**On the Limits of Officials’ Ability to Change Citizens’ Priorities:**

**A Field Experiment in Local Politics**

**Supporting Information (Online Material)**

**SI.1. Invitation to Take the Survey**

Dear [NAME OF CITY] Resident –

My name is Daniel Butler and I am the professor at Washington University in St. Louis. I am conducting a survey of [NAME OF CITY] residents about some of the possible priorities for the city. We would greatly appreciate your input.

Follow this link to take the Survey.

Take the survey

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[LINK]

Thank you for your help. Your input is invaluable. If you have any questions, please email or call me at [NUMBER – REDACTED].

Sincerely,

Daniel Butler

Associate Professor

Department of Political Science

Washington University in St. Louis

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

Click here to unsubscribe

**SI.2. Survey Questions**

**Baseline Survey**

*PAGE 1*

This survey is being conducted by Professor Butler at Washington University in St. Louis. If you have questions, email is the easiest way to reach Professor Butler (daniel.butler@wustl.edu). In the survey we will ask you a few questions about yourself and your political views. We will also ask your opinion about which issues the city should prioritize. Your responses will be kept confidential by the researcher. The city officials will only learn about the overall results and will not learn your individual responses Thank you for helping us better understand citizens’ views of local government.

*PAGE 2*

What is your gender?

* Male (1)
* Female (2)

What is your age?

* 18-25 (1)
* 26-35 (2)
* 36-45 (3)
* 46-55 (4)
* 56-65 (5)
* 66+ (6)

What is the highest level of school you have completed?

* Less than high school (1)
* High school graduate or equivalent (GED) (2)
* Some college, but no degree (3)
* Associate degree (4)
* Bachelors degree (5)
* Graduate degree (Masters, Professional, or Doctorate) (6)

How much do you follow local politics?

* Not at all (1)
* Somewhat (2)
* A lot (3)

In general, how interested are you in politics and public affairs?

* Very interested (1)
* Somewhat interested (2)
* Slightly interested (3)
* Not at all interested (4)

*PAGE 3*

[NAME OF CITY] is considering the agenda for the next year. What best represents your thoughts on the following issues:

(NOTE: ALL ISSUES DIFFERED BY CITY. LIST OF ISSUES BY CITY IS GIVEN BELOW. ALL QUESTIONS HAD THE FOLLOWING OPTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM:)

* I do not support doing this and it should not be a priority for the town (1)
* I believe the town should consider this but it should not be a priority for the town (2)
* I believe the town should consider this and it should be a medium priority for the town (3)
* I believe the town should consider this and it should be a high priority for the town (4)

*PAGE 4*

Thank you for your participation. Sometime in the next two months we plan to conduct a follow up survey that will be about the same length as this survey. Please let us know if you are willing to help in that survey. Thank you for your help and participation.

**CITY SPECIFIC ISSUE QUESTIONS USED ON BOTH SURVEYS:**

**City 1 - Specific Issue Questions:**

[Name of City 1] should protect and improve the water quality of all the lakes, rivers and streams in town

[Name of City 1] should invest in a building a community/recreation center

[Name of City 1] should build a public sewer system in [PART OF THE CITY] to protect groundwater and allow continued commercial development

The town should charge developers an impact fee for new development on existing roads

The town should raise the standards for building and maintaining private roads

The town should change the rules so that the elected council approves budget instead of having a town meeting

**City 2 - Specific Issue Questions:**

[Name of City 2] should invest in more recreation facilities, such as natural trails and bicycle/walking paths

[Name of City 2] should invest in more recreation facilities for organized sports such as soccer and baseball

[Name of City 2] should sponsor more seasonal community events

[Name of City 2] should develop a Town Green with capability of supporting special events and providing additional outdoor recreational opportunities

[Name of City 2] should to continue advocate against off-shore oil and natural gas exploration and drilling off our coast

**City 3 - Specific Issue Questions:**

Introducing term limits for elected officials in [Name of City 3] (i.e., Limiting the number of terms an elected city official can serve)

Change the law in [Name of City 3] so that important issues can be put before the citizens as referenda to be voted on.

Make it so that the elected officials in [Name of City 3] are not eligible to draw benefits (e.g., health, etc.) from the city consistent with the regulations for other part-time employees.

Take away or limit the use of city credit cards by elected officials that allow them to spend city funds on items they deem necessary for city business.

Extend nepotism laws to include for city boards and commissions to prohibit family members of elected officials from sitting on those boards.

Work on developing a mayor and city council handbook to outline ethical guidelines for elected officials just as there are ethical guidelines for city employees.

Update the city charter (last updated in 2001) to clarify the intent of some of the regulations on the behavior and actions of city officials.

**City 4 - Specific Issue Questions:**

[Name of City 4] should work to increase the number and quality of bicycle lanes and trails

[Name of City 4] should work to improve the cleanliness and appearance of the community

[Name of City 4] should invest in streets and street repair

[Name of City 4] should invest in economic development in our community using tax increment financing

**Follow-up Survey**

*PAGE 1*

This survey is being conducted by Professor Butler at Washington University in St. Louis. If you have questions, email is the easiest way to reach Professor Butler (daniel.butler@wustl.edu). In the survey we will ask you a few questions about yourself and your political views. We will also ask your opinion about which issues the city should prioritize. Your responses will be kept confidential by the researcher. The city officials will only learn about the overall results and will not learn your individual responses Thank you for helping us better understand citizens’ views of local government.

