Accountability in State Legislatures:

How Parties Perform in Office and State Legislative Elections

Job Market Paper

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Abstract

Theories of political accountability suggest that governing parties and their members should be electorally punished when they perform poorly in office. However, I find little evidence of this type of accountability in state legislatures. State legislative elections are not referendums on state legislators' own performance but are instead dominated by national politics. Presidential evaluations and the national economy matter more for state legislators' elections than state-level economic conditions, state policy outcomes, or voters' assessments of the legislature. Previous analyses of state legislative elections fail to consider which party controls the state legislature and whether voters know this information. When accounting for these factors, I discover that even when the legislature performs well, misinformed voters mistakenly reward the minority party. Thus, while state legislatures wield considerable policy-making power, elections are ineffective in holding state legislative parties accountable for their own performance and lawmaking.

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In the 2010 elections, Republicans took control of the U.S. House, but fifteen state legislative chambers also changed party hands. Democrats' poor showings in state legislative races followed their considerable successes in 2006 and 2008. Across these two earlier elections, Democrats gained state house seats in all but seven states. It seems unlikely that Democratic state legislative parties performed so poorly in 2010 after doing so well such a short time before. Regardless, hundreds of state legislative Democrats lost their jobs nationwide.

The apparent vulnerability of state legislators to national political tides brings into question how much state representatives' electoral fates have to do with how they perform in office. Elections provide voters an opportunity to hold those in power accountable, establishing a fundamental connection between citizens and elites that can potentially motivate elected officials' behavior. When state legislators consider legalizing gay marriage or curbing collective bargaining rights, theories of elections suggest looming judgments at the ballot box create incentives for legislators to act in voters' interests (e.g. Federalist 52; Key 1966; Arnold 1992). The premise of this expectation is that voters will replace a policymaker who fails to perform, but in low-information elections such as those for the state legislature, it is difficult for voters to evaluate their legislator's performance (Wolfson 1985; Layton 1998).

Party labels and retrospective voting offer simplicity to the accountability process (Schattschneider 1942; Fiorina 1981). Instead of holding representatives accountable for their individual behavior, voters can assess the parties in power and hold their members collectively accountable. Political scientists have given considerable attention to studying collective accountability in federal elections in the United States (e.g. Tufte 1975; Jacobson 1989; Jones and McDermott 2004) but scarcely consider whether the performance of state legislative parties affects electoral outcomes. More fundamentally, prior work ignores basic requirements of retrospective voting, such as voters knowing which party is in charge of the state legislature. If voters cannot credibly reward or punish the incumbent government, it is

unclear whether fundamental theories of electoral accountability successfully apply to state legislatures.

To assess the extent to which elections create incentives for representation in state legislatures, I examine state legislative elections since the early 1970s. My analyses of election results and surveys produce very little evidence of accountability. I find state legislative contests are relatively insensitive to voters' evaluations of the legislature or measures of state policy performance, such as economic growth or crime reduction. Elections instead are largely determined by factors outside of state representatives' control. National conditions are more influential than state conditions, and presidential rather than state legislative approval drives outcomes in state legislative elections. Misinformation further complicates the accountability process as some voters reward the minority instead of the majority party even when they approve of the legislature's performance. The behavior of misinformed voters and the prominent role that evaluations of federal actors play in state legislative elections cast doubt that these contests effectively hold state legislative parties electorally accountable for their own performance.

## Requirements for Electoral Accountability

Theories of political accountability suggest that those in government should be electorally punished when they perform poorly in office. Otherwise, incumbents have little incentive to act in voters' interests, creating a moral hazard (Ferejohn 1986; but see also Fearon 1999). In the context of state legislatures, if a state legislator provides poor representation by supporting undesirable policies or otherwise failing to perform, voters can hold this representative accountable by voting against her in the next election. However, there is limited evidence that voters hold state legislators accountable for how they represent their individual districts (Hogan 2008; Rogers 2013). Further diminishing the prospects for district-level accountability, less than a fourth of voters know who their state legislator is yet

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alone what their individual representative is doing from day to day (Jewell 1982; Vanderbilt Poll 2012).

To make the accountability process easier, voters can rely on party labels and reward or punish legislators for their collective behavior. By connecting a party's performance in office to its members' electoral success, this behavior establishes a system of partisan collective accountability consistent with theories of retrospective voting (Key 1966; Fiorina 1981). If followed, it implies members of the state house majority party need to seek voters' approval to avoid being replaced. Retrospection simplifies the accountability process (Downs 1957), but to hold state legislative parties accountable, voters must satisfy two conditions. A voter must "know who is responsible for making policy" and "cast a meaningful vote for or against the policymakers" (Powell 2000: 51).

The first condition for accountability concerns "clarity of responsibility." Without knowing which party is responsible for policy outcomes, it is difficult for voters to correctly attribute retrospective evaluations. For example, divided government (Fiorina 1995; Nicholson and Segura 1999) and federalism (Downs 1999; Cutler 2004) can obscure who is responsible for policy and subsequently diminish levels of electoral accountability. In state legislative elections, failure to have clarity of responsibility is prevalent. Figure 1 shows that while a majority of voters can identify who controls higher levels of federal and state government, most cannot correctly name which party controls the state house. This brings into question whether enough voters have "clarity of responsibility" to produce effective accountability through state legislative elections. It is not clear how an uninformed voter would use elections to motivate the incumbent government to act in his interest. Misinformed voters could even credit parties for outcomes not attributable to them, potentially punishing

Figure 1: Voter Knowledge of the Partisan Control of Political Institutions
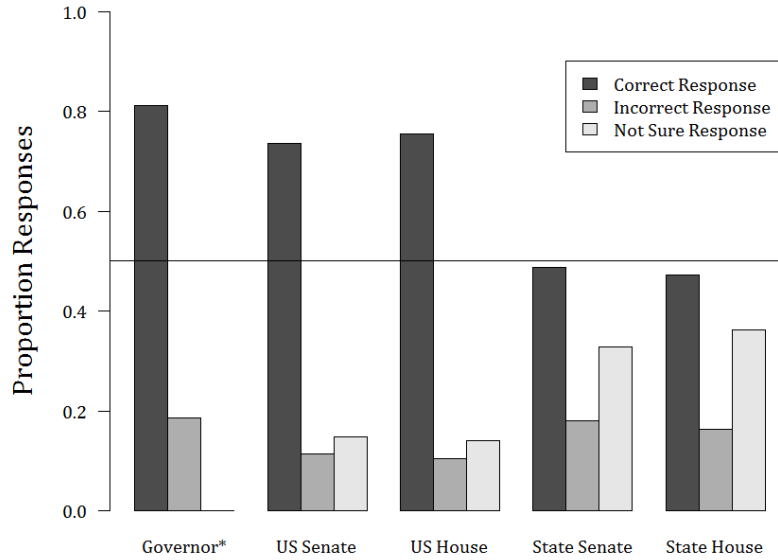

Bars illustrate the proportion of Correct, Incorrect, and Not Sure responses regarding which party controls various political institutions, listed on the X-Axis. Sample is registered voters from the October 2010 ANES Evaluations of Government and Society Study. *'Not sure' was not given as a response option for the Governor's party identification question.

governments that performed well. This misinformed retrospective behavior would weaken, rather than, strengthen accountability in state legislatures.[1]

Theories of accountability additionally require there be a "meaningful" relationship between votes and performance, but *national* tides in *state* legislative elections cast doubt that this electoral connection exists. For example despite state legislatures addressing issues independent of one another, Democrats lost seats in all but three legislatures in 1994, and in 1974, Republicans lost seats in all but five. Health care reforms or Watergate may explain the outcomes of federal elections in these years, but state legislators had little or nothing to do with these federal events. State legislative parties, meanwhile, appear to be punished along with their federal counterparts. The similarity between the success of state and federal legislative parties over time is striking. Figure 2 illustrates this relationship by comparing

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[1]Legislators appear to be aware that voters do not know who to blame for poor policymaking. When asked by the 2012 National Candidate Survey, only 15% of state legislators agreed with the statement: "Voters know who in government to blame for policies they do not like" (Broockman 2013).

