

**Information availability and information use in ballot proposition contests**

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## **Information availability and information use in ballot proposition contests**

Direct democracy in its Swiss or Western US practice is a qualitatively different kind of political process from referendum democracy practiced elsewhere in the world. The referendum in countries such as the UK, Ireland, Canada or France is used infrequently and largely remains in the hands of legislators. By contrast, the initiative process is both frequent and in the hands of voters themselves. California is often used as a case in order to highlight differences from the referendum. Between 1912 and January 2013 Californians saw 360 initiative proposals qualified for the ballot. A further 1307 failed to qualify but made at least some progress towards the ballot. With so many proposals being made and put to the ballot it is not surprising that a wide range of issues are considered. November 2012, for example, saw Californians decide on ten initiatives and a referendum including measures on taxation, union dues, car insurance, the death penalty, labeling of GM foods and redistricting. By contrast to referendum practice none of these issues were placed on the ballot by legislature but were instead placed on the ballot by players from outside the legislature.

These differences in process translate into a different in the decision context facing voters.

In general, the decision problem facing voters is seen in the literature as one where voters are presented a series of ballot measures without the usual guidance of incumbency and party label to help them make sense of the choice they are asked to make. Given this framing of the decision problem, it is not surprising that some commentators express concerns over the capacity of the average voter to make decisions. One of the enduring debates within the literature on ballot proposition elections and in particular initiative elections concerns whether voters are up to the task of dealing with direct democracy.

With so many proposals on so many different topics a live question becomes whether voters have and process enough information to be able to make choices on ballot proposals. Often these concerns are underpinned by the implicit concern over whether voters have sufficient information to be able to make ‘sensible’ choices among the alternatives on offer<sup>1</sup>. After all, a generation of scholarship on political behaviour showed that voters have, at best, a part-time or intermittent attention to politics even within the framework of periodic, high information contexts of general elections. “Ordinary voters,” note Harrop and Miller in discussing candidate elections, “do not think very long or very hard about political questions” (Harrop and Miller:1987:101). One would reasonably expect the demands of information to be a defining characteristic of voter decision-making in proposition elections. A number of consequences follow on

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<sup>1</sup> One subtext is that “sensible” is related to whether or not the particular analyst supports the choice being made – or not)

from that. First, it may be that voters are simply unable to make decisions and so register a “don’t know” response on surveys, possibly not even voting at election time. Furthermore, to the extent that undue burdens are placed on voters then one would expect voters to react and dislike the process in part because of these burdens as some voters may already do in candidate elections (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse: 2002). Overburdened voters may not only disengage from the process they will also grow to dislike the process of direct democracy itself.

A body of work on voting focuses on the ways in which voters may cope with the demands of direct democracy and so challenges the line of argument that says direct democracy places too many demands on voters. The standard rebuttal is that voters use cues and heuristics to enable them to make appropriate decisions in the face of this information (Lupia: 1994; Bowler and Donovan 1998; Binder et al 2011). In candidate elections voters use the cues of party label and incumbency examples of similar cues in ballot proposition elections include endorsements from well-known political figures. Another variant of the way in which voters may orient their opinions is to rely on whether propositions target or benefit a particular group (Nicholson 2011). While the use of heuristics seems a sensible approach to making decisions it is not always clear just how many voters rely on these cues and, more to the point, if voters do find themselves relying on cues whether this is more a source of irritation to voter than a coping strategy. That is, while it seems clear that cue-taking is a coping strategy in low information settings and, further, that some voters use these kinds of coping strategies in ballot proposition elections other questions remain unanswered. It is not clear, for example, just how many voters rely on cues. It may be that cue-taking is indeed a strategy but it is simply not used by many people or all that often. Nor is it clear whether voters response to direct democracy as a process is conditioned upon the information demands made upon them. That is, it is not always clear just how hard a time voters have making a decision on ballot propositions and, consequently, just how much their view of the process is coloured by how difficult they find the process to navigate. If voters do have a negative view of the process then the literature would suggest this has straightforward consequences for the legitimacy of the process and decisions it produces.

The paper is divided into two empirical sections that address each of these questions. In the first section we examine what effect self-reported inadequacies in information have for evaluations of direct democracy. We show that concerns about information availability depress both support for and use of the initiative process.

In the second section we examine more closely the question of information availability and uptake. In large part this second section reverses the conclusion of the first section and shows that voters can orient themselves towards propositions – possibly even with only limited reliance on cues. Furthermore, those voters who do express difficulty over the informational demands seem to be ones unwilling to look for more information by themselves.

The broader conclusion of the paper is that the literature on direct democracy – both critics and to some extent supporters of the process -- over-state the difficulties face in navigating direct democracy.