*PAGE 2*

Local governments like [NAME OF CITY] deal with a variety of issues. While we are going to ask you about a few specific issues on the next page, we would like to have you first tell us about a few of the important issues in [NAME OF CITY]. Please use the box below to write a sentence or two about some of the issues in [NAME OF CITY].

*PAGE 3*

[NAME OF CITY] is considering the agenda for the next year. What best represents your thoughts on the following issues:

(NOTE: ALL ISSUES DIFFERED BY CITY. LIST OF ISSUES BY CITY IS GIVEN WITH THE BASELINE SURVEY (SEE ABOVE). ALL QUESTIONS HAD THE FOLLOWING OPTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM:)

* I do not support doing this and it should not be a priority for the town (1)
* I believe the town should consider this but it should not be a priority for the town (2)
* I believe the town should consider this and it should be a medium priority for the town (3)
* I believe the town should consider this and it should be a high priority for the town (4)

*PAGE 4*

[NOTE: ON THIS PAGE THE RESPONDENTS WERE PRESENTED WITH ONE ISSUE. THIS IS THE ISSUE THAT THEY WERE RANDOMLY ASSIGNED DURING THE RANDOMIZATION STAGE OF THE PROJECT. FOR THE TREATMENT GROUP THIS IS ALSO THE ISSUE THAT THE CITY OFFICIAL EMAILED THEM ABOUT. THE FULL TEXT OF ALL OF THE SPECIFIC ISSUES IS GIVEN BELOW]

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [NAME OF CITY]’s City Council to take action to ...[SEE SPECIFIC WORDING BY ISSUE BELOW]. Would you want to sign this petition?

If you want to sign the petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition.

* Yes (1)
* No (0)

*PAGE 5*

To sign the petition about [ASSIGNED ISSUE] in [CITY NAME], click on the link below. When you do a new webpage with the petition will open up. After you are done with the petition, please return to this page and click next.

[LINK TO PETITION]

*PAGE 6*

In the previous month, have you received information from any [CITY NAME] city official about the city's policy priorities?

* Yes (1)
* No (2)
* Don't know (3)

**CITY SPECIFIC PETITION TEXT USED ON FOLLOW-UP SURVEY:**

**City 1 - Specific Petition Text:**

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [Name of City 1]'s Town Council to work to improve the water quality of the lakes, rivers, and streams in [NAME OF CITY]. Would you want to sign this petition? If you want to sign this petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition.

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [Name of City 1]'s Town Council to invest in building a community/recreation center. Would you want to sign this petition? If you want to sign this petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [Name of City 1]'s Town Council to build a public sewer system in [PART OF THE CITY]. Would you want to sign this petition? If you want to sign this petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [Name of City 1]'s Town Council to charge developers an impact fee for new development on existing roads. Would you want to sign this petition? If you want to sign this petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [Name of City 1]'s Town Council to raise the standards for building and maintaining private roads. Would you want to sign this petition? If you want to sign this petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition

**City 2 - Specific Petition Text:**

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [Name of City 2]'s Board of Commissioners to provide additional recreational facilities for organized sports such as soccer and baseball. Would you want to sign this petition? If you want to sign this petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition.

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [Name of City 2]'s Board of Commissioners to develop more nature trails and walking paths. Would you want to sign this petition? If you want to sign this petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [Name of City 2]'s Board of Commissioners to sponsor more seasonal community events. Would you want to sign this petition? If you want to sign this petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [Name of City 2]'s Board of Commissioners to develop a Town Green with capability of supporting special events and providing additional outdoor recreational opportunities. Would you want to sign this petition? If you want to sign this petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [Name of City 2]'s Board of Commissioners to continue advocate against off-shore oil and natural gas exploration and drilling off our coast. Would you want to sign this petition? If you want to sign this petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition

**City 3 - Specific Petition Text:**

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [Name of City 3]'s City Council to take action to institute term limits for elected city officials. Would you want to sign this petition? If you want to sign the petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition.

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [Name of City 3]'s City Council to enact the ability to put issues facing the city to referenda. Would you want to sign this petition? If you want to sign the petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition.

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [Name of City 3]'s City Council to make it so that elected officials are not eligible for employment benefits consistent with other part-time employees. Would you want to sign this petition? If you want to sign the petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition.

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [Name of City 3]'s City Council to limit the use of city credit cards for personal use. Would you want to sign this petition? If you want to sign the petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition.

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [Name of City 3]'s City Council to extend nepotism laws to city boards and commissions. Would you want to sign this petition? If you want to sign the petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition.

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [Name of City 3]'s City Council to develop ethical guidelines for the mayor and city council. Would you want to sign this petition? If you want to sign the petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition.

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [Name of City 3]'s City Council to updated the city charter. Would you want to sign this petition? If you want to sign the petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition.

**City 4 - Specific Petition Text:**

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [Name of City 4]'s City Council to take action to increase the number and quality of bicycle lanes and trails. Would you want to sign this petition? If you want to sign the petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition.

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [Name of City 4]'s City Council to improve the cleanliness and appearance of the community. Would you want to sign this petition? If you want to sign the petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition.

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [Name of City 4]'s City Council to invest in streets and street repair. Would you want to sign this petition? If you want to sign the petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition.

We wanted to make you aware about a petition that is circulating to encourage [Name of City 4]'s City Council to invest in economic development in our community using tax increment financing. Would you want to sign this petition? If you want to sign the petition, click yes below and you will be provided a link to the petition.