Figure 2: Democratic Seat Change in State House and U.S. House Elections
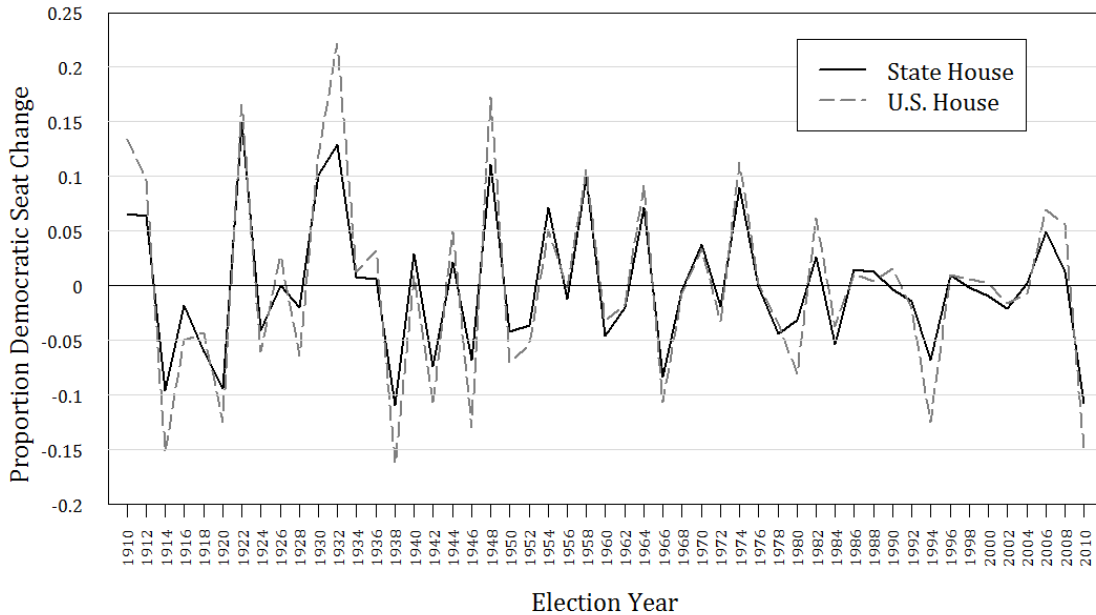
Nationwide proportion of seats won or lost by the Democratic party in state house or U.S. House elections over the last hundred years.

nationwide Democratic seat changes in state and federal legislative elections. In all but four elections in the last hundred years, the party that gained seats in Congress also made net gains in state legislatures.

This pattern in election outcomes could reflect at least two types of voter behavior. Voters may either use state legislative elections to punish political actors outside of the legislature or heuristically rely on evaluations of party figureheads when making decisions in state legislative contests. An example of the first type of behavior would be voters using state legislative elections to repudiate an unpopular governor, similar to how federal midterm elections are sometimes considered presidential referendums (e.g. Tufte 1975). By removing members of the governor's party from the state legislature, voters make it more difficult for a governor to accomplish her legislative agenda and thereby hold her accountable for poor performance. Voters may also use state legislative elections to express their displeasure with the White House or punish the President (Piketty 2000; Kellerman 2008). Before modern

polling, presidents commonly used state elections to assess trends in the electorate (Geer 1996). If the president's party loses state legislative elections, it not only reflects poorly on this party but can also be detrimental to accomplishing the President's goals. Following the 2010 elections, President Obama was likely displeased with losing 680 state legislative co-partisans before congressional redistricting or the implementation of "Obamacare."

Instead of punishing the governor or president, the pattern in Figure 2 may alternatively be explained by voters relying on assessments of party figureheads when formulating opinions of more obscure state legislators. Evaluations of political executives are usually more certain than their assessments of the state legislature. For example, twice as many respondents to the 2008 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) were "Not sure" whether they approved of their state legislature (20.8%) as compared to their governor (9.8%). With undefined views of the state legislature, voters could heuristically turn to their more accessible evaluation of the governor for a broader state party evaluation (Tversky and Kahneman 1974; Kahneman and Frederick 2002; see also Gabaix and Laibson 2005). Similarly, someone who knows little about state politics may rely on evaluations of national party figures. Only 1.6% of CCES respondents were "Not sure" whether they approved of President Bush, potentially giving nearly every voter an assessment of Republicans albeit from the federal level.

This analysis does not disentangle whether voters intentionally use their state legislative votes to reward or punish the governor or president, or simply rely on evaluations of party figureheads as heuristics in evaluating less salient elected officials. In either case, the implication for accountability in state legislatures is the same: state legislators lack strong incentives to act in their constituents' interests. Voting against the governor's party in state legislative elections may help hold the governor accountable, but state representatives themselves often have little control over gubernatorial performance. And they have even less

control over the performance of the president.[2] Thus, to the extent that state legislative elections are driven by presidential politics, they become "second-order" elections analogous to European Parliament elections, in which votes are cast "on the basis of factors in the main political arena of the nation" (Reif & Schmitt 1980: 9). Second-order elections are unlikely to serve what is presumably elections' first-order purpose - to hold state legislators accountable for their own performance.

The connection between state legislators' collective performance and electoral outcomes, however, is largely unknown. In studies of parties in state legislative elections, the governor is the center of attention (Bailey and Fullmer 2011; Chubb 1988; Hogan 2005; Lowry, Alt, and Ferree 1998; see also Besley and Case 2003).[3] Similarly, work on federalism finds that national conditions influence regional elections (Anderson and Ward 1996; Glienau and Blanger 2005; Leigh and Mcleish 2009; Rodden and Wibbels 2011; see also Erikson and Filippov 2001; Kedar 2006; Leon 2012; Martins and Veiga 2013) but never considers the party in control of the state legislature in the U.S. system (Berry, Berkman, and Schneiderman 2000; Campbell 1986; Chubb 1988). Existing research additionally does not account for voters' evaluations or knowledge regarding their state legislature.[4]

To determine the degree to which theories' of political accountability and retrospective voting predictions bear out in state legislative elections, I test the hypothesis that the party

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[2]This lack of control in state legislative elections resembles that created by the attribution error in national and American gubernatorial elections (e.g. Patty and Weber 2007; Leigh 2009; Wolfers 2007; see also Remmer 2013).

[3]Lowry, Alt, and Feree (1998) focus on gubernatorial elections but do examine legislative seat change under divided government. In this related literature, findings are mixed regarding whether governors electorally benefit from strong state economies (Atkeson and Partin 1995; Carsey and Wright 1998; Ebeid and Rodden 2006; Javian 2011; Stein 1990). Despite political psychology research arguing voters distinguish between presidential and gubernatorial responsibilities (Arceneaux 2006), Carsey and Wright (1998) and Javian (2011) discover national forces such as presidential approval influence gubernatorial contests.

[4]Some analyses include other assessment measures. Prior to Klarner's (2010) election forecasts, state legislative election work including a measure of presidential approval use aggregated dependent variables such as nationwide control of legislative chambers (Simon, Ostrom, and Marra 1991; Fiorina 1994) or straight ticket voting (Piereson 1975). Studies with gubernatorial approval employ limited samples and produce mixed results (Mayo 2004; Bailey and Fullmer 2011; Folke and Snyder 2012).

in control of the state house gains seats or votes following times of strong state-level performance or high approval of the state legislature. Evidence for this hypothesis suggests voters reward legislative parties that perform well and hold party members collectively accountable. To more systematically investigate the patterns suggested by Figure 2, I also examine the influence of non-legislative actors in state legislative elections. If voters sanction or heuristically draw on evaluations of prominent party figures in state legislative elections, I expect the governor's or president's co-partisans to lose seats or votes during times of weak performance and low gubernatorial or presidential approval. This analysis is the first to consider how the performances of both state legislative and federal actors affect legislative election outcomes.

I test these hypotheses using election results and surveys in two sets of analyses. I investigate how statewide party seat change in legislatures statistically relate to measures of both economic and non-economic performance. To complement this macro- or state-level examination of election outcomes, I use surveys to study the relationship between an individual's assessment of how the legislature performed and his voting decision. This micro-level analysis additionally illustrates the implications of voters incorrectly identifying which party controls their legislature and how this affects the incentives for the state house majority party to perform well. These macro and micro approaches complement one another to provide a fuller understanding of accountability in state legislative elections.

State-Level Analysis

If elections hold members of the state house majority party collectively accountable, theories of retrospective voting suggest voters should reward the majority party with more legislative seats after their policies produce good outcomes. To determine whether this is the case, I study how various measures of government performance are associated with party seat changes in state legislatures in the 1972 - 2010 elections. This macro-level approach resembles that of previous state legislative work (Chubb 1988) but differs in two key respects. First,

I assess the electoral success of the state house majority party in addition to the governor's and president's party to establish whether voters reward legislative parties independent of their affiliation with the governor or president. My dependent variables are the proportion change in state house seats for the state house majority, governor's, or president's party with observations at the state-year level (Dubin 2007; National Conference of State Legislatures).[5]

My analysis also differs from prior work on state legislative accountability in the measures of performance I examine. Previous research only explores the relationship between fiscal or economic variables and seat change, but I expand the focus to also consider how state governments perform managing other policy areas. Education expenditures typically are the second largest appropriation in state budgets, and state governments are responsible for a third of non-federal public safety spending (Barnett 2011). Thus, I investigate whether voters reward state legislators for a state's improved educational performance or reduced crime. Following findings that governors are more likely to be elected after state taxes decrease (Besley and Case 1995; Kone and Winters 1993; Niemi, Stanley, and Vogel 1995), I additionally evaluate whether the party in control of the state legislature receives a similar electoral reward for reducing taxes.

To capture economic performance, the analysis presented below relies on the annual change in logged real disposable income at the state and national levels, but results are similar with unemployment or GDP measures (Table A-2).[6] For non-economic policy performances,

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[5]For example in Texas in 1998 under President Bill Clinton and Governor George W. Bush, the dependent variable for "President's Party" is the proportion change in Democratic seats in the Texas state house (-0.02), but the dependent variable for "Governor's Party" is the proportion change in Republican seats (0.02). I adjust control variables, such as change in congressional vote, to be consistent with the dependent variable.

Findings do not change when the dependent variable is Democratic party seat change and independent variables are economic measures interacted with the president's, governor's and state house majority party (Table A-1). Results are similar when examining state senate elections. Estimates available upon request.

[6]I convert disposable income data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis to 2010 real dollars using Consumer Price Index factors and estimate the annual change. Each state in a specific year receives the same measure of "Change in Logged National RDI," and each observation receives a specific state-year "Change in Logged State RDI" measure. Substantive results do not change when including lagged performance from previous years or when controlling for the structure of the economy (Ebeid and Rodden 2006).