## Section 1. Consequences of lack of information

We know that voters as a whole quite like direct democracy and there exist a literature on what voters do and do not like about the system (notably Donovan and Karp, 2006). There is, however, little understanding of the connection between the empirical demands of the system upon voters and voter evaluations of the system. Yet, as we noted earlier, the system may place demands on voters that they are unwilling or unable to navigate. Presumably, voters can be expected to prefer simple and clear over the complex and unclear. Voters who dislike the system may do so because it is complex. It may be the case, too, that – despite some overall affect for the system – voters have many misgivings that are rooted in difficulties relating to information and inforedness.

The information problem facing voters in ballot proposition elections can indeed be seen to be quite serious. Two-thirds (67%) of voters agreed or strongly agreed with a survey question that asked them whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that: “The wording of initiatives on the state ballot was too complicated and confusing”. In the same survey 21% of respondents said that they were “not too satisfied” or “not at all satisfied” with the information they had to make the choices on the ballot (source: PPIC December 2010 post-election survey).<sup>2</sup>

We can demonstrate this point empirically within a standard regression framework. We take as our dependent variable evaluations of the system of direct democracy. The key independent variable of interest is whether voters were satisfied with the information available to them to make a decision on the ballot propositions.

As dependent variables we look at four attitudinal and one behavioural response to the initiative process. The attitudinal measures are

- 1) whether the respondent thought there were too many measures on the ballot
- 2) whether the respondent thought the wording of initiatives was confused
- 3) how happy the respondent felt having to vote on the issues and
- 4) whether voting on the state propositions made the respondent feel better or worse about state politics.

The behavioural evaluation is how often voters simply did not bother to vote on a proposition.

Data are taken from a 2010 PPIC post-election survey (see Appendix for description of variables used in this paper).

As noted, the key independent measure will be whether voters are or are not satisfied with the information available to them. But this is not likely to be the only driver of opinions towards the process. Attitudes towards the process as a whole may be

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<sup>2</sup> That PPIC survey, along with the PPIC October 2010 pre-election survey, provides the bulk of the data used in this project. The questionnaire, survey report and the survey data themselves are available for download on the PPIC web site ([www.ppic.org](http://www.ppic.org)).

coloured by a range of different factors (Donovan and Karp 2006). These attitudes may be driven by political concerns. In California, for example, Democrats are typically more suspicious of the process than others. Some voters may simply not care about politics in general and so find the process more an irritant than a blessing. Voter dissatisfaction with the process may also be related to other attributes of the voters themselves. It seems reasonable, for example, to suppose that the better educated are better able to deal with the process (although previous results suggest the more highly educated tend to be more skeptical of the process). Similarly, Spanish speakers and other non-English speakers may find the process confusing as may younger voters less used to the system. There are, then, a series of factors we need to control for along with our key variable of interest - voter concerns over information availability.

Table 1

As can be seen from Table 1, even after controlling for a battery of other factors, voter concerns over information availability drive negative evaluations of the system itself. In fact concerns about information consistently drive both opinions and behavior in ways that other variables do not. Table 2 gives some idea of the substantive size of these effects, which are quite substantial.

Table 2

On the face of it the results of Table 1 suggest that the initiative process places too many information demands on voters themselves, the implication of this is that voters exhibit a range of attitudes and behaviours that reflect badly on the process as a whole.

Still, there are reasons for thinking that the conclusions based on the findings of Table 1 are too pessimistic by looking more closely at information availability to voters and information uptake by them. We begin by examining just who it is that is unhappy with the information available to them. We can take unhappiness with information availability as our dependent variable and again pursue a standard approach of modeling responses to this question as a function of a set of independent variables. To the extent that we are interested in defending voter competence in direct democracy elections then the kinds of factors we should see underpinning unhappiness with information are factors such as a lack of political interest or engagement. If we can show that the results of Table 1 reflect the views of an already disgruntled and disaffected minority then this will mitigate the criticism of the process because voters will be unhappy not because of the information demands of direct democracy but because voters unhappy with the information demands are also unhappy with a range of other factors: unhappiness with the information demands of direct democracy may have no causal effect.

This we do in Table 3 – with substantive effects reported in Table 4. What we see from this model is that voters who believe the state is on the wrong track, who are not interested in politics and who do not see the issues on the ballot as important are likely

not to be satisfied with the information they have available to them. What we see then are those voters who are unhappy with the process are people unhappy with things in general and are not necessarily terribly engaged voters. In that sense, the people who are unhappy with direct democracy (Table 1) are not that really unhappy because of information demands/lack of information – they are just generally unhappy and disaffected.

Tables 3 and 4 about here

While that line of argument may be plausible it does run into the problem of endogeneity. That is, we cannot tell from the results so far whether voters are disaffected from the process because they cannot find the information they need, or it is that disaffected voters are simply unable/unwilling to take time to figure out what they need to know. We can sidestep the thorny causal relationship between lack of interest in politics and dissatisfaction within the information available by looking at information uptake. If it is the case that voters, unhappy with the kinds of information available, are busy looking for information then we might say that there is a problem with the process i.e. that informational demands are a problem.

We can begin to broach this issue of seriousness of information demands by looking in more detail at some largely descriptive evidence.