**SI.3. Text of Emails Sent by Partnering Officials**

**City 1 – Official’s Emails to Citizens**

SUBJECT: Improving [NAME OF CITY 1]

Dear Residents,

Thank you for the many ways in which you make our community better. The town council is also working hard to improve the community. There are many issues that we are working on. Finding the right ways to invest our resources requires thoughtful judgment and action. We are working to provide information on what is going on in town at our home page ([LINK – REDACTED]) and Facebook page ([LINK – REDACTED]).

{ISSUE TREATMENT TEXT CHOSEN FROM BELOW}

Thanks again for all that you do in the community.

Sincerely,

[NAME OF COUNCILOR]

Town Councilor, [NAME OF CITY]

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**Water Quality of Lakes, Rivers and Streams**

One issue that is very important to me is for [NAME OF CITY] to work to improve the bodies of water in our town. The natural beauty that surrounds us is one of the most precious resources that we have. Protecting and improving those resources should be a high priority for our community. I believe we need to take action to preserve those resources so that we and others may continue to enjoy them. The beauty and attractiveness of our community depends in part on our willingness to invest to improve the water quality of the lakes, rivers and streams in our town. This will benefit our citizens and ensure our town continues to be a great place to live.

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**Community/Recreation Center**

One issue that is very important to me is for [NAME OF CITY] to develop a community/recreation center that can act as a gathering place for the community and also provide additional recreational facilities for the use of residents. I believe we should continue in this work by identifying a location and moving forward in the process of developing a community center. This new center will provide new recreational opportunities and also provide meeting space for groups and organizations active in our community. I believe that a community and recreation center will benefit our citizens and ensure our town continues to be a great place to live.

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**[NAME OF CITY] should build a public sewer system in [PART OF CITY] to protect groundwater and allow continued commercial development**

One issue that is very important to me is to work on building a public sewer system in [PART OF CITY]. By acting now, we work to protect groundwater and facilitate continued commercial development in a way that will be beneficial to the community. It is very important that as we continue to develop [PART OF THE CITY] that we do it with the infrastructure in place to ensure that we do not harm groundwater and incur significant costs that will be a detriment to our community. It is important that lay the groundwork for continued growth and I believe that by taking action on this important issue we will ensure that our town continues to be a great place to live.

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**The town should charge developers an impact fee for new development on existing roads**

One issue that is very important to me is to institute an impact fee for new development on existing roads. While we want to continue to grow and encourage development we have to recognize the impact that developers have on the infrastructure of our community. While they are developing new areas of growth for our town, they also leave a lasting impact that can be expensive to the city. We need for developers to take more responsibility for the impact they have on existing communities so that we are not left with expenses that will hurt the town and limit our ability to provide important services to existing residents. I believe that implementing a fee for developers will help ensure that our town continues to be a great place to live.

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**The town should raise the standards for building and maintaining private roads**

One issue that is very important to me is to raise the standards for building and maintaining private roads. While we want to continue to grow and encourage development, we want to do it in a way that betters our community. Better roads allow the city to provide better services to our residents and help mitigate the problems caused by stormwater runoff. Low quality roads often lead to increased flooding, degradation of water quality, soil erosion and sedimentation. We want to permit unobstructed, safe, and continuous vehicle access, as well as, encourage road design standards which will mitigate these problems by more appropriately managing stormwater. I believe that by taking this important action, we can reduce problems for our resident, encourage growth, and ensure that our town continues to be a great place to live.

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**City 2 – Official’s Emails to Citizens**

SUBJECT: Improving [NAME OF CITY 2]

Dear Residents,

Thank you for the many ways in which you make our community better. The Board of Commissioners is also working hard to improve the community. There are many issues that we are working on. Finding the right ways to invest our resources requires thoughtful judgment and action. We are working to provide information on what we are doing as a town on our Facebook page, which you can be found here: [LINK – REDACTED]

{ISSUE TREATMENT TEXT CHOSEN FROM BELOW}

Thanks again for all that you do in the community.

Sincerely,

[NAME OF OFFICIAL]

Mayor, [NAME OF CITY]

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**Natural Trails**

Enjoying our unique natural environment is very important to me. Nature trails and walking paths can provide the means for great opportunities to connect with wildlife and our natural surroundings. They are natural outdoor laboratories that can be used by our schools and teachers to educate students and adults about our natural history and science. By partnering with organizations such as [LOCAL NATURE CONSERVATION GROUP] to provide access to [LOCAL WILDLIFE AREA] and management to adjoining Town-owned property, including possibly opening the [LOCAL POND] to fishing, we can work to reveal and preserve natural elements of our Town to our residents and visitors. I support taking action to ensure protection of our natural areas, and to provide access to them to increase enjoyment so they will be conserved for generations to come. I believe we should include this is our long-range planning goals for the [NAME OF CITY].

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**Recreational Facilities**

One issue that is very important to me is for [NAME OF CITY] to provide additional recreational facilities. Although we do not maintain a parks and recreation department, our role in providing recreation facilities has grown tremendously over the past 30 years. We have been able to implement many recommendations made by our citizens in surveys and planning and guide documents. I believe we should continue investigating recreation facilities and activities that encourage walking, cycling, and playground areas for the very young, and organized sports such as roller hockey, softball, and soccer. I believe we should continue to work with [NAME OF COUNTY] to schedule organized recreation at the [REDACTED] Field, and I believe that we should include identification and development of enhanced recreation facilities in upcoming operating budgets for the Town. This will benefit our citizens and visitors, alike, and ensure our Town continues to be a great place to live and visit.

