-level data from random samples of state voters and the difficulty of incorporating issue preferences into aggregate models (Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox 1994). By contrast, “data on state economic conditions are relatively easy to obtain, and longitudinal analysis information on incumbency and presidential popularity is readily available” (Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox 1994, 188). Although media exit polls allow for individual-level analyses, they are not without their problems (see Atkeson and Partin 1998; Mitofsky and Brennan 1993).

⁴ Nicholson (2005) analyzed a third issue, affirmative action, but in the context of the 1996 presidential campaign. Support for Proposition 209, misleadingly labeled the “California Civil Rights Initiative,” was associated with voting for Republican candidates for president, Congress, and the state Senate, but not the state Assembly—presumably due to the low visibility of Assembly races. Nicholson’s theory of indiscriminate priming holds that once a clear stand on a salient issue (e.g., a controversial ballot measure) is associated with a political party, that issue support can impact candidate contests at a variety of levels even if the issue is not a significant factor in the campaign for a particular office.

⁵ Ballot initiatives allow petitioners to draft proposed laws and have them placed either directly on the ballot or indirectly (through the legislature) if they qualify with a sufficient number of valid signatures (Magleby 1988, 1994). The *popular* referendum enables citizens to place action taken by legislative bodies on the ballot for ratifying. As Magleby (1988) notes, it is important to distinguish between popular referenda, a form of direct legislation, and referenda in general. Every state except Delaware requires major constitutional revisions to be submitted to a vote of the people, while only half of the states provide for the popular referendum. Fifteen states also provide for the recall of statewide officials (Magleby 1988, 1994).

⁶ For a complete listing of California’s direct legislation propositions, see the UC Hastings College of the Law Library online database of California ballot propositions and initiatives <<http://traynor.uchastings.edu/Welcome.html>>.

⁷ Between 1950 and 1992 more initiatives and referendums qualified in California (127) than any other state. In Oregon, the second most active direct democracy state, 97 initiatives and referenda qualified during this time period (Magleby 1994).

⁸ Van de Kamp sponsored three ballot initiatives as a way of building a substantive and focused issue platform, hoping that would catapult him to election. The three measures were Proposition 128 (the “Big Green” environmental reform measure, cosponsored with then-State Senator Tom Hayden); Proposition 129 (criminal justice reform); and, Proposition 131 (term limits/campaign finance reform). According to the California Commission on Campaign Financing (1992), “While the strategy attracted widespread praise for bringing substance to the gubernatorial campaign, the

initiatives depleted Van de Kamp's organization resources. Van de Kamp's three initiatives appeared on the November ballot, but Van de Kamp did not. He lost the Democratic primary battle to former San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein. And all three of his initiatives were eventually defeated" (p. 62).

⁹ During the election Schwarzenegger contributed \$1.25 million of his own money for Proposition 77, which would have taken the job of drawing the state's political districts away from the legislature and given it to a panel of retired judges (Vogel and Finnegan 2005).

¹⁰ Importantly, voter awareness and consideration of salient propositions may extend beyond the information received from news. As Behr and Iyengar (1985) point out, public concern over "real-world conditions and events provide an independent impetus to the perceived importance of issues" (p. 53). Subsequent research has shown that news coverage may vie with campaign advertising (Roberts and McCombs 1994) and interpersonal discussion networks (Huckfeldt 1995) in determining citizen issue concerns.

¹¹ Of course, candidate support may depend on a host of other voting-related factors, including partisanship, ideology, candidate viability, campaign competitiveness, and so on.

¹² The general election polls included two CBS News/*New York Times*-sponsored election day polls from the 1982 and 1986 elections; a joint network (ABC, CBS, NBC, and CNN) exit poll from the 1990 election; and, for 1994 and 1998, the Voter News Service General Election Exit Polls, cosponsored by ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN and, in 1998, the Associated Press (ICPSR datasets 8168, 8698, 9604, 6520 and 2780, respectively). Although a dataset was available for 1978, VNS only conducted an exit poll during the primary election that year, featuring multiple challengers. Since the exit poll data for 1978 are not comparable, they are not included in the analysis.

¹³ Somewhat ironically, given their media sponsorship, the VNS exit polls did not ask about respondents' media use.

¹⁴ Ideology, party identification, and financial status were converted into $n-1$ categorical variables, using the SPSS default deviation contrasts subcommand, with the highest level of each variable serving as the reference category. The value of the coefficient for the reference category can be calculated by taking the negative of the sum of the other category coefficients (Norusis, 1992). Logistic regression coefficients are interpreted as a ratio of the coefficient to the standard error; the larger the coefficient relative to standard error, the more likely are the odds of an event occurring.

¹⁵ The measure, sponsored by Californians for a Bilateral Nuclear Freeze, called for the governor to write a letter to then-President Reagan requesting that the United States and Soviet Union stop all nuclear testing, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons in a verifiable way (Brazil 1982). Although neither major party candidate visibly endorsed or opposed Proposition 12, it was clearly identified as a liberal response to President Reagan's aggressive foreign policy and was opposed by conservatives (Allswang 2000).

¹⁶ Rival explanations for Bradley's 1982 loss include his bland campaign style and a timid get out the vote effort (Fairbanks 1982); NRA opposition to the gun control measure and support for Republican candidate Deukmejian (Brazil 1982); and, potentially biased media coverage against Bradley by the state's largest newspaper, the *Los Angeles Times*, which played up Bradley's race as a campaign issue in a series of articles quoting Deukmejian's campaign manager (Payne and Ratzan 1986). Bradley would have been California's first black governor.

¹⁷ Perhaps not surprisingly, four of the cornerstone issues Wilson stressed in his 1996 presidential campaign announcement speech—illegal immigration, affirmative action, welfare reform, and crime—had been pretested through the ballot initiative process (Taylor 1995). Wilson was not successful in the Republican primaries that year, however.

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¹⁸ Other factors include Wilson's tough stance on crime, which was popular with voters, and success in painting Brown as relatively weak on law and order issues (Phillips 1994). Brown was also criticized for running a disorganized campaign (Noble 1994).

¹⁹ Distinguishing between pure (direct) democracy and republicanism, or representative democracy, Madison (1788/1987) in *Federalist No. 10* argued that if political institutions routinely succumbed to popular opinion on important matters, "factions," "local prejudices," and "schemes of injustice" would prevail, enabling the spread of "general conflagration through the other States" (p. 128).