## **Section 2. Information uptake**

There are a series of information sources open to voters. Table 5 presents the well-established pattern that California voters rely heavily on the ballot pamphlet provided by the state to each voter.

Table 5 about here

But the pamphlet is not the only source of information used by voters. Despite the presence of the pamphlet as well as the availability of web resources voters still express concern about the information available to them. One straightforward question is whether different kinds of voters rely on different kinds of information. We can make several rough categories of information from the kinds of sources listed in Table 5. Those voters who rely on the internet are exhibiting a kind of search behaviour, while those who rely on the opinions/endorsements of others (newspapers, friends or interest groups and politicians or advertising) are more passive in having others provide them with views. Those voters who rely on the ballot pamphlet may be grouped into a third category.

Again using a standard regression framework we can see which voters use which sources of information and different information strategies. For example, more interested and educated will use search strategies, the less interested and less educated will rely more on others and so on. Again, a key group are those who are dissatisfied with the information they have available to them (the group who provided the main group of

interest for Table 1). One point to underscore is that this approach should help us dodge some of the issues endogeneity. Above we noted that it is plausible to argue that the causal relationship runs either or both ways between disaffection from politics and unhappiness with information availability and so we should not be too quick to jump to the conclusion – suggested by Table 3 – that it is the disengaged and disenchanting who are unhappy with information. It is, however, much less plausible to argue that active information search leads to unhappiness with information availability unless it is the most alert and engaged citizens who are becoming disenchanting with the process.

In looking at Table 6 we note that voters who are unhappy with the amount of information they have are significantly less likely to search for information: they may be unhappy about the information available to them, but are unwilling to do anything about it. Some voters may well be unhappy with the information demands of direct democracy but they do not seem willing to seek information (whether from the web or printed sources) that will address the problem. This pattern is consistent with the earlier patterns (Table 3) that suggested voters who were unhappy with the information available to them over propositions were voters who were disengaged in general.

Table 6 about here

There is an additional point that can be made on the basis of the pattern of information sources see in Table 5. Cue taking behaviour is not as prevalent – and certainly not as conscious or explicit- as the literature suggests. The lack of explicit reference to cue taking may be more than simple social desirability. There may be more going on than voters being too embarrassed to admit that they relied on cues. Some evidence suggests that voters may simply not need cues in their actual decision. The broader consequence of this point is that it may be that the literature over-states the information demands facing voters. That is, critics over-state the difficulties facing voters and, ironically, in relying on a cue-taking argument even supporters of the process may over-state the difficulties by implying that voters need to rely on cues. Yet even very simple evidence suggests voters do not need cues to make a decision.

We can bring to illustrate this point by looking more closely at voters who respond “don’t know” to survey questions. The following example is taken from a September 2004 survey. The language closely follows the language used on the ballot and relates to an issue on the upcoming November ballot

Proposition 62 on the November ballot—the “Elections, Primaries Initiative Constitutional Amendment,”—requires primary elections where voters may vote for any state or federal candidate regardless of the voter's or candidate's party registration. The two primary election candidates

receiving the most votes for an office—whether they are candidates with “no party” or members of the same or different party—would be listed on the general election ballot. No significant fiscal impact is expected. If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on Proposition 62?

The question format mimics that of the actual California ballot<sup>3</sup>

In a series of surveys using this question format, voters how they would vote on 34 of the issues that appeared on the ballot 2000-2012. The particular response of interest here is “don’t know”, as in voters responded they did not know how they would vote. Figure 1 displays the distribution of ‘Don’t Knows’ over these 34 proposals. The average percent of ‘Don’t Know’ over the 34 proposals is just over 14%.

Figure 1 about here

What this simple figure suggests is that a large majority of voters can make a decision using the information just from the ballot itself. Further, albeit circumstantial, evidence that voters do not need to rely on cues is given from a PPIC post-election survey from 2010. In that survey voters were asked to give a reason for why they voted the way that they did on four propositions including asking them whether they used the endorsements of opinion leaders or newspaper columns. Table 7 reports responses that people gave for the reason they voted for Proposition 19, a proposal that would substantially legalize marijuana. What we see here is that the numbers of people who referred to endorsements is so small as to not show up as noticeable.

Table 7 about here

Large numbers of voters are able to articulate a reason for their vote across the propositions<sup>4</sup>. More to the point, many of these reasons echo ones given by campaigns themselves (Table 8). Across the four propositions voters were asked about in this survey

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<sup>3</sup> The actual ballot language was *Should primary elections be structured so that voters may vote for any state or federal candidate regardless of party registration of voter or candidate? The two primary-election candidates receiving most votes for an office, whether they are candidates with "no party" or members of same or different party, would be listed on general election ballot. Exempts presidential nominations.* Language about fiscal impact is also included on the ballot.