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**More Special Events**

Special events, such as [NAME OF CITY]’s [REDACTED CELEBRATION 1], [REDACTED CELEBRATION 2], and, of course, the [REDACTED CELEBRATION 3] in December of each year, help promote and establish our identity with our residents and our visitors. Our busy schedules correlate to heavy seasonal visitation that requires extra effort and duty during the spring, summer and early fall months. This often prevents us from socializing and visiting with neighbors and friends. Scheduled events provide opportunities for us to “plan” to enjoy community gatherings, to support our families, friends, schools, and our Town. The [REDACTED CELEBRATION] gives us a unique and important opportunity to continue embracing and teaching our history. By sponsoring more quality special events we can encourage interaction and communication and ensure that [NAME OF CITY] continues to be a great place to live.

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**Develop a Common Area for Multi-Function Use**

One issue that is very important to me is the development of a Town Green identification and development of a location capable of supporting special events and provide additional outdoor recreational opportunities, possibly including nature-based walking trails, a gathering/playing field, pavilion and grilling facilities. Other amenities could include restroom facilities, a playground for small children, picnic tables, vehicular parking, and bicycle racks. As envisioned this area would be capable of hosting town-wide special events, or individual events such as family reunions, neighborhood parties, etc. This would also be important as we move forward with developing more special events and I believe we should make it a goal for achievement.

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**Off-Shore Oil Drilling and Seismic Testing Opposition**

The [NAME OF CITY] Board of Commissioners has acted numerous times to adopt language opposing off-shore drilling since the first resolution was adopted in 1989 and recently included seismic testing as potentially harmful to our area. It is important to me that this is our continued position. We have beautiful beaches in our Town and all along [NAME OF AREA] that are enjoyed by visitors from all over the world. They come for sun, sand and our clean recreational waters. Our salt and fresh water marshes, sounds and tributaries are home to so much wildlife, and they serve as hatcheries for many types of shrimp, crabs and fish. Our geographical region generates billions of dollars in personal and commercial income, public revenues, and employment opportunities. I believe we should continue our efforts to prevent off-shore oil and natural gas exploration, and seismic testing to map oil and gas deposits in the mid-Atlantic region to protect our land and sea natural resources. I also believe that we should monitor these issues and take further action as necessary to ensure [NAME OF CITY]’s position is well-known.

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**City 3 – Official’s Emails to Citizens**

SUBJECT: Improving [NAME OF CITY 3]

Dear Residents,

Thank you for the many ways in which you make our community better. The city council is also working hard to improve the community. There are many issues that we are working on. Finding the right ways to invest our resources requires thoughtful judgment and action. I am providing information about what I am working on at the following sites:

[LINK 1 – REDACTED]

[LINK 2 – REDACTED]

{ISSUE TREATMENT TEXT CHOSEN FROM BELOW}

Thanks again for all that you do in the community.

Sincerely,

[NAME OF OFFICIAL]

Councilmember, [NAME OF CITY]

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**Term Limits**

One issue that is very important to me is limiting the number of terms an elected official in [NAME OF CITY] can serve. Elected officials who are in office for long periods of time are more likely to serve their own personal interests instead of representing the public interest. I believe it is important that we ensure that future city officials are focused on what our community needs and that [NAME OF CITY] continues to be a place where public officials serve the interests of our residents. That is why I believe this should be a major focus of our community efforts in the coming months.

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**Referenda**

One issue that is very important to me is to change the laws that govern our city so that important issues can be put before the citizens as referenda to be voted on. Because our current city charter does not allow the city to put important issues before the citizens as referenda, we lose the opportunity to gain the insight of our community. I believe it is important that we ensure that residents of [NAME OF CITY] have a strong voice in the important issues that affect our communities. That is why I believe this should be a major focus of our community efforts in the coming months.

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**City Official Benefits**

One issue that is very important to me is to make it so that the elected officials in [NAME OF CITY] are not eligible to draw employment benefits such as healthcare from the city in a way consistent with the regulations for other part-time employees. Elected officials are not full-time employees of the city and providing benefits above and beyond what we provide other part-time employees of the city is a burden to the city. Making these benefits consistent across all employees will create a more efficient government that serves the community rather than elected officials. That is why I believe this should be a major focus of our community efforts in the coming months.

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**City Credit Cards**

One issue that is very important to me is taking away or limiting the use of city credit cards by elected officials that allow them to spend city funds on items they deem necessary for city business. Currently there are no regulations on elected officials regarding what is necessary for “city business.” This creates an opportunity for elected officials to abuse the trust of taxpayers and city funds. By limiting the use of city credit cards we can create a more efficient government that serves the community rather than elected officials. That is why I believe this should be a major focus of our community efforts in the coming months.

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**Nepotism Laws**

One issue that is very important to me is extending nepotism laws to include for city boards and commissions to prohibit family members of elected officials from sitting on those boards. Nepotism laws protect citizens from the abuse of government resources by city officials. Boards and commissions are supposed to be independent of elected officials and to provide unbiased recommendations to the city. By extending nepotism laws to include city boards and commissions we can create a more efficient government that serves the community rather than elected officials. That is why I believe this should be a major focus of our community efforts in the coming months.