I use the annual change in a state's homicide rate to measure state crime prevention (U.S. Department of Justice), and for education, I rely on the changes in a state's average SAT score (National Center for Education Statistics). Substantive results are similar when using changes in a state's crime index or performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress reading exam (Table A-3).[7] To capture state tax increases, I use the estimated change in the average state income tax rate as a percentage of adjusted growth income. Analyses in the main text use the percentage change in effective tax liabilities for $50,000 joint filers (National Bureau of Economic Research). Results are not sensitive to type of filing, level of income, or employing other measures of state taxes.[8] If voters punish legislators for a state's performance in economic or non-economic policy areas, I expect these measures to correlate with seat change for the majority party.

To investigate the extent to which the performance of governors influence state legislative elections, I conduct similar economic, crime, education, and tax policy analyses for the governor's party in the legislature. To assess presidential influences, I examine seat change for the president's state legislative party both as a function of economic performance and presidential approval. For presidential approval, I rely on the last national Gallup poll before the November election. This variable ranges from zero to one and assumes uniformity in presidential approval across states. Results are similar when using annual multi-level regression with post-stratification estimates of state-level presidential approval.[9]

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[7]Crime index, SAT, and NAEP data respectively cover the 1972 - 2008, 1988 - 2010, and 1998 - 2010 elections. I recenter SAT scores before 1995 to maintain comparability to contemporary scores. I thank Jason Grissom and Alex Bolton for pointing me to these education measures.

[8]These tax data cover two-year rate changes across the 1980 - 2010 elections. Results are similar when using changes in a state's maximum tax rate (1980 - 2010) or total state income, sales and corporate taxes collected per capita (1972 - 2010, US Statistical Abstract). Substantive results additionally do not change when using a dummy variable to indicate tax increases (Table A-3). A limitation of using tax increases to assess accountability is that most voters likely desire stronger economies, lower crime, and improved test scores, but some may want the state government to raise taxes to fund other programs.

[9]Estimates available upon request. I thank Marc Meredith for sharing these data.

I estimate the relationship between party seat changes and performance measures using Ordinary Least Squares regressions. Each estimation includes state fixed effects and two control variables. To account for coattail effects or surges in partisan turnout, I control for changes in a state's congressional vote. Unlike presidential, gubernatorial, or senatorial vote, this measure is consistently available in two year intervals as U.S. House elections closely follow most state house election calendars. To control for a party's electoral exposure, I also include a state legislative party's seat change in the previous election (Oppenheimer, Stimson, and Waterman 1986).[10]

Theories of political accountability predict that electorates will punish or reward those in government for how they perform, but the statistical analyses reported in Table 1 provide little evidence that this is the case in state legislative elections. The first three columns of this table show the relationships between measures of economic performance and changes in seats held by state house majority party. During prosperous state-level economies, voters do not reward the party in control of the state house. The relationship between changes in national real disposable income and state house majority party seats likewise is insignificant and in the unexpected direction. Analyses in the third column of Table 1, furthermore, suggest that members of majority party are not rewarded when their state's economy performs well relative to the national economy. These findings persist under conditions where one might expect to see greater levels of collective accountability in state legislatures, such as unified state governments, professional legislatures, or during midterm elections (Tables A-4, A-5, & A-6). Voters, therefore, do not seem to retrospectively reward state legislative parties for economic prosperity, providing these parties little electoral incentive to produce polices that stimulate the state economy.

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[10]The congressional vote control is not available for state legislative elections that occur in the "off-year." New Jersey, Virginia, Mississippi, Louisiana, and sometimes Kentucky, therefore, are excluded from the main analysis. Substantive results do not change when dropping this control and including these states. Results additionally are not sensitive to excluding the exposure control variable, a particular state or year, state fixed effects, or alternatively using year fixed effects and clustering standard errors by state.

Table 1: State House Majority Party Seat Change as a Function of Performance and Policy Measures

Performance Measure:	Econ.	Econ.	Econ.	Crime	Education	Taxes
Change in Logged State RDI	-0.022					
	(0.085)					
Change in Logged National RDI		-0.147				
		(0.129)				
State Economy Relative to National Economy			0.077			
			(0.115)			
Change in Homicide Rate				-0.002		
				(0.002)		
Change in Logged Average State SAT Score					-0.042	
					(0.076)	
Change in State Income Tax as Pct. of AGI						1.139
						(0.822)
Previous Seat Change	-0.184*	-0.184*	-0.182*	-0.184*	-0.187*	-0.153*
	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.041)	(0.037)
Congressional Vote Change	0.310*	0.311*	0.310*	0.311*	0.321*	0.299*
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.034)	(0.031)
Constant	-0.012	-0.010	-0.012	-0.014	-0.010	-0.009
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.018)	(0.017)
R-Squared	0.220	0.221	0.220	0.220	0.278	0.244
N	867	867	867	867	524	678

$^*p \leq .05$; Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses

OLS estimates of state house majority party seat change regressed on economic and non-economic performance measures. Data for economy regressions cover 1972 - 2010 elections, and non-economic regressions cover more recent elections as discussed in the main text. Observations are at the state-year level and estimations include state fixed effects. No performance or policy measure is statistically related to seat change for the party in control of the state house.

Voters also do not appear to hold legislative parties accountable for a state's performance in non-economic policy areas. The statistical analysis presented in the fourth column of Table 1 imply there is little relationship between changes in a state's homicide rate and seats won by the state house majority party.[11] Similarly, there is no statistical association between students' improvement on standardized tests and legislative seat change, as shown by the fifth column of Table 1. It, therefore, appears that even if a state legislature successfully implements effective education policies, the party in power receives little electoral reward. Unlike findings from gubernatorial elections, estimates in the final column of Table

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[11]Under divided state government, the state house majority party receives some reward for reductions in the homicide rate. A 1% drop in the homicide rate associates with a 0.8% increase in seats for state house majority parties that differ from the governor's party. This divided government result, however, is sensitive to the inclusion of the 1974 election. Estimates available upon request.

Table 2: Governor's Party Seat Change as a Function of Performance and Policy Measures

Performance Measure:	Econ.	Econ.	Econ.	Crime	Education	Taxes
Change in Logged State RDI	-0.051					
	(0.088)					
Change in Logged National RDI		0.013				
		(0.133)				
State Economy Relative to National Economy			-0.103			
			(0.119)			
Change in Homicide Rate				0.007*		
				(0.002)		
Change in Logged Average State SAT Score					-0.096	
					(0.079)	
Change in State Income Tax as Pct. of AGI						0.200
						(0.878)
Previous Seat Change	-0.244*	-0.245*	-0.244*	-0.244*	-0.253*	-0.228*
	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.032)	(0.041)	(0.038)
Congressional Vote Change	0.299*	0.298*	0.300*	0.300*	0.317*	0.297*
	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.035)	(0.033)
Constant	0.009	0.008	0.008	0.015	-0.013	0.004
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.018)
R-Squared	0.195	0.195	0.196	0.203	0.259	0.186
N	861	861	861	861	518	672

$^*p \leq .05$; Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses

OLS estimates of Governor's party seat change regressed on economic and non-economic performance measures. Data for economy regressions cover 1972 - 2010 elections, and non-economic regressions cover more recent elections as discussed in the main text. Observations are at the state-year level and estimations include state fixed effects.

1 suggest there is little relationship between state tax increases and seat change for the party in control of the state house.

Findings are similar when examining seat change for the governor's party in state legislative elections. As shown by the statistical analyses in Table 2, the governor's party does not systematically gain seats in the state house when the state economy prospers, crime falls, test scores rise, or taxes decrease. State legislative elections, therefore, do not seem to be referendum on the state executive and appear ineffective at holding state parties accountable for both economic and non-economic policymaking.

Whereas state parties' performances seem to have little electoral relevance, national conditions are a driving force in state legislative elections. The statistical analyses offered by Table 3 provide strong evidence that voters collectively reward members of the president's

Table 3: President's Party Seat Change as a Function of Presidential Approval and Economic Performance

Performance Measure:	Pres. Approval	National Economy	State Economy	All
Presidential Approval	0.144*			0.073*
	(0.025)			(0.028)
Change in Logged National RDI		0.934*		0.750*
		(0.121)		(0.192)
Change in Logged State RDI			0.406*	0.005
			(0.092)	(0.126)
Previous Seat Change	-0.327*	-0.312*	-0.310*	-0.322*
	(0.077)	(0.077)	(0.079)	(0.077)
Congressional Vote Change	0.225*	0.220*	0.250*	0.208*
	(0.037)	(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.036)
Constant	-0.110*	-0.054	-0.043	-0.088*
	(0.036)	(0.035)	(0.034)	(0.037)
R-Squared	0.248	0.267	0.240	0.273
N	867	867	867	867

$^*p \leq .05$; Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses

OLS estimates of the proportion change in state house seats for the president's party regressed on economic performance and presidential approval measures. Data cover the 1972 - 2010 elections. Observations are at the state-year level and estimations include state fixed effects.

party in state legislative elections when the president is popular or the national economy is strong. Results presented in the second column of this table suggest that national income growth of 2% approximately associates with a 1.8% change in seats, accounting for over a third of the average party seat swing in state legislative contests. The comparison of economic estimates from the second and third columns of Table 3 demonstrate that similar to other federal systems national rather than state economic conditions are more influential in regional legislative elections (e.g. Gelineau and Blanger 2005; Leigh and Mcleish 2009; Remmer and Glineau 2003).