<sup>4</sup> This ability holds for those who were asked why they voted against the proposal and the same for those who voted for/against the other propositions. That is, when asked voters could give a reason for their vote. The propositions were Prop 19 (legalization of Marijuana), Prop 23 (suspended air pollution laws), Proposition 24 (repeal of a business tax liability) and Proposition 25 (changed vote requirement for legislature to pass a budget).



just 47 respondents, or 2% of the sample, responded that they voted the way they did (for or against) because of endorsements. When asked the more general question of how they learned about the ballot propositions roughly 8% of voters said they relied on an endorsement of an interest group or newspaper.

Table 7 taken together with Figure 2 suggest that most voters are able to arrive at decisions on ballot propositions most of the time without reference to cues and, in part, that is because information sources are available to them: some voters seek out information, others rely on the information at hand. Those voters who are dissatisfied over information sources are ones who do not actually use information sources themselves (Table 6).

One further point to mention is that many voters simply do not care about the issue at hand. Again we use the 2010 post-election survey which asked voters about the four proposals ( 19, 23, 24 and 25). When asked, after the election, whether or not the issue had been important to them just under 20% of voters responded that at least one of the issues was “not at all important”. Five percent responded that they had no interest in any of the proposals<sup>5</sup>. It is worth bearing in mind that quite a lot of people find politics uninteresting and dull. Quite simply, many people do not want a cue.

A few caveats are in order. First it is the case that there are a few outliers in terms of voters being able to express an opinion on a ballot measure. Figure 2 shows that while, for most of the proposals, 80-90% of respondents find enough information in the question itself a few proposals do seem to be more ambiguous. The highest level of “don’t know” in the sample being seen for Proposition 60 (2004).

Proposition 60 on the November ballot—the  
“Election Rights of Political Parties Legislative  
Constitutional Amendment”—requires that general  
election ballots include the candidate receiving the  
most votes among candidates of the same party for  
partisan office in the primary election. No significant  
fiscal impact is expected. If the election were held  
today, would you vote yes or no on Proposition 60?  
(PPIC September 2004)

Some propositions, then, are harder to figure out than others. But still voters seem to find some way to figure out most proposals on their own and, also, advance cogent reasons for their vote choice.

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<sup>5</sup> The pre-election survey from October saw slightly more engagement with around 14% saying that one or more were unimportant.

Second, while we know there are systematic reasons for expecting that the percent of don't knows can vary by proposition – some proposals see more spending than others, some are more controversial and so on (Bowler and Donovan 1998; Nicholson 2003) there are also sources of individual level variation in “don't know” and some of those sources of variation can be quite troubling.

This time using data from a pre-election survey from the same 2010 election we can examine who it is that “doesn't know” how they will vote on the propositions ahead of time. The results from doing that analysis do not offer an entirely comfortable picture of reasoning voters. First, the demographic factors that drive “don't know” produce, in some instances, odd results: more educated voters are more likely to say they don't know than less well educated voters<sup>6</sup>. Women are strongly and significantly more likely to say “don't know” than men. These are, on the face of it, somewhat odd results and inconsistent with the pattern we expect to see.

Table 9 about here

One way of showing they are somewhat surprising results is by comparing them to the results of column 2. That column reports results from a model which takes as its dependent variable whether or not people respond that they “don't know” who to support for governor. There we see that educated voters are more willing to express a choice for governor and the gender gap disappears: the expected pattern reasserts itself. It may be, then, that there is something not entirely straightforward with decision-making in ballot proposition elections. Still, it does seem clear – as the results of column 3 suggest – that “don't know” on ballot proposition elections is strongly related to “don't know”ing on the governor election. It also seems clear that “don't know” is related to ‘don't care’ in that not being interested in politics is a driver for replying “don't know”.

### **Discussion: what are the implications for campaign effects?**

One of the long-standing critiques of direct democracy remains that – because of the mix of complex decisions and voter's cognitive limitations – there is considerable room for campaign effects. Voters, in short, are easily fooled by slick TV ads into voting for foolish proposals. The hidden assumption in many discussions of spending that are critical of the process is that spending essentially leads people to vote against their own interests or their own preferences.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In some models, too, Spanish language speakers (who we presume will have a harder time dealing with predominantly English language campaigns) are more likely to express a hypothetical vote choice.

<sup>7</sup> A subtler kind of campaign effect is seen in the work of Dyck who sees one consequence of campaigns as not so much in the one off mobilization of voters to vote or conversion of voters from YES to NO or vice versa but in the cumulative effect of campaigns. In brief, the argument is that a succession of direct democracy campaigns that are critical of politicians drive lower trust and regard for politicians (Dyck 2009). Of

The empirical evidence in support of such large campaign effects is mixed. There seems little evidence that campaigners can spend their way to passing a proposal. A consistent pattern is that “no” spending has bigger effects than “yes” spending suggesting that well heeled interests may be able to veto or block proposals. A sophisticated analysis by Stratmann (2006) suggests that there is room for nuance in this argument and there is room for spending effects (see also De Figueiredo et al 2011), but the conditions seem quite strict. The literature has found it hard to demonstrate – at least in the California case – that campaign dollars drive outcomes.<sup>8</sup>

In some ways this discussion points up the problem of defining expectations of campaign effects: what do we reasonably expect to see? To use Lau and Redlawsk’s language: Do we expect to see “incorrect” voting (Lau and Redlawsk 1997)? Or are the effects mostly related to turnout? While there may be ways in which it is possible to estimate some kind of ‘normal vote’ as a baseline in candidate elections (some combination of previous vote totals by party or registration levels) it is not possible to do so for direct democracy elections. Such benchmarks as vote last time or registration are unavailable or irrelevant which makes it hard to develop the appropriate counter-factual.