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**Ethical Guidelines**

One issue that is very important to me is to develop a handbook for the mayor and city council that outlines ethical guidelines for elected officials just as there are ethical guidelines for city employees. We currently have a clear ethical standard for city employees, but that same standard is not extended to elected officials. This lack of standards creates an environment where elected officials can act in an unethical way without any accountability. By creating ethical guidelines and standards for elected officials we can ensure we have a city government that serves the community rather than elected officials. That is why I believe this should be a major focus of our community efforts in the coming months.

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**Updating the City Charter**

One issue that is very important to me is to update the city charter to clarify the intent of some of the regulations on the behavior and actions of city officials. The current city charter was last updated in 2001 (15 years ago) and as a result the intent behind some of the regulations governing the behaviors and actions of city officials is unclear and outdated. An updated city charter would give greater clarity and direction to city officials about how they should act in their office. By spending time updating and clarifying our city charter we can ensure we have a city government that serves the community rather than elected officials. That is why I believe this should be a major focus of our community efforts in the coming months.

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**City 4 – Official’s Emails to Citizens**

SUBJECT: Improving [CITY 4 NAME]

Dear Residents,  
  
Thank you for the many ways in which you make our community better. The city council is also working hard to improve the community. There are many issues that we are working on. Finding the right ways to invest our resources requires thoughtful judgment and action. We are working to provide information on what is going on in town at our home page (LINK - REDACTED) and Facebook page (LINK - REDACTED).

{ISSUE TREATMENT TEXT TAKEN FROM BELOW IF ASSIGNED TO TREATMENT}  
  
Thanks again for all that you do in the community.  
  
Sincerely,  
[NAME OF OFFICIAL]

City Councilor, [NAME OF CITY}

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**Bicycle Lanes and Trails**

Bike and walking trails are an important amenity to any community. Accommodations such as bike lanes and trails encourage people to participate in active lifestyles, help reduce the number of cars on the road, positively impact the environment by reducing harmful emission, and help attract younger families and professionals who want to live in connected and active communities. As we continue to tackle road improvement projects, it is important that we look for opportunities to improve biking and walking accommodations as well. By investing in trails and bike lanes we can ensure that our community continues to be a wonderful place to live.

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**Clean Up City**

The cleanliness and overall appearance of our community can have a significant impact on our economy. When everyone pitches in to keep our community clean, it results in increased tourism, new business opportunities, and community pride. Cleaning up litter is also essential in maintaining and protecting our environment. The [NAME OF CITY] has several programs in place to encourage residents to help keep our City clean, including the [NAME OF PROGRAM], Adopt-a-road programs, [NAME OF PROGRAM], recycling programs, and more. It is vital that we continue to support programs like these, in order to help improve our environment and make [NAME OF CITY] a better place to live now and for future generations.

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**Streets and Street repair**

The [NAME OF CITY] is planning to tackle more than 30 road improvement projects this season using the local option sales tax. We are now entering our third construction season in the [NAME OF CAMPAIGN], and have completed approximately 40 projects across the community to date (approximately 15 miles of roadway) and invested approximately [$$] as of February 2016. All projects that were scheduled to be completed in fall 2015 were successfully completed.

Approximately [$$]will be spent this construction season on road improvements utilizing the local option sales tax for streets. The projected 2016 list of projects includes approximately eight miles of roadway.

The City has created a 10-year comprehensive strategy for our roads, which enables us to allocate funding to the best and highest use, relying on a prioritization list that is data driven, impartial, and measurable. The [NAME OF PROGRAM], made possible by the one-percent local option sales tax, allows the City to utilize a pay-as-you-go funding source, rather than selling bonds and incurring debt. The City will collect updated pavement condition data on our streets and re-evaluate the plan every two years, to ensure the plan is supporting the best and highest use of funding.

The condition of our streets is an important factor in increasing resident safety and comfort, encouraging new economic opportunities, and developing community pride. That is why continued improvement of our streets is a major goal in our City, and will continue to be a focus into the future.

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**Economic Development**

[NAME OF CITY] is seeing great energy from our local developers, and has several projects in the works in the downtown area and throughout the City. Business, retail and housing are all seeing growth, such as [LIST OF 7 BUSINESSES], and many more.

[NAME OF CITY] also offers unique infrastructure to attract and support businesses in the bioprocessing and ag sectors. Many of these businesses are able to work together, sharing resources to the benefit of both. These companies have been extremely important to our City in the past, and will continue to be in the future. But [NAME OF CITY] offers many opportunities beyond these sectors. In recent years we have established ourselves as a leader in [MIDWEST STATE], offering opportunities for entrepreneurs and established business segments as well as quality of life amenities to attract and retain employees.

These and other exciting projects prove we are long past recovering, and are moving toward strong growth in our community. New development projects and business opportunities bring jobs, business and vitality to our community. That is why economic development is important for the advancement of our City and will continue to be a focus into the future.

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**SI.4. Additional Results**

**Table SI.1. Probability of assignment to treatment for issue-level analysis**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Strata (i.e., Number of movable issues) | Number of individuals in the strata | Ex-ante probability that issue  assigned to treatment  [=1/2\*1/Number of issues)] |
| 1 | 137 | 0.5 |
| 2 | 75 | 0.25 |
| 3 | 27 | 0.167 |
| 4 | 4 | 0.125 |
| 5 | 1 | 0.10 |

**Table SI.2. Taking Timing on Petition Page into Account**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| DV = Spent Time on Petition Page | (1) |
| Regression Model: | Probit |
| Independent Variables |  |
| Treatment Email | -0.27 |
|  | (0.18) |
|  |  |
| Lagged Position: Low Priority | -0.29 |
|  | (0.19) |
|  |  |
| Constant | -0.42 |
|  | (0.18) |
|  |  |
| Observations | 244 |
| Log-likelihood | -127.9 |
|  |  |

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.