A similar relationship emerges when using a more direct measure of voters' evaluations of presidential performance. A 10% increase in presidential approval corresponds to a 1.4% change in state house seats. The association between seat change in state legislatures and presidential approval is robust to institutional contexts such as divided government and is not isolated to a few states. When regressing president's party seat change on presidential approval in separate OLS estimations by state, positive relationships emerge in over forty

states (Figure A-1). Even when controlling for economic conditions, presidential approval correlates with state legislative election outcomes, as shown by the final column of Table 3.

The statistical analyses presented in Table 3 suggest that events entirely beyond the control of state representatives, such as presidential scandals, influence the outcomes of state legislative elections (Kernell 1978). Meanwhile, the results presented in Table 1 imply that effective state legislative policymaking produces little in the way of electoral rewards. Together, these analyses suggest that state legislative elections are unlikely to produce the curb on moral hazards envisioned in theories of political accountability.

Individual-Level Analysis

The state-level analysis suggests that state legislative elections do not hold the state house majority party accountable for its performance but instead appear to be largely national affairs. This interpretation of state-level findings presumes that economic performance shapes evaluations of elected officials and voters know who to reward or punish. However, objective measures of economic performance do not always translate into subjective assessments of government (De Boef and Kellstedt 2004), and many voters do not know who controls their legislature (Figure 1). Examining the relationship between income growth and seat changes demonstrates how actual performance associates with election outcomes (Kramer 1983), but a more micro-level analysis that relaxes assumptions regarding individual voters' knowledge of the legislature is necessary for a comprehensive study of partisan accountability in state legislatures (Krause 1997).

To conduct such a study, I examine surveys that asked registered voters about their state legislatures. I first investigate whether individuals report voting for the state house majority party when they believe the legislature is doing a good job, as predicted by theories of political accountability. This largely replicates the state-level study at the individual-level but without relying on objective measures of performance or aggregated election outcomes.

The second part of the individual-level analysis accounts for levels of voter information and investigates whether voters punish or reward the party they believe controls the legislature. This addresses the extent to which voters try to hold state legislative parties accountable even if they lack information about who is in charge.

These investigations employ two sets of surveys. To study elections across the country, I rely on the 2008 and 2010 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES). *YouGov Polimetrix* conducted these online surveys in two waves, interviewing the same respondents in October and November. In the first wave, individuals were asked who controlled their state legislative chambers and whether they approved of the state legislature. In the second wave, respondents stated how they voted in their state legislative elections. To complement these recent nationwide surveys and examine elections since the 1970s, I use New Jersey state polls conducted by the Eagleton Institute of Politics. New Jersey state elections occur in the "off-year" (e.g. 2007 or 2009) separate from federal elections and presumably should be less sensitive to federal influences such as coattail effects.

In these analyses of surveys, the dependent variable of interest is state house vote choice. For the CCES surveys, I code respondents' Republican and Democrat reported vote choices respectively 0 and 1.[12] I estimate how vote choice varies as a function of voters' approval ratings of their state legislature, governor, and president while controlling for a respondent's party identification.[13] On the CCES, voters indicated their approval

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[12]2008 and 2010 surveys asked, "For whom did you vote for in the state legislative elections" in the respondent's lower chamber. In 2008, individuals could select a "Not Sure" response, but in 2010, this option was unavailable. To simplify presentation, I focus on registered voters who gave a definitive Democrat or Republican response. Findings are similar when including "Not Sure" responses in a multinomial probit estimation. Estimates available upon request.

[13]A potential limitation of this survey analysis is that voters' reported approval ratings may be influenced by their vote choice (Wlezien, Franklin, and Twiggs 1997; Linn, Nagler, and Morales 2010). If voters' decisions in state legislative elections affect their reported approval of the legislature, the following estimates will overstate the relationship between state legislative approval and vote choice.

The seven-point party ID measure provided by the CCES does not account for possible dual-party identification (Jennings and Niemi 1966) Most voters do not have dual-party identifications. The considerable variation in state and national parties' ideology, however, may limit partisanship's effectiveness in voting decisions (Shor and McCarty 2011).

rating of these political actors on a five-point scale ranging from "Strongly disapprove" to "Strongly approve," which I code from -2 to 2. To maintain consistency with the dependent variable, positive values denote approving of a Democrat state legislature. For example, if a respondent strongly approved of a legislature with a Democrat state house majority party, "State Legislative Approval" receives a value of 2, but if Republicans held the majority, this variable receives a value of -2. I create similar variables for gubernatorial and presidential approval. Substantive findings are similar when either using dummy variables for approval levels instead of a cardinal measure or substituting voters' assessments of the economy for their approval ratings of political actors.

Similar to the state-level analysis, this research design presumes that individuals know which party to retrospectively reward for good performance. As illustrated by Figure 1, many voters, however, cannot identify the party controlling their legislature and therefore lack clarity of responsibility. Misinformed voters may still act retrospectively and try to hold legislative parties accountable, but they could punish or reward the wrong party. In the context of the state-level analysis, an incumbent legislative party that effectively manages the economy or education policy then may not receive a full electoral reward for their performance. Put differently, voters may try to use elections to sanction but fail to do so due to misinformation, and the null relationships between seat change and the performance measures in Table 1 could be attributable to voters lacking clarity of responsibility.

To better understand the implications of low levels of voter information in state legislative elections, I additionally examine whether voters punish or reward the legislative parties they believe are in power. This second component of the individual-level analysis resembles the first but takes advantage of a political knowledge question in the CCES survey. The survey asked respondents which party they thought controlled the state house. With this variable, I adjust a voter's approval rating to account for which party they *believed* was in control of the state house instead of which party *actually* controlled the state house. For ex-

ample if a voter strongly approved of their legislature's performance and believed Democrats controlled the state house, "State Legislative Approval (Belief)" receives a value of 2. If the same voter instead thought Republicans controlled the state house, this variable then receives a value of -2. Coefficients on these measures shed light on whether voters try to hold state legislative parties accountable. I perform similar knowledge adjustments for gubernatorial approval. Due to the lack of a presidential party knowledge question, I assume voters knew Bush in 2008 was a Republican and Obama in 2010 was a Democrat.

Before proceeding to statistical results, potential limitations of the individual-level analysis deserve attention. The CCES surveys allow me to examine the relationship between voters' legislative evaluations and their electoral decisions, but the nationwide CCES samples are wealthier, better educated, and more politically interested than the general population. They also more often identify the parties in power and therefore may be better able to hold state legislators collectively accountable. CCES respondents, however, are still less likely to correctly identify the state house majority party than the governor's or federal legislative parties. To account for some of these differences, I employ sample weights provided by the CCES that account for age, education, gender, race, and turnout.[14]

To examine the relationship between a voter's evaluations of political actors, party identification, and vote choice, I use a weighted probit analysis. Positive relationships between state legislative approval and vote choice serve as evidence that voters who approve

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[14]Measurement assumptions further limit the analysis. I assume approving of a Democratic state legislature is the same as disapproving of a Republican state legislature. To investigate whether results are sensitive to this assumption, I estimate the models with unadjusted approval variables on data subset by who respondents thought controlled the governorship and state house. Conclusions do not change. Since the state legislative approval question does not specifically ask about the state house or senate, I assume a respondent's approval rating is the same across both chambers. Conclusions do not change when data is subset to those who thought the same party controlled both legislative chambers, which makes this assumption less concerning unless respondents have different opinions regarding state senate and state house Democrats. There are a considerable number of "Not sure" responses to the governor and state legislative approval and knowledge questions, and I code these responses as a middle category to reflect uncertainty regarding whether the respondent disapproves or approves of these political actors. "Not sure" respondents may have answered correctly if given different closed item responses (Mondak 1999: 72). Main conclusions do not change when omitting "Not sure" respondents. All estimates available upon request.

Table 4: State House Vote Choice as a Function of Approval Ratings & Party ID

Election Year:	2008	2008	2010	2010
State Legislative Approval	0.075*		0.059*	
	(0.015)		(0.016)	
State Legislative Approval (Belief)		0.110*		0.108*
		(0.018)		(0.018)
Governor Approval	0.132*		0.105*	
	(0.013)		(0.014)	
Governor Approval (Belief)		0.131*		0.115*
		(0.014)		(0.015)
Presidential Approval	0.347*	0.342*	0.461*	0.453*
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Party ID (7 pt)	0.507*	0.502*	0.472*	0.468*
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Constant	-0.277*	-0.270*	0.075*	0.077*
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.024)
Log-pseudolikelihood	-4928.1	-4922.9	-5200.3	-5164.8
N	18182	18182	27769	27769

$^*p \leq .05$; Standard Errors in Parentheses

Probit estimates of state house vote choice as a function of voters' assessments of political actors and partisan identification. The first and third columns adjust state legislative approval by the party that actually controlled the state house, and the second and fourth columns adjust approval by the party a respondent believed controlled the state house. These data from the Cooperative Congressional Election Studies are weighted to make them representative of the registered voters in the 2008 and 2010 elections.

of their state legislature reward candidates of the incumbent state house majority party and suggest theories of accountability apply to state legislatures. Positive coefficients on gubernatorial or presidential approval provide evidence that how the governor or president performs influences legislative elections. To simplify interpretations, I convert probit estimates to predicted probabilities in text and figures. For differences in predicted probabilities, I adjust the variable of interest and hold other variables at their weighted sample means.