The results presented here suggest that a further difficulty is that there are reasons to expect limited effects for campaign activity. Sections of the electorate either know they will not vote at all or know which way they will vote based on the issue itself. After all, the initiative process embraces a population of issues. Some issues are complex, abstract and perplexing but others are “easy” (Carmines and Stimson; 1989); gay marriage, abortion, extension of the death penalty and legalization of drug use are all issues that have appeared on the ballot. They are also issues on which it is hardly controversial to argue that many voters will have quite fixed opinions. That said, just how fixed opinions may be in the context of direct democracy campaigns is a matter of some uncertainty – there is very little panel data available that allows us to track changes over time: shifts in aggregate opinion may reflect a jump from “don’t know” to an opinion rather than a flickering back and forth between support and opposition, or between being a voter and staying at home.

What may be the case is that voters have reasons for supporting/opposing a proposition and these do seem to echo themes in the campaigns themselves (Table 7 and 8). Voter reasoning does overlap with the reasons advanced in the campaigns themselves – or at least in the ballot pamphlet itself. To the extent that this is a causal relationship – and not simply a case of looking for patterns where none exist – then this does suggest a more useful role for campaigns than many commentators allow: a role of persuasion based on arguments.

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course this argument does not address the possibility of the reverse effect: low trust drives initiative use.

<sup>8</sup> For example, some work has looked at the rhetorical structure of YES and NO arguments – as opposed to the effects of money – that may work to privilege the NO side (Murphy et al 2012).

## **Conclusion**

There are two broad conclusions that may be made from this study. First, many voters do seem able to make a decision about which way to vote – often with very little information and without cues. Whether this is ‘correct’ voting or not is a different question. The first order puzzle is whether voters can navigate the demands of direct democracy and the answer seems to be yes. To repeat an earlier point, this conclusion suggests that both critics and supporters of direct democracy over-state the difficulty of reaching decisions.

Second, it is the case that some voters cannot navigate the demands of the system or of some specific propositions. There seems to be reason to think that dislike of direct democracy is not related in a very specific way to these difficulties in any causal way to dislike of the demands of direct democracy. The “don’t knows” are generally a small proportion of the total vote and, in general, don’t know is reflective of a “don’t care” attitude rather than an attitude that says “I care but can’t find what I need to make a decision”. We would add to this group those voters who simply do not care not just about politics but also about the specific issue at hand.

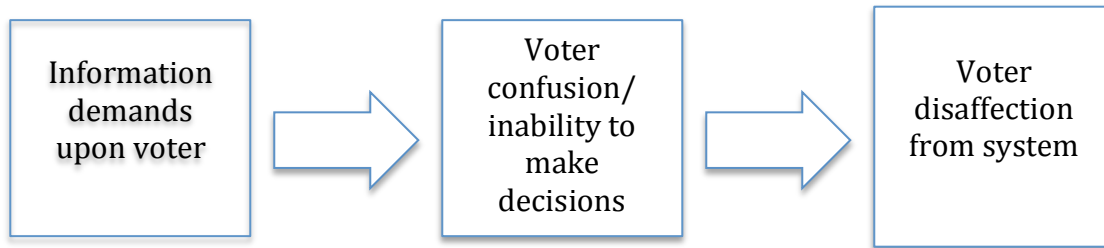
In sum, it seems easy to over-state the difficulties voters face when asked to make a decision on ballot propositions.

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**Figure 1 Information processes and direct democracy**



**Table 1 Effects of being unhappy with level of information**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Too many measures on the ballot	Wording of proposals is confusing	How happy to vote on the proposals	Voting on proposals made R feel better/worse about state politics	Not vote on X of the 4 proposals – Version 1 (Poisson count)	Not vote on X of the 4 proposals – Version 2 (Poisson count)
Democrat	-0.193*** (-3.68)	-0.00582 (-0.07)	0.0443 (0.93)	-0.147 (-1.46)	0.366 (1.48)	0.143 (1.63)
Independent	-0.0994 (-1.19)	0.0224 (0.25)	-0.102 (-1.42)	-0.0200 (-0.14)	0.162 (0.56)	0.114 (0.86)
Any information	-0.0681 (-1.39)	0.00152 (0.02)	-0.0966 (-1.77)	-0.0737 (-1.21)	-0.125 (-0.79)	-0.145* (-2.07)
Dissatisfied with information	-0.166*** (-3.67)	-0.257*** (-10.10)	0.395*** (12.96)	0.330*** (11.44)	0.313*** (3.53)	0.197*** (5.90)
Female	-0.148* (-2.15)	-0.175** (-2.93)	0.0294 (0.55)	-0.0592 (-1.07)	-0.214 (-1.23)	0.239*** (3.84)
Spanish language	-0.410***	0.0122	-0.0933	-0.492***	-0.422	0.0771