**Table SI.3. Main Effect on the One Email Subsample**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Dependent Variable: | Priority of Issue | Visit Petition Page |
|  | (1) | (2) |
| Model: | Ordered Probit | Probit |
| Independent Variables |  |  |
| Treatment Email | -0.25 | -0.46 |
|  | (0.14) | (0.19) |
|  |  |  |
| Lagged Position: Low Priority | -0.98 | -0.27 |
|  | (0.13) | (0.20) |
|  |  |  |
| FE for Strata? | Yes | NA |
|  |  |  |
| Observations | 360 | 213 |
| Clusters (Individuals) | 206 | NA |
| Log-likelihood | -417.1 | -123.4 |

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.

**SI.5. Amazon Mechanical Turk Sample**

Amazon’s Mechanical Turk is a website where individuals can publish tasks (termed Human Intelligence Tasks or HITs) and provide a small payment to those who complete those tasks. In many ways it is similar to other web-based approaches such as YouGov that maintain a panel of respondents and invite respondents to participate in exchange for payment or other incentives. Those who post a task or survey can limit the availability of the task to respondents who meet certain qualifications or criteria, such as age or location. For our experiment, we limited respondents to residents of the United States who were 18 years or older.

We recognize that there are limitations of Mechanical Turk. Mechanical Turk routinely provides samples that are more liberal and Democratic, younger, better educated, and poorer than national samples, although they are more representative than other commonly used convenience samples (Berinsky et al. 2012; Buhrmester, Kwang, and Gosling 2011; Krupnikov and Levine 2014; Paolacci, Chandler, and Stern 2010). However, studies using data from Mechanical Turk have been shown to replicate important experimental findings in psychology and other disciplines (Berinsky, Huber, and Lenz 2012; Clifford, Jewell, and Waggoner 2015; Krupnikov and Levine 2014; Mullinix et al. 2016). What limitations it has been shown to have stem from experiments that require extensive “buy-in” from respondents or experiments where subjects must trust information from the researcher, a situation that is not present in this study. Given its usefulness and its limited drawbacks, Mechanical Turk has become a common means and widely accepted platform to run social science experiments.

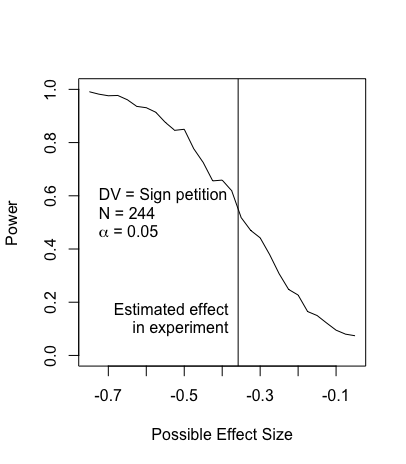
**Table SI.4. Information on Amazon Mechanical Turk Sample**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Demographics** | **ACS 2014 Estimates** | **MTurk Sample** | **NAES 2008** |
| Female | 50.8% | 45.8% | 56.6% |
| Age (mean years) | 37.4 (median) | 36.7 | 50.1 |
| Education (% completing some college) | - | 90.3% | 62.9% |
| White | 73.8% | 77.6% | 79.1% |
| Black | 12.6% | 6.5% | 9.7% |
| Asian | 5.0% | 8.6% | 2.5% |
| Latino (a) | 16.9% | 4.1% | 6.3% |
| Party Identification |  |  |  |
| Democrat | - | 44.6% | 36.7% |
| Independent | - | 31.5% | 20.8% |
| Republican | - | 21.6% | 30.6% |
| *N* | - | 2012 | 19,234 |

**SI.6. Power Analysis**

We use simulation methods to conduct a power analysis. While most power analyses look at how power changes with sample size, we are interested in the power given the sample sizes we have (244 in the individual-level analysis and 415 for the issue-level analysis). We carried out these analyses by starting with the code provided by Coppock (2013) and adjusting it to match the experiment we conducted.

**Figure SI.1. Power simulation for individual-level analysis**



**Figure SI.2. Power simulation for issue-level analysis**

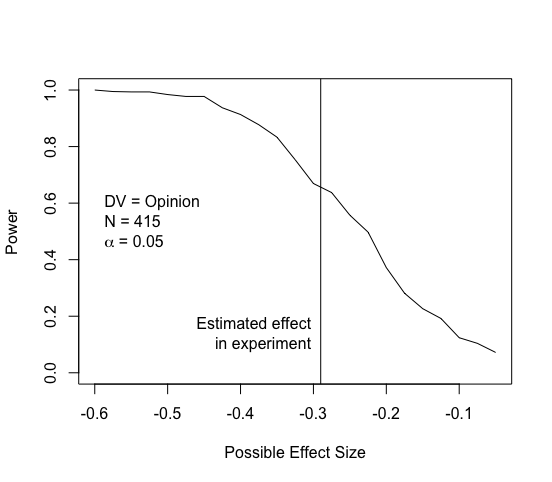


Figure SI.1 provides the results for the individual-level analysis and Figure SI.2 the results for the issue-level analysis. For both figures we calculate the power the sample size we have, while varying the true treatment effect. Finally, the vertical line in both figures indicates the treatment effect that we find in our particular study. The results show that the power was between 0.6 and 0.65 for the treatment effects we find.