The CCES surveys provide some support for the proposition that elections hold state legislators collectively accountable. However, the strength of the connection between voters' assessments of the state legislature and their state house voting decisions is relatively weak, as shown by the first and third columns of Table 4. When voters strongly approve of their state legislature instead of strongly disapprove, the probability that they vote for a candidate of the state house majority party increases by up to .12. This relationship implies that there

are incentives for legislative parties to act in their constituents' interests to better their members' reelection chances and is the first known evidence that how the state majority party performs matters for its members' elections.

State-level actors outside the legislature, such as the governor, also seem influential in legislative elections. Strongly approving instead of strongly disapproving of the governor changes the predicted probability of a state house vote by at least .18. Punishing an unpopular governor's legislative party can stall the governor's legislative agenda, and the relationship between vote choice and gubernatorial approval could reflect this tactic by voters.

Assessments of state-level actors play some role in state legislative elections, but findings presented in Table 4 reaffirm that national politics matter much more. Shifts in presidential popularity from strongly disapproving to strongly approving can change predicted probabilities of voting for the president's co-partisans by at least .38. The relative impact of presidential to state legislative approval is remarkable. Figure 3 summarizes the predicted probabilities of voting for candidates of the state house majority or president's party using estimates from Table 4. In each panel, solid lines represent the probability of voting for the state house majority party under different levels of state legislative approval, and dotted lines plot the probabilities of voting for a legislative candidate of the president's party for given levels of presidential approval. With growing approval, predicted probabilities of voting for these parties' candidates increase, but changes in presidential approval have at least three times the impact of comparable shifts in state legislative approval. This relationship between presidential approval and state legislative vote choice is robust. Levels of voter knowledge or divided state government have no attenuating effect, and the relationship persists amongst wealthy, educated, or politically interested voters. The correlation between state legislative vote choice and presidential approval consistently emerges when estimating the model on data subset by state.[15] Therefore in state legislative elections across the country, changes

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[15] All estimates available upon request.

Figure 3: Voter Behavior under different levels of State Legislative or Presidential Approval
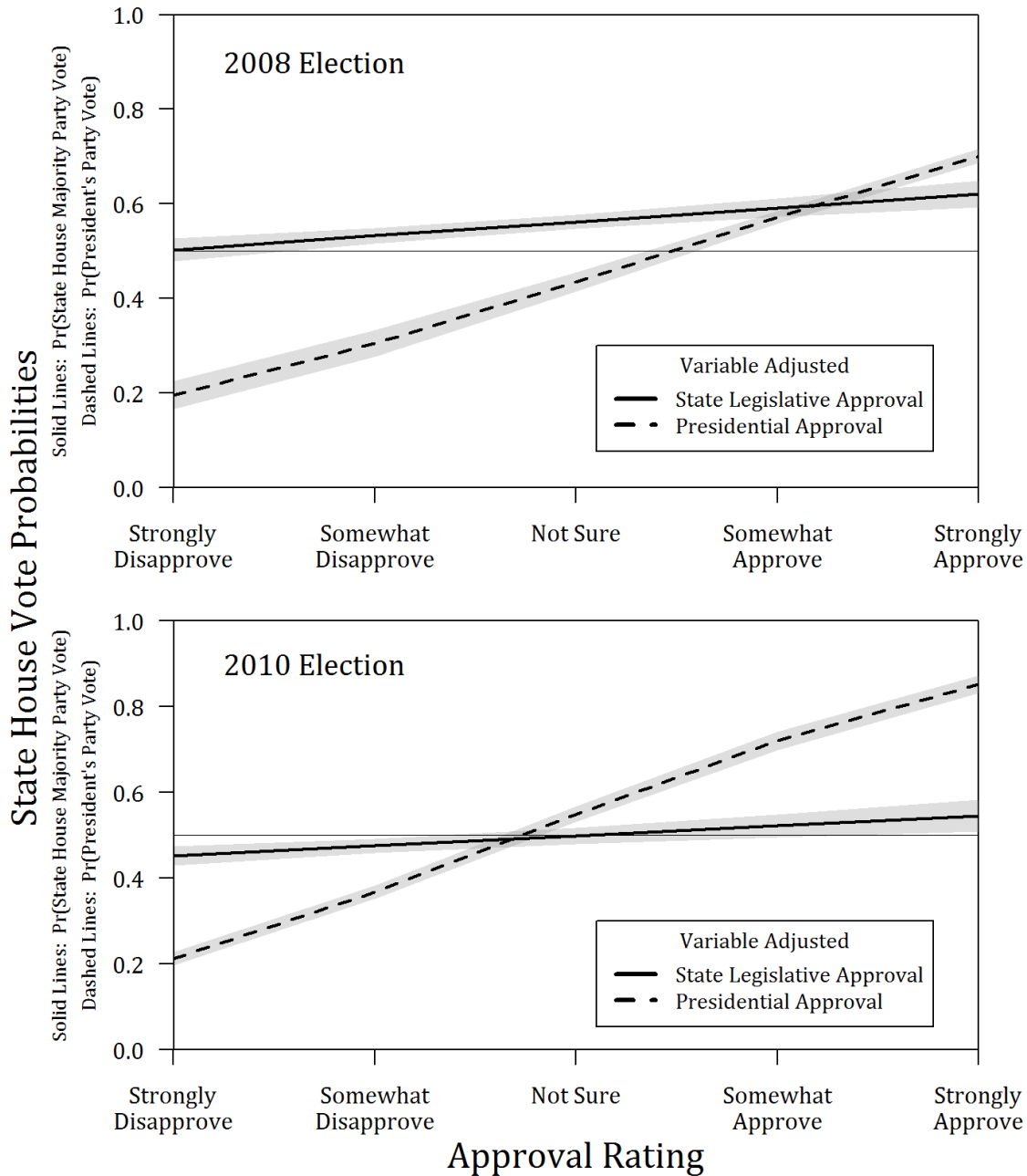
Comparisons of the relationships between an individual's assessments of the state legislature or the president and their state house voting decisions in the 2008 and 2010 elections. Solid lines represent the predicted probability of voting for a candidate of the state house majority party under different levels of state legislative approval, and dashed lines represent the probability of voting for a member of the president's party under different levels of presidential approval. Other variables are set to their weighted sample means, and grey regions are 95% confidence intervals. The relative influence of presidential approval is at least three times that of state legislative approval.

in presidential approval clearly matter more than shifts in state legislative approval even though legislative parties control the legislature's performance more than the president's.

The findings from the 2008 and 2010 CCES provide persuasive evidence that national politics influence state legislative elections. These analyses, however, only examine recent state elections that coincide with federal contests. Some state elections, such as those in New Jersey or Virginia, occur in the "off-year" separate from presidential or congressional elections. When advocating off-year elections, New Jersey Governor Alfred Driscoll asserted "the election for a Governor and for Assemblymen should not coincide with a Presidential election. The importance of a gubernatorial election merits an election that will not be overshadowed by a national contest for the Presidency" (*New Jersey Constitution Convention Proceedings* 1947).[16] While the focus of this study is whether assemblymen are held accountable rather than governors, Driscoll's overarching point regarding state elections still applies. By being held separate from federal contests, off-year elections should be less likely to be "overshadowed," and New Jersey provides an opportunity to evaluate the influence of presidential approval in state legislative elections under electoral conditions presumably less sensitive to national politics.

I, therefore, examine New Jersey voters' state legislative voting behavior using polls from the Eagleton Institute of Politics. This investigation tests the robustness of findings regarding the impact of national conditions in two key respects. First, it analyzes elections that occur in the off-year. Second, it examines polls from each of five presidential administrations since the 1970s instead of only more recent elections. Similar to the CCES analysis, I estimate the relationship between vote choice and a voter's approval rating of the state legislature, governor, and president while controlling for an individual's party identification. To account for New Jersey's multi-member districts and options to vote for two Democrats, split the ticket, or vote for two Republicans, I estimate this relationship with an ordered probit

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[16]This quote was found thanks to Bishop and Hatch (2012).