	(-4.17)	(0.12)	(-0.83)	(-4.00)	(-1.12)	(0.65)
Age	-0.122*** (-6.52)	-0.121*** (-4.84)	0.0708** (3.16)	0.0338 (1.36)	-0.120 (-1.74)	-0.0839*** (-3.72)
Education	-0.00432 (-0.15)	0.0340 (1.22)	0.0987** (3.12)	0.0847*** (3.67)	0.0831 (0.78)	-0.0356 (-0.95)
Level of interest in politics	-0.00384 (-0.12)	-0.0400 (-0.90)	0.0444 (1.35)	-0.00174 (-0.05)	0.476*** (5.40)	0.308*** (6.14)
_cons					-3.265*** (-6.95)	-1.248*** (-7.68)
cut1						
_cons	-1.897*** (-10.28)	-1.496*** (-6.71)	0.513* (2.27)	0.107 (0.42)		
cut2						
_cons	-1.111*** (-5.58)	-0.512* (-2.31)	1.794*** (8.17)	1.999*** (7.84)		
cut3						
_cons	-0.0434 (-0.23)	0.306 (1.30)	2.052*** (9.23)			
cut4						
_cons			2.939*** (12.93)			
<i>N</i>	1876	1888	1853	1861	1911	1911
pseudo <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.023	0.029	0.038	0.043	.	.

*t* statistics in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

source: PPIC post-election survey November 2010



**Table 2: Substantive effects of being unhappy with information on evaluations of direct democracy**

*Change in probability of being happy about having to vote on the issues by level of satisfaction with information*

Level of satisfaction with information	Happy	Unhappy
Very Satisfied	.27	.03
Somewhat Satisfied	.15	.07
Not too Satisfied	.08	.15
Not at all satisfied	.03	.26

*Change in probability of being made to feel better/worse about state politics by level of satisfaction with information*

Level of satisfaction with information	Better	Worse
Very Satisfied	.30	.08
Somewhat Satisfied	.20	.14
Not too Satisfied	.12	.23
Not at all satisfied	.06	.34

**Source: Table 1**

**Table 3 Predicting who is unhappy with information (ordered Probit model)**

	(1) q12
Democrat	0.0846 (0.96)
Independent	0.0801 (0.74)
Issues are unimportant (count)	0.130* (2.01)
Female	0.0615 (1.21)
Spanish	-0.106 (-0.82)
CA on wrong track	0.253*** (3.72)
Age 18 to 24	-0.270 (-1.54)
Age 25 to 34	0.108 (1.13)
Age 35 to 44	0.108 (1.29)
Age 45 to 54	-0.0602 (-0.80)
Age 54 to 64	0.0144 (0.15)
Education	-0.0421 (-1.71)
Level of interest in politics	0.149*** (4.59)
cut1 _cons	-0.172 (-1.05)
cut2 _cons	1.269*** (7.69)

---

cut3	
_cons	2.044***
	(10.94)

---

<i>N</i>	1911
pseudo <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.017

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*t* statistics in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

source: PPIC post-election survey November 2010

**Table 4 Predicting who is unhappy with level of information**

*Effect of interest in propositions on probability of being satisfied with information available*

<b>Not care about X propositions</b>	<b>Probability of being "Very satisfied" with information</b>	<b>Probability of being "Not at all satisfied" with information</b>
<b>0</b>	.29	.04
<b>1</b>	.24	.06
<b>2</b>	.20	.08
<b>3</b>	.17	.10
<b>4</b>	.14	.12

*Effect of those who do not care about propositions on probability of being satisfied with information available*

<b>How much interest do you have in politics</b>	<b>Probability of being "Very satisfied" with information</b>	<b>Probability of being "Not at all satisfied" with information</b>
<b>Great deal</b>	.32	.03
<b>Fair amount</b>	.27	.05
<b>Only a little</b>	.22	.07
<b>None</b>	.18	.09
		.

## **Table 5 How voters learned about the ballot propositions**

People learned about the ballot propositions a number of different ways. What way did you find the most helpful in deciding how to vote on the nine state propositions?