*Code for individual-level power analysis*

library(MASS)

library(lmtest)

## This builds on code provided by Alex Coppock (http://egap.org/content/power-analysis-simulations-r)

possible.taus <- seq(from=-.05, to=-.75, by=-.025) # The effects we'll be considering

powers <- rep(NA, length(possible.taus)) # Empty object to collect simulation estimates

alpha <- 0.05 # Standard significance level

sims <- 750 # Number of simulations to conduct for each tau

#### Outer loop to vary the true treatment effect ####

for (j in 1:length(possible.taus)){

tau <- possible.taus[j] # Pick the jth value

significant.experiments <- rep(NA, sims) # Empty object to count significant experiments

#### Inner loop to conduct experiments "sims" times over for each tau ####

for (i in 1:sims){

# Give the potential outcome from the control condition

# The probability comes from the observed outcome in the control group

Y0 <- rbinom(n=244, size=1, prob=.35)

# Give the potential outcome from the treatment condition

# The prob comes from the baseline probability in the control group (pnorm(-.385)= 0.35), adjusted for the treatment effect given by tau.

Y1 <-rbinom(n=244, size=1, prob=pnorm( (-.385+ tau), 0,1))

# Z.sim simulates treatment asssignment. prob=.5 because 50% of the individuals were assigned to treatment

Z.sim <- rbinom(n=244, size=1, prob=.5)

# Reveal outcomes according to assignment

Y.sim <- Y1\*Z.sim + Y0\*(1-Z.sim)

# Estimate regression and test whether the treatment effect is significant.

fit.sim <- glm(Y.sim ~ Z.sim, family=binomial(link="probit"))

p.value <- coeftest(fit.sim)[2,4] # Extract p-values

significant.experiments[i] <- (p.value <= alpha) # Determine significance according to p <= 0.05

}

# store average success rate (power) for each tau

powers[j] <- mean(significant.experiments)

}

# Plot the simulated power results

plot(possible.taus, powers, type="l", ylim=c(0,1), xlab="Possible Effect Size", ylab="Power")

abline(v=-.358) # This is the estimated effect (see Column 1 of Table 7)

text(x=-.358, y=.17, "Estimated effect", pos=2)

text(x=-.358, y=.1, "in experiment", pos=2)

text(x=-.75, y=.6, "DV = Sign petition",pos=4)

text(x=-.75, y=.53, "N = 244",pos=4)

text(x=-.75, y=.46, expression(paste(alpha, " = 0.05")),pos=4 )

*Code for issue-level power analysis*

library(dplyr)

library(MASS)

library(lmtest)

## This is based on code provided by Alex Coppock (http://egap.org/content/power-analysis-simulations-r)

possible.taus <- seq(from=-.05, to=-.60, by=-.025) # The effects we'll be considering

powers <- rep(NA, length(possible.taus)) # Empty object to collect simulation estimates

alpha <- 0.05 # Standard significance level

sims <- 750 # Number of simulations to conduct for each N

# Simulate a dataset

# Create dataset to simulate having 262 individuals - who are movable on 1 to 5 issues

# Number who are movable matches the numbers in the dataset.

# The "id" variable corresponds to the number of individuals in the issue-level analysis

df.id<-as.data.frame(c(1:149, rep(150:231,2), rep(231:257,3),rep(258:261,4),rep(262,5)))

names(df.id)=c("id")

df.id$row=c(1:length(df.id$id))

# "Strata" matches the number of issues on which the individual is movable.

strata<-c(rep(1,149),rep(2,164),rep(3,81),rep(4,16),rep(5,5))

#### Outer loop to vary the true treatment effect ####

for (j in 1:length(possible.taus)){

tau <- possible.taus[j] # Pick the jth value for N

significant.experiments <- rep(NA, sims) # Empty object to count significant experiments

#### Inner loop to conduct experiments "sims" times over for each tau ####

for (i in 1:sims){

c1=-1.396

c2=-0.191

c3=1.031

## Simulate the potential outcomes

Y0 <- sample( c(1:4), 415, replace=TRUE, prob=c( pnorm(c1, 0, 1), pnorm(c2, 0, 1)- pnorm(c1, 0, 1), pnorm(c3, 0, 1)- pnorm(c2, 0, 1), 1- pnorm(c3, 0, 1)) )

Y1 <- sample( c(1:4), 415, replace=TRUE, prob=c( pnorm(c1-tau, 0, 1), pnorm(c2-tau, 0, 1)- pnorm(c1-tau, 0, 1), pnorm(c3-tau, 0, 1)- pnorm(c2-tau, 0, 1), 1- pnorm(c3-tau, 0, 1)) )

## Match the randomization process used in the exxperiment

## Select an issue per individual

treated.issue<-df.id %>% group\_by(id) %>% sample\_n(size = 1)

treated.issue$issue.chosen<-1

df.issue<-merge(df.id,treated.issue,by="row", all=T)

df.issue$issue.chosen <- ifelse(is.na(df.issue$issue.chosen),0,1)

## Select half because 50 percenmt of the time a person (and their randomly-chosen issue) was chosen for the treatment group

Z.individual<-rbinom(n=415, size=1, prob=.5)

## Get the treatment status for each observation by multiplying the two pieces together (i.e., half of the individuals receive letter on chosen issue)

Z.sim <- Z.individual\*df.issue$issue.chosen

## Calculate observed outcome base on treatment status

Y.sim <- Y1\*Z.sim + Y0\*(1-Z.sim)