Table 5: NJ and VA Off-Year State Legislative Voting as a Function of Approval Ratings and Party ID

Election Year:	NJ-1973	NJ-1975	NJ-1979	NJ-1983	NJ-1985	NJ-1987	NJ-1995	NJ-2007	VA-2007
Presidential Approval	0.216*	0.218*	0.252*	0.210*	0.323*	0.179*	0.423*	0.228*	0.296*
	(0.060)	(0.050)	(0.074)	(0.064)	(0.082)	(0.059)	(0.078)	(0.063)	(0.023)
Governor Approval	0.015	0.202*	0.088	0.094	-0.012	0.146*	0.228*	0.074	0.180*
	(0.068)	(0.064)	(0.067)	(0.066)	(0.102)	(0.068)	(0.085)	(0.055)	(0.043)
State Legislative Approval	0.005	0.013	0.080	-0.033	0.151	0.022	-0.017	0.092	0.186*
	(0.078)	(0.063)	(0.069)	(0.075)	(0.099)	(0.069)	(0.095)	(0.058)	(0.039)
Party ID	0.746*	0.707*	0.902*	0.711*	0.860*	0.665*	0.758*	0.684*	0.613*
	(0.055)	(0.050)	(0.056)	(0.059)	(0.084)	(0.053)	(0.069)	(0.051)	(0.043)
Intercept: R Votes	Split	-0.232*	-0.498*	-0.292*	-0.048	-0.052	-0.098	-0.267*	-0.051	0.185*
	(0.099)	(0.082)	(0.106)	(0.088)	(0.134)	(0.095)	(0.103)	(0.094)	(0.070)
Intercept: Split	D Votes	0.141	-0.262*	-0.215*	0.109	0.043	-0.057	-0.182	0.282*	0.573*
	(0.098)	(0.080)	(0.105)	(0.088)	(0.134)	(0.095)	(0.102)	(0.096)	(0.072)
Log-Likelihood	-211.444	-353.944	-220.603	-192.25	-92.577	-195.878	-127.763	-251.3	-452.272
N	446	654	638	415	323	509	461	523	1052

*$p \leq .05$; Standard Errors in Parentheses

Ordered probit estimates of state house vote choice as a function of voters' assessments of political actors and partisan identification. Column headings indicate the state and year of the poll. The Eagleton Institute of Politics conducted the New Jersey polls, and The Washington Post conducted the Virginia poll. In these off-year election states, presidential approval consistently correlates with state house vote choice.

regression. Over the last forty years, the Eagleton Institute at times changed the wordings of the vote choice, approval, and party identification questions. To maintain comparability to CCES estimates in Table 4, I code response categories similar to the CCES analysis. The Appendix details coding and provides results from an alternative model specification without these adjustments. Results are similar (Table A-7).

Table 5 presents evidence that presidential influences in state legislative elections are not solely a result of federal election coattails nor a recent phenomenon. In each Eagleton poll, approving instead of disapproving of the president can change the probability of a state legislative vote for the president's party by at least .27. While gubernatorial politics matter more in some elections than others, assessments of the New Jersey state legislature never have a meaningful relationship with vote choice. The final column of Table 5 indicates these

off-year election findings are not confined to New Jersey, as national influences have similar effects in Virginia legislative elections, which also occur in odd-numbered years.[17]

In spite of weaker results from off-year states, recent CCES surveys provide some evidence that theories of accountability apply to state legislatures. Misinformation, however, may limit the interpretations of these findings and those from the state-level analysis because voters do not always know who controls their state legislature. The statistical analyses in the second and fourth columns of Table 4 relax informational assumptions by adjusting approval ratings to account for the party a voter believed controlled the state house or governorship. Compared to the first and third columns, nearly all estimates are relatively stable, but the relationship between state legislative approval and vote choice strengthens. Voters, therefore, appear to try to hold state legislators collectively accountable but sometimes punish the party that actually is in power when they intend to reward them.

Figure 4 illustrates the magnitude of this effect using the 2010 elections. To plot the predicted probabilities in this figure, I classify voters by whether they correctly or incorrectly identified their state house majority party, and within each of these subsets, I regress state house vote choice on the party identification and approval variables (Table A-8). The estimation using the correct respondents produces a positive relationship between approval of the legislature and voting for candidates of the state house majority party (dotted line), but the corresponding relationship among incorrect respondents is negative (dashed line).[18] In other words, when the state legislature performs well, voters who identify the state house majority party electorally reward the party in power, but misinformed voters punish the incumbent party. These counteracting votes contribute to the relatively weak relationships

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[17]Of the New Jersey elections examined, only 1973 and 1985 had a gubernatorial election. Virginia results use a 2007 Washington Post Poll. Instead of a vote choice question, this survey asked "Regardless of your local contest, which party would you like to see in control of the Virginia state legislature after the November elections, the (Democrats) or the (Republicans)?" I code "Divided" responses as the middle category.

[18]There is no meaningful relationship between state legislative approval and vote choice amongst those who were "Not sure" which party controlled their state house.

Figure 4: Voting Behavior of Informed and Misinformed Voters
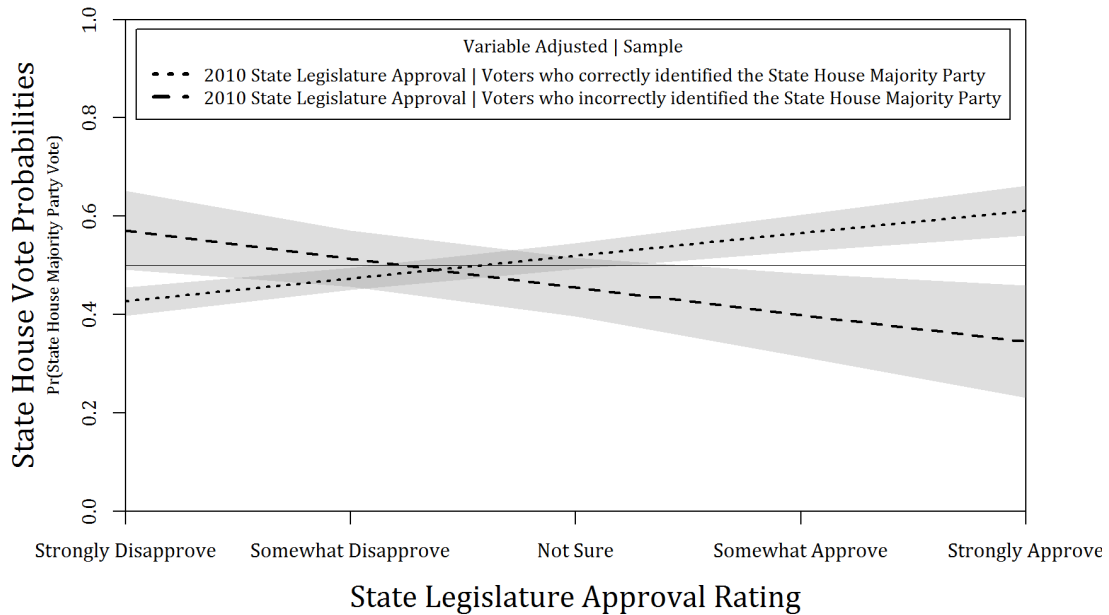
Lines represent the predicted probabilities of an individual voting for the state house majority party, and grey regions reflect 95% confidence intervals. Dotted and dashed lines use estimates from separate regressions using samples of voters subset by whether they correctly or incorrectly identified the state house majority party. By voting against members of the state house majority party, even when they approve of the legislature's performance, misinformed voters reduce the incentives for incumbent state legislative parties to perform well.

between state legislative approval and vote choice, especially when compared to the influence of national conditions (Figure 3; Table A-8).

Misinformed voting behavior also helps explain the null results from the state-level study. Some voters could recognize that the economy is weak or the state government's policies are ineffective but do not know which party to blame. These voters may try to hold legislative parties accountable by voting for or against the party they believe to be in charge, but their mistaken attribution ultimately weakens the relationship between performance and state house majority party seat change. This misinformed behavior then diminishes state legislative elections' effectiveness as an accountability mechanism and reduces the incentives for legislative parties to perform well.

Conclusion

Theories of accountability suggest there should be a meaningful relationship between how state legislators perform in office and elections, but legislators fearing electoral retribution need to worry more about the president's performance than their own. Carsey and Wright argue that "national forces working through evaluations of the president are a major influence on voting for governor" (1998: 1001). The above findings imply that these forces are strong enough to reach state legislative chambers. Instead of being referenda on how legislators perform, state legislative contests appear to "second-order elections" that are driven by factors largely beyond legislators' own control. State representatives' behavior and performance may matter at the margins, but evaluations of the president more likely determine whether legislators are electorally successful.

The weak or null relationships between state legislative performance and electoral outcomes cast doubt on whether state legislative elections effectively sanction legislative parties. Retrospective party voting is not the only way to hold state legislators accountable, but the lack of an electoral connection in state legislatures has implications for both political science research and state legislative representation. Legislators' common party electoral goals are the cornerstone of theories of lawmaking (Cox and McCubbins 1993; Rohde 1991). Some are already being tested in the states (e.g. Aldrich and Battista 2002; Anzia and Jackman 2013; Cox, Kousser, and McCubbins 2010). However, if national rather than state politics dominate state legislative elections, how state legislators achieve their electoral goals should presumably differ from their congressional counterparts. Before studying some theories in the "laboratories of democracy," there needs to be stronger evidence that protecting the state legislative party brand is electorally meaningful.

More importantly, if national politics determine state legislative election outcomes, legislators could exploit favorable national conditions and translate them into local electoral or policy gains. Tennessee Representative Glen Casada understands the power of national

forces. Before the 2012 election, this Republican asserted, "That is the biggest thing working for us: President Obama and the anti-president attitude"(Cass 2012). Casada was probably right. Dislike of Obama likely paved an easy path for Republicans to maintain control of the state house despite low state legislative approval amongst Tennesseans (Vanderbilt Poll: May 2012).

National politics influencing state legislative elections in this way may ultimately lead to diminished representation and unintended policy consequences. Without electoral accountability, there is little that constrains lawmaking at the state level. Legislative parties can claim mandates and adopt controversial collective bargaining policies or other laws with little electoral consequence. More research is needed to fully understand the above findings' implications for representation. State legislators may still "run scared," act in their constituents' interests, and produce representative policies (Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1994; Lax and Phillips 2009). The evidence, however, strongly suggests that there is not much electoral reason for them to do so, as elections do relatively little to hold legislators and their parties collectively accountable.