34% Official Voter Information Guide and sample ballot  
19 Internet  
9 Internet in general  
4 Internet news sites  
3 official proposition sites  
3 voter resource sites  
14 advertisements—radio, television, newspaper, mail  
12 news and media coverage—radio, television, newspaper  
6 newspaper endorsements—columns, editorials  
5 opinions of friends, family, coworkers  
2 endorsements of interest groups, politicians, celebrities  
4 something/someone else  
4 don't know

source: PPIC post-election surveys 2010



**Table 6 Information search by voters**

	(1) Engage in information search	(2) Rely on others (endorsements/a ds)	(3) Rely on ballot pamphlet	(4) Ads
Democrat	0.158** (2.64)	-0.0625 (-0.91)	0.0181 (0.24)	-0.119 (-1.31)
Independent	0.0809 (0.74)	-0.0831 (-0.98)	0.0807 (0.85)	-0.0606 (-0.74)
Female	-0.145** (-2.79)	0.0890 (1.27)	0.0498 (0.59)	0.132 (1.80)
Spanish	0.0388 (0.25)	0.526*** (4.04)	-0.492** (-2.89)	0.742*** (4.38)
Age	-0.150*** (-5.72)	0.116*** (3.52)	0.0466 (1.56)	0.0841* (2.02)
Education	0.00739 (0.28)	0.00226 (0.07)	0.0230 (0.59)	-0.0776* (-1.99)
Level of interest in politics	-0.191*** (-3.80)	0.152*** (4.16)	0.0471 (0.83)	0.116*** (3.42)

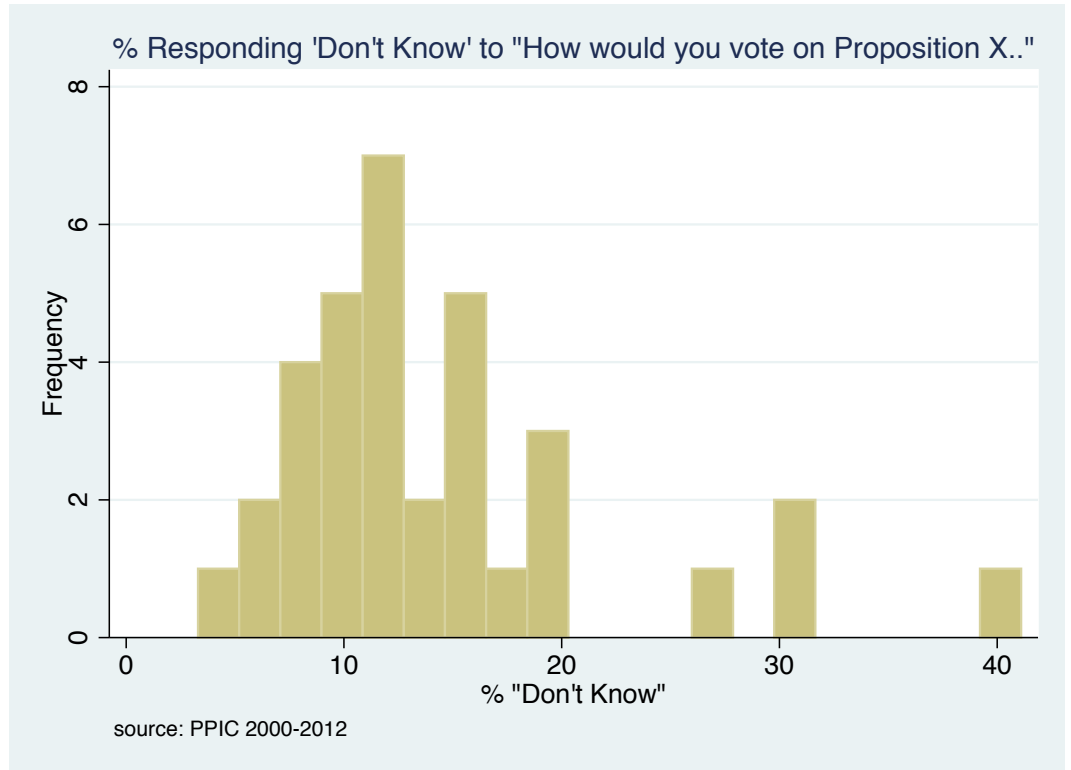
Unhappy with information	-0.0719*	-0.00356	-0.0241	0.00914
	(-1.98)	(-0.09)	(-0.43)	(0.15)
constant	0.580**	-1.399***	-0.743**	-1.455***
	(2.79)	(-6.83)	(-3.13)	(-5.97)
<hr/>				
<i>N</i>	1911	1911	1911	1902
pseudo <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.037	0.030	0.009	0.047
<hr/>				

*t* statistics in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

source: PPIC post-election survey November 2010

**Figure 2**



## **Table 7 Reasons for voting for Proposition 19**

Proposition 19 was called the “Legalizes Marijuana Under California but Not Federal Law. Permits Local Governments to Regulate and Tax Commercial Production, Distribution, and Sale of Marijuana. Initiative Statute.” Did you vote yes or no on this measure?

Why did you vote yes?