#Estimate the model controlling for strata (Matches column 1 of Table 6)

fit.sim <- polr(factor(Y.sim) ~ Z.sim +factor(strata), method="probit")

# Extract p-values

p.value <- coeftest(fit.sim)[1,4]

# Determine significance according to p <= 0.05

significant.experiments[i] <- (p.value <= alpha)

}

## Store average success rate (power) for each tau

powers[j] <- mean(significant.experiments)

}

# Plot the Results

plot(possible.taus, powers, type="l", ylim=c(0,1), xlab="Possible Effect Size", ylab="Power")

abline(v=-.29) # This is the estimated effect (see Column 1 of Table 7)

text(x=-.29, y=.17, "Estimated effect", pos=2)

text(x=-.29, y=.1, "in experiment", pos=2)

text(x=-.6, y=.6, "DV = Opinion",pos=4)

text(x=-.6, y=.53, "N = 415",pos=4)

text(x=-.6, y=.46, expression(paste(alpha, " = 0.05")),pos=4 )

**SI.7. Randomization Code**

The following is the R-code used to randomize the treatment.

## NB: df.raw = the data

## Drop people who didn't answer any of the position questions

df.raw <- df.raw[!is.na(df.raw$issue1) | !is.na(df.raw$issue2) | !is.na(df.raw$issue3) | !is.na(df.raw$issue4) | !is.na(df.raw$issue5) | !is.na(df.raw$issue6), ]

## Gives the number number of issues in this city. This information is used later.

num.iss <- 6

## Identify the number who were movable (And on what issue they were movable)

## Identify the issues that were a low priority.

df.raw$low.priority1 <-ifelse(df.raw$issue1==2,1,0)

df.raw$low.priority2 <-ifelse(df.raw$issue2==2,1,0)

df.raw$low.priority3 <-ifelse(df.raw$issue3==2,1,0)

df.raw$low.priority4 <-ifelse(df.raw$issue4==2,1,0)

df.raw$low.priority5 <-ifelse(df.raw$issue5==2,1,0)

df.raw$low.priority6 <-ifelse(df.raw$issue6==2,1,0)

## Identify the issues that were a medium priority

df.raw$med.priority1 <-ifelse(df.raw$issue1==3,1,0)

df.raw$med.priority2 <-ifelse(df.raw$issue2==3,1,0)

df.raw$med.priority3 <-ifelse(df.raw$issue3==3,1,0)

df.raw$med.priority4 <-ifelse(df.raw$issue4==3,1,0)

df.raw$med.priority5 <-ifelse(df.raw$issue5==3,1,0)

df.raw$med.priority6 <-ifelse(df.raw$issue6==3,1,0)

attach(df.raw)

factor(df.raw$total.low<-rowSums(cbind(low.priority1,low.priority2,low.priority3,low.priority5,low.priority6)))

factor(df.raw$total.med<-rowSums(cbind(med.priority1,med.priority2,med.priority3,med.priority5,med.priority6)))

detach(df.raw)

## Create dataframe with those we in the sampling frame

df.randomizations<-df.raw[df.raw$total.low!=0 | df.raw$total.med!=0,]

## Number we use in the low-priority group (by number of issues they have as low priority)

table(df.randomizations$total.low[df.randomizations$total.low!=0])

## Number we use in the med-priority group ONLY (i.e., who had no issues in "low-priority)

table(df.randomizations$total.med[df.randomizations$total.low==0])

## Randomize Treatment

## Low-Priority Sub-sample

## Randomize so that half get a letter

low.rand <- rnorm(length(df.randomizations$total.low[df.randomizations$total.low!=0]))

df.low.treatment <- df.randomizations[df.randomizations$total.low!=0, ]

for(i in 1:length(low.rand)){

df.low.treatment$tr.letter[i] <- ifelse(low.rand[i]>median(low.rand),1,0)

}

## Randomly pick which issue would be chosen if they get a letter

low.issue.rand <- matrix(runif(num.iss\*length(low.rand), min=0.1, max=1), ncol=num.iss)

iss.positions <- cbind(df.low.treatment$low.priority1, df.low.treatment$low.priority2,df.low.treatment$low.priority3,df.low.treatment$low.priority4)

temp <- iss.positions \* low.issue.rand

df.low.treatment$tr.issue <- as.matrix(apply(temp,1,which.max))

df.low.treatment$low.priority.sample <- 1

## Medium-Priority Sub-sample

## Randomize so that half get a letter

med.rand <- rnorm(length(df.randomizations$total.med[df.randomizations$total.low==0]))

df.med.treatment <- df.randomizations[df.randomizations$total.low==0, ]

for(i in 1:length(med.rand)){

df.med.treatment$tr.letter[i] <- ifelse(med.rand[i]>median(med.rand),1,0)

}

## Randomly pick which issue would be chosen if they get a letter

med.issue.rand <- matrix(runif(num.iss\*length(med.rand), min=0.1, max=1), ncol=num.iss)

iss.positions2 <- cbind(df.med.treatment$med.priority1, df.med.treatment$med.priority2,df.med.treatment$med.priority3,df.med.treatment$med.priority4)

temp <- iss.positions2 \* med.issue.rand

df.med.treatment$tr.issue <- as.matrix(apply(temp,1,which.max))

df.med.treatment$low.priority.sample <- 0

## Combine

df.tr.combined <- rbind(df.low.treatment, df.med.treatment)

write.csv(df.tr.combined, file="TreatmentAssignments.csv")

**Supporting Information References**

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