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Appendix

Figure A-1: State-Level Relationships between Seat Change and Presidential Approval
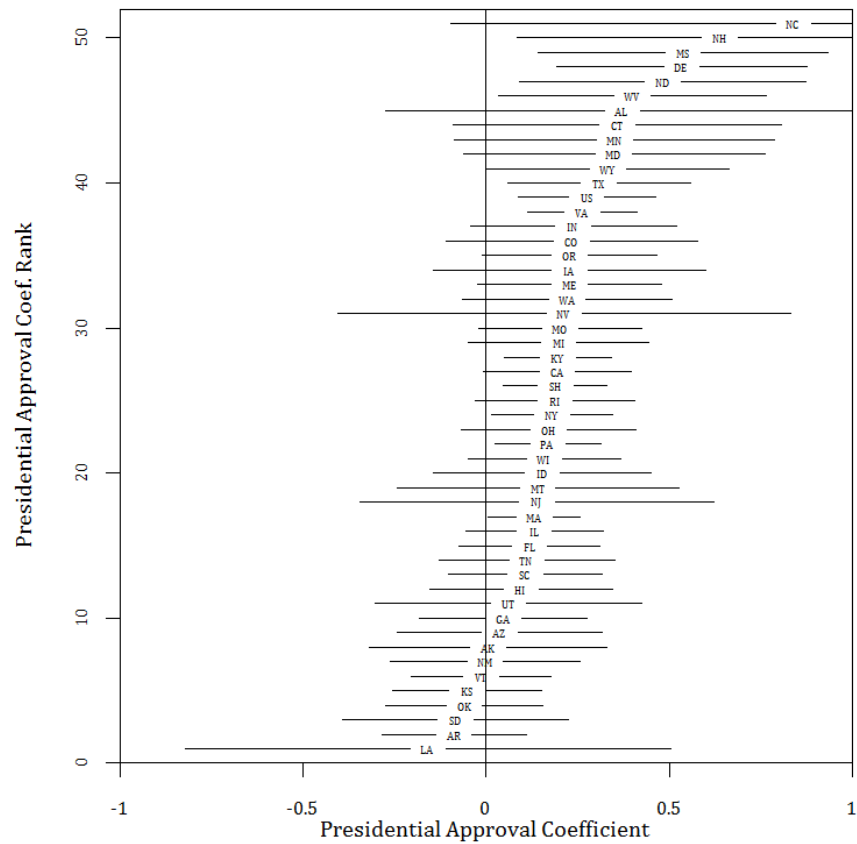
Plots of OLS estimates and 95% confidence intervals for state level regressions of president's party seat change on presidential approval. Data cover the 1972 - 2011 elections. Ignoring uncertainty of estimates, over 40 states produce a positive relationship. Points labeled US and SH represent comparable estimates for the U.S. House and all state house seats.

Table A-1: Democratic State House Seat Change as a Function of Economic Variables

Dependent Variable: Democratic Seat Change	National Economy	State Economy	National and State
National Economy x President's Party	0.812*		0.831*
	(0.128)		(0.184)
National Economy X Governor's Party	0.015		0.156
	(0.129)		(0.198)
National Economy X State House Party	-0.089		-0.049
	(0.137)		(0.186)
State Economy X President's Party		0.352*	-0.017
		(0.100)	(0.128)
State Economy X Governor's Party		-0.042	-0.136
		(0.106)	(0.144)
State Economy X State House Party		-0.127	-0.047
		(0.110)	(0.158)
Previous Seat Change	-0.253*	-0.259*	-0.253*
	(0.063)	(0.062)	(0.063)
Congressional Vote Change	0.183*	0.206*	0.182*
	(0.037)	(0.038)	(0.038)
President's Party Dummy	-0.041*	-0.032*	-0.041*
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Governor's Party Dummy	-0.004	-0.003	-0.004
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
State House Party Dummy	-0.020*	-0.020*	-0.020*
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
National Economy	-0.318*		-0.258
	(0.132)		(0.189)
State Economy		-0.161	-0.066
		(0.089)	(0.134)
Constant	-0.046*	-0.046	-0.045*
	(0.022)	(0.026)	(0.023)
R-Squared	0.355	0.333	0.357
N	861	861	861

$^{*}p \leq .05$; Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses

OLS estimates of State House Democratic Party Seat Change as a function of economy variables interacted with the parties that controlled the presidency, governorship, and state house. Observations at the state-year level and include state fixed effects. Results are consistent with those in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Table A-2: Economic Models using Unemployment and State GDP

Dep. Var. (Seat Change):	Pres. Pty	Gov. Pty	St. Hse Pty	Pres. Pty	Gov. Pty	St. Hse Pty	Pres. Pty	Gov. Pty	St. Hse Pty
National Unemployment	-0.003*	-0.001	-0.001						
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)						
State Unemployment				-0.002	0.000	0.000			
				(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)			
Change in Logged State GDP							-0.020	-0.079	-0.011
							(0.054)	(0.054)	(0.052)
Previous Seat Change	-0.301*	-0.245*	-0.183*	-0.251*	-0.204*	-0.132	-0.306*	-0.245*	-0.183*
	(0.062)	(0.063)	(0.066)	(0.071)	(0.073)	(0.068)	(0.056)	(0.059)	(0.052)
Congressional Vote Change	0.255*	0.299*	0.310*	0.267*	0.302*	0.306*	0.264*	0.300*	0.310*
	(0.038)	(0.041)	(0.037)	(0.040)	(0.042)	(0.036)	(0.040)	(0.044)	(0.048)
Constant	0.010	0.016	-0.009	0.006	0.008	-0.015	-0.007	0.012	-0.012*
	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.022)	(0.015)	(0.018)	(0.014)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.005)
R-Squared	0.221	0.196	0.220	0.207	0.188	0.239	0.218	0.197	0.220
N	867	861	867	780	774	780	867	861	867

$^*p \leq .05$; Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses

OLS estimates of seat change regressed on changes in national unemployment, state unemployment, and state GDP. Party of dependent variable indicated by the column heading. Observations are at the state-year level and estimations include state fixed effects.

Table A-3: State House Majority Party Seat Change as a Function of Performance and Policy Measures

Performance Measure:	Crime	Education	Taxes	Taxes	Taxes
Logged Change in State Crime Index	-0.027				
	(0.037)				
Logged Change in Average State Reading Score		-0.386			
		(0.498)			
Change in Maximum Tax Rate			-0.003		
			(0.003)		
Change in Inc., Sales, and Corp. Tax				-0.002	
				(0.005)	
Dummy Variable for Increase in Effective Tax Liability					-0.005
					(0.006)
Previous Seat Change	-0.184*	0.122	-0.151*	-0.184*	-0.185*
	(0.032)	(0.090)	(0.036)	(0.032)	(0.032)
Congressional Vote Change	0.278*	0.370*	0.299*	0.279*	0.309*
	(0.031)	(0.047)	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.029)
Constant	-0.014	-0.002	-0.014	-0.014	-0.013
	(0.016)	(0.034)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.016)
R-Squared	0.197	0.487	0.242	0.196	0.22
N	822	198	694	822	867

$^*p \leq .05$; Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses

OLS estimates of state house majority party seat change as a function of measures of policy performance. "Dummy variable for Increase in Tax Liability" set to 1 if "Change in State Income Tax as Pct. of AGI" for joint filers earning $50,000 is greater than zero. Other variables follow descriptions in main text. None of considered measures correlate with seat change for the party in control of the state house.

Table A-4: Party Seat Change as a Function of Economic Performance Controlling for Professionalism

Dependent Variable	Pres Pty	Gov. Pty	St. Hse Pty	Pres Pty	Gov. Pty	St. Hse Pty	Pres Pty	Gov. Pty	St. Hse Pty
Economy Variable	National	National	National	State	State	State	Relative	Relative	Relative
Economy	1.236*	0.182	-0.276	0.322*	-0.096	-0.039	0.002	-0.307	0.053
	(0.209)	(0.241)	(0.260)	(0.157)	(0.146)	(0.154)	(0.189)	(0.211)	(0.206)
Economy X Professionalism	-1.344*	-0.747	0.552	0.498	0.269	0.091	0.139	1.362	0.188
	(0.606)	(0.669)	(0.679)	(0.530)	(0.520)	(0.507)	(0.959)	(1.063)	(1.042)
Previous Seat Change	-0.312*	-0.244*	-0.185*	-0.310*	-0.243*	-0.184*	-0.304*	-0.240*	-0.182*
	(0.053)	(0.060)	(0.051)	(0.056)	(0.060)	(0.052)	(0.056)	(0.060)	(0.052)
Congressional Vote Change	0.220*	0.299*	0.310*	0.248*	0.298*	0.310*	0.263*	0.298*	0.309*
	(0.040)	(0.044)	(0.048)	(0.040)	(0.044)	(0.048)	(0.040)	(0.044)	(0.048)
Professionalism	0.086*	0.048	-0.068	0.025	0.027	-0.056	0.032	0.023	-0.057
	(0.043)	(0.033)	(0.040)	(0.046)	(0.035)	(0.041)	(0.045)	(0.034)	(0.039)
Constant	-0.050*	-0.005	0.008	-0.023	0.001	0.003	-0.017	0.002	0.003
	(0.017)	(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.017)	(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.018)	(0.015)	(0.012)
R-Squared	0.270	0.196	0.222	0.241	0.196	0.22	0.218	0.198	0.221
N	867	861	867	867	861	867	867	861	867

$^*p \leq .05$; Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses

OLS estimates of seat change regressed on economic variables while controlling for professionalism. State house majority parties from professionalized legislatures are not more likely to receive a reward for professionalism. The president's state legislative party receives less of a reward in professionalized legislatures, consistent with the findings of Berry, Berkman and Schneiderman (2000). However, even in the most professionalized legislature, California, national income growth of 2.5% results in over a 1% increase in seats for the president's party. Observations are at the state-year level and estimations include state fixed effects. Party of dependent variable indicated by the column heading.