29% allows for the taxation of marijuana; tax revenue will help with budget deficit

12 personal freedom; same as drinking; not a big deal

11 frees up police/courts to do other things; police/courts should not waste their time on marijuana

10 less crime; less drug violence

9 it's the right thing to do; it is important

7 allows for regulation of marijuana

5 helps with the economy

4 decriminalization/should not be illegal

3 black market/drug cartels will be limited or weakened

9 some other reason

1 don't know

source: PPIC post-election survey 2010

Table 8: Ballot Pamphlet arguments on marijuana

## ARGUMENTS

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**PRO** COMMON SENSE CONTROL OF MARIJUANA. Stops wasting taxpayer dollars on failed marijuana prohibition. Controls and taxes marijuana like alcohol. Makes marijuana available *only* to adults. Adds criminal penalties for giving it to anyone under 21. Weakens drug cartels. Enforces road and workplace safety. Generates billions in revenue. Saves taxpayers money.

**CON** Opposed by Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) because allows drivers to smoke marijuana until the moment they climb behind the wheel. Endangers public safety. Jeopardizes \$9,400,000,000.00 in school funding, billions in federal contracts, thousands of jobs. Opposed by California's Sheriffs, Police Chiefs, Firefighters and District Attorneys. Vote "No" on 19.

**Table 9 Predicting “Don’t know” s**

	(1) Don’t know how to vote on propositions (Count measure)	(2) Don’t know who to vote for governor	(3) Don’t know how to vote on propositions (Count measure)
Democrat	0.0802 (1.21)	-0.0445 (-0.25)	0.0915 (1.60)
Independent	0.173 (1.66)	0.200 (1.12)	0.165 (1.71)
Age 18 to 24	-0.220 (-1.00)	0.577** (3.26)	-0.285 (-1.28)
Age 25 to 34	0.116 (0.74)	0.627*** (3.40)	0.0524 (0.37)
Age 35 to 44	-0.00761 (-0.05)	0.450* (2.22)	-0.0371 (-0.25)
Age 45 to 54	0.0113 (0.15)	0.300 (1.31)	-0.0295 (-0.44)
Age 54 to 64	-0.0477 (-0.49)	0.137 (0.79)	-0.0580 (-0.62)

Education	0.0690* (2.28)	-0.126* (-2.26)	0.0826** (2.85)
Spanish	-0.00763 (-0.06)	-0.226 (-0.86)	0.0172 (0.15)
Female	0.472*** (6.10)	0.0680 (0.44)	0.493*** (7.27)
“Don’t know” how important the issues are (count)	0.586*** (23.82)	0.155* (2.56)	0.581*** (25.19)
Issues are unimportant (count)	0.0277 (0.26)	-0.00289 (-0.02)	0.0400 (0.41)
Level of interest in politics	0.0890* (2.25)	0.352*** (4.44)	0.0446 (1.06)
Don’t know who to vote for governor			0.448*** (4.66)
_cons	-1.458*** (-8.38)	-2.408*** (-10.22)	-1.511*** (-8.98)
<hr/> <i>N</i>	1573	1573	1573
<hr/> <i>pseudo R<sup>2</sup></i>	.	.	.

*t* statistics in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

sample; Registered voters on PPIC October 2010

## Appendix A Coding of measures

Source: PPIC post-election survey December 2010 and the pre-election November 2010 “Californian and Their Government” series, Data, codebook and report are available from [www.ppic.org](http://www.ppic.org)

Note: Models are weighted (see codebook) and standard errors are clustered by county

Democrat	0,1	1= Democrat id (registration for “don’t know” table)
Independent	0,1	1= Independent id (registration for “don’t know” table)
Female	0,1	1= female, 0=male
Spanish	0,1	1= survey conducted in Spanish, 0= conducted in English
Age categories	0,1	dummy variable for that category. As a variable the categories are combined into one scale 1-6
Education	1 to 5	1= some high school....5= post-graduate
Level of interest in politics	1 to 4	1=great deal of interest...4=none
Don’t know who to vote for governor	0,1	1= don’t know who to vote for for governor, 0=knows who to vote
“Don’t know” how important the issues are (count)	0 to 4	On how many of the 4 ballot issues R said “don’t know” how important they are
Issues are unimportant (count)	0 to 4	On how many of the 4 ballot issues R said they are unimportant
Don’t know how	0 to 4	On how many of the 4 ballot issues



to vote on propositions (count)		R said "don't know" how they would vote
Any information	0,1	Did R have any news or information about the state propositions
Dissatisfied with information	0,1	1= not at all satisfied with the information R had to make choice over ballot props
CA on wrong track	0,1	1= believe CA to be on wrong track
Too many measures on the ballot	1-4	1=strongly agree,,,4=strongly disagree
Wording of initiatives on the ballot too confusing	1-4	1=strongly agree,,,4=strongly disagree
Happy about having to vote on the issues	1-5	1= very happy....5=very unhappy
Did voting on propositions make R feel better or worse about CA propositions	1-3	1= better, 2=no different, 3=worse
Not vote 1 (count)	0-4	Count of how many propositions R did not vote on
Not vote 2 (count)	0-4	Count of how many propositions R did not vote on/ did not remember how they voted