Table A-5: Party Seat Change as a Function of Economic Performance Controlling for Divided State Government

Dependent Variable	Pres Pty	Gov. Pty	St. Hse Pty	Pres Pty	Gov. Pty	St. Hse Pty	Pres Pty	Gov. Pty	St. Hse Pty
Economy Variable	National	National	National	State	State	State	Relative	Relative	Relative
Economy	0.992*	-0.151	-0.128	0.531*	-0.076	-0.096	0.043	0.009	-0.061
	(0.176)	(0.207)	(0.214)	(0.120)	(0.160)	(0.152)	(0.199)	(0.242)	(0.233)
Economy X Divided Government	-0.136	0.357	-0.048	-0.234	0.069	0.146	-0.030	-0.137	0.241
	(0.249)	(0.298)	(0.281)	(0.186)	(0.244)	(0.212)	(0.281)	(0.338)	(0.335)
Previous Seat Change	-0.312*	-0.219*	-0.183*	-0.310*	-0.219*	-0.182*	-0.305*	-0.217*	-0.181*
	(0.058)	(0.064)	(0.052)	(0.061)	(0.064)	(0.053)	(0.061)	(0.064)	(0.053)
Congressional Vote Change	0.220*	0.298*	0.307*	0.248*	0.298*	0.307*	0.264*	0.298*	0.307*
	(0.038)	(0.039)	(0.047)	(0.038)	(0.039)	(0.047)	(0.038)	(0.04)	(0.047)
Divided Government	0.002	0.020*	0.008	0.005	0.025*	0.004	-0.001	0.027*	0.007
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.004)
Constant	-0.028*	-0.004	-0.014	-0.017	-0.005	-0.015*	-0.008	-0.006	-0.016*
	(0.014)	(0.018)	(0.008)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.007)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.007)
R-Squared	0.267	0.221	0.222	0.242	0.219	0.222	0.218	0.220	0.222
N	867	861	867	867	861	867	867	861	867

$^*p \leq .05$; Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses

OLS estimates of seat change regressed on economic variables while controlling for divided state government. State parties from unified government are not more likely to receive a reward for economic prosperity. Observations are at the state-year level and estimations include state fixed effects. Column headings list the party of the dependent variable and the economic measure used (e.g. change in logged national real disposable income).

Table A-6: Party Seat Change as a Function of Economic Performance Controlling for Midterm Elections

Seat Change for:	Pres Pty National	Pres Pty State	Pres Pty Relative	Gov Pty National	Gov Pty State	Gov Pty Relative	St. Hse Pty National	St. Hse Pty State	St. Hse Pty Relative
Economy Variable									
Economy	0.894*	0.388*	0.036	-0.203	-0.128	-0.072	-0.242	-0.124	-0.034
	(0.128)	(0.136)	(0.190)	(0.147)	(0.136)	(0.198)	(0.133)	(0.108)	(0.161)
Economy X Midterm	0.075	0.000	-0.071	0.489	0.171	-0.074	0.223	0.270	0.320
	(0.238)	(0.213)	(0.291)	(0.313)	(0.276)	(0.352)	(0.309)	(0.202)	(0.261)
Previous Seat Change	-0.376*	-0.366*	-0.354*	-0.243*	-0.242*	-0.244*	-0.188	-0.192	-0.191
	(0.140)	(0.141)	(0.140)	(0.117)	(0.118)	(0.118)	(0.103)	(0.103)	(0.104)
Previous Seat Change X Midterm	0.214	0.205	0.200	0.017	0.016	0.016	0.018	0.029	0.027
	(0.190)	(0.192)	(0.194)	(0.185)	(0.186)	(0.187)	(0.178)	(0.176)	(0.178)
Congressional Vote Change	0.116*	0.155*	0.167*	0.158*	0.161*	0.161*	0.178*	0.180*	0.176*
	(0.038)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.042)	(0.043)	(0.042)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.038)
Cong. Vote Change X Midterm	0.165*	0.141*	0.137*	0.240*	0.236*	0.237*	0.218*	0.218*	0.221*
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.060)	(0.069)	(0.071)	(0.070)	(0.066)	(0.066)	(0.067)
Midterm Election Dummy	-0.010	-0.012	-0.014	-0.009	-0.003	0.001	-0.010	-0.010	-0.005
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Constant	-0.026	-0.012	-0.005	0.015	0.013	0.009	-0.008	-0.010	-0.013
	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)
R-Squared	0.290	0.262	0.242	0.212	0.211	0.210	0.235	0.236	0.236
N	867	867	867	861	861	861	867	867	867

$^*p \leq .05$; Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses

OLS estimates of seat change regressed on economic variables while controlling for midterm elections. Column headings list the party of the dependent variable and the economic measure used (e.g. change in logged national real disposable income). There is little difference between the impact of national conditions on the president's party's seat change in state legislatures during midterm elections.

Table A-7: NJ and VA Off-Year State Legislative Voting as a function of Approval Ratings and Party ID since the 1970s - Alternative Specification

Election Year:	1973	1975	1979	1983	1985	1987	1995	2007
Presidential Approval	0.216*	0.218*	0.252*	0.210*	0.323*	0.180*	0.423*	0.342*
	(0.060)	(0.050)	(0.074)	(0.064)	(0.082)	(0.059)	(0.078)	(0.095)
Governor Approval	0.015	0.202*	0.088	0.094	-0.012	0.146*	0.229*	0.111
	(0.068)	(0.064)	(0.067)	(0.066)	(0.102)	(0.068)	(0.085)	(0.083)
State Legislative Approval	0.005	0.013	0.080	-0.033	0.151	0.022	-0.017	0.139
	(0.078)	(0.063)	(0.069)	(0.075)	(0.099)	(0.069)	(0.095)	(0.087)
Party ID	1.492*	1.414*	1.804*	1.422*	1.719*	1.330*	1.515*	1.368*
	(0.111)	(0.101)	(0.113)	(0.118)	(0.168)	(0.106)	(0.137)	(0.103)
Intercept: R Votes | Split Votes	-0.232*	-0.498*	-0.292*	-0.048	-0.052	-0.098	-0.267*	-0.051
	(0.099)	(0.082)	(0.106)	(0.088)	(0.134)	(0.095)	(0.103)	(0.094)
Intercept: Split Votes | D Votes	0.141	-0.262*	-0.215*	0.109	0.043	-0.057	-0.182	0.282*
	(0.098)	(0.080)	(0.105)	(0.088)	(0.134)	(0.095)	(0.102)	(0.096)
Log-Likelihood	-211.444	-353.944	-220.603	-192.250	-92.577	-195.878	-127.763	-251.300
N	446	654	638	415	323	509	461	523

$*p \leq .05$; Standard Errors in Parentheses

Probit estimates of New Jersey state assembly vote choice as a function of approval variables and party ID accounting for question wording differences. In each Eagleton survey, respondents were asked a 3-pt Party ID question. CCES asked a 7-pt. For comparability to Table 4, I then code Democrats 2, Independents 0, and Republicans -2. Similarly, the CCES also asked for approval ratings on a Strongly Disapprove to Strongly Approve scale. I code these from -2 to 2. With Eagleton in 2007, voters could only respond Disapprove or Approve. To match CCES, I code these as -1.5 and 1.5 in Table 5. In other years, Eagleton commonly asked ask 'how good a job' institutions were doing where respondents could respond Poor, Only Fair, No Opinion, Good, and Excellent. I code these from -2 to 2 to match CCES. The above table presents results without these adjustments for the CCES (e.g. Party ID on a -1 to 1 scale, and approval coded 0 or 1).

Table A-8: 2010 Democratic State House Vote Choice as a Function of Approval Ratings and Party ID - Correct and Incorrect Respondents

Election Year:	Correct Respondents	Incorrect Respondents
State Legislative Approval	0.116*	-0.144*
	(0.021)	(0.054)
Governor Approval	0.097*	0.117*
	(0.017)	(0.044)
Presidential Approval	0.470*	0.384*
	(0.021)	(0.048)
Party ID (7 pt)	0.442*	0.450*
	(0.018)	(0.039)
Constant	0.099*	-0.107
	(0.035)	(0.077)
Log-pseudolikelihood	-3470.2	-479.9
N	18477	2134

$^{*}p \leq .05$; Standard Errors in Parentheses

Probit estimates of state house vote choice as a function of voters' assessments of political actors and partisan identification. Estimates are used to create Figure 4. These data from the 2010 Cooperative Congressional Election Study are subset by whether a respondent correctly or incorrectly identified the state house majority party.