

PUBLIC APPROVAL OF STATE LEGISLATURES

Lilliard E. Richardson, Jr.
Truman School of Public Affairs
University of Missouri
richardsonle@missouri.edu

David M. Konisky
Georgetown Public Policy Institute
Georgetown University
dmk74@georgetown.edu

Jeffrey Milyo
Department of Economics
University of Missouri
milyoj@missouri.edu

ABSTRACT

The determinants of public approval for state legislatures have not received much attention, but one important finding is that more professionalized legislatures experience lower levels of public support. We argue that this result is an artifact of limited data and problematic model specifications. Analyzing a large national survey sample, we demonstrate that the negative relationship holds primarily for conservatives and to a lesser extent for moderates but not liberals. Additionally, we find that legislative approval in states with term limits and ballot initiatives is no different than in states without these institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Citizens expect much of democratic governance, but they are also often frustrated with the political process. In particular, the compromise, delay, and byzantine procedures of legislatures can be bewildering and alienating for the average citizen. Studies have shown high levels of citizen cynicism about democracies around the globe (Norris 1999) and in American state and national politics (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995; Rosenthal 2009). Citizen approval of U.S. state legislatures, however, has received only modest scholarly attention (Patterson, Ripley and Quinlan 1992; Patterson, Hedlund, and Boynton 1975; Jewell 1982; Squire 1993; Kelleher and Wolak 2007) and has been limited by both theoretical and empirical shortcomings.

Studying data from the 2007 and 2008 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), we address these issues by analyzing attitudes from surveys of over 36,000 respondents over two years to examine the factors associated with public approval of state legislatures. Our analysis improves on the existing literature in three specific ways. First, we control for the possible effects of several relevant state institutions on legislative approval, not just legislative professionalism. Second, we show that political ideology plays an important role in conditioning the relationship between these institutions and public approval. Third, we estimate models that address the possible endogeneity problem caused by including gubernatorial approval in models of legislative approval. The central finding of our analysis is that the negative relationship between legislative professionalism and approval found in both Squire (1993) and Kelleher and Wolak (2007) diminishes when interacting a state legislature's professionalism level with a respondent's ideology, and that ideological conservatives in states with more professional legislatures are more negative than moderates and liberals toward the state legislature.

The balance of the paper proceeds as follows. In the next section, we review the prior literature on the determinants of public approval of state legislatures. We then discuss the survey data used in our study and our methodological improvements to the extant literature. Finally, we report our findings and conclude with a brief discussion of the implications of the results.

PUBLIC APPROVAL OF STATE LEGISLATURES

Surveys of the American public have long revealed citizens' disdain for Congress. As Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (1995, 60) note, "Congress embodies practically everything Americans dislike about politics." Public opinion of state legislatures is quite similar. Figure 1 uses data from the 2008 CCES survey to display approval rates for each state legislature set against the legislative professionalism score for the state (using the measures constructed by Squire and Hamm, 2005).¹ There are two defining features of the approval rates. First, state legislatures are held in low regard across the country. A majority of respondents in only five states – Alaska, Idaho, North Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming – approved of their state legislature. Across all respondents, the level of approval was approximately 35%. Second, there appears to be a negative association between legislative professionalism and public approval rates. Legislative approval is particularly low in states with highly-professionalized legislatures, such as California, Michigan, and New York, and highest in states with citizen legislatures, such as North Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. This pattern is consistent with previous research showing a negative correlation between legislative professionalism and public approval.

[Figure 1 about here]

Although scholars have given state legislatures considerable attention, there is not a large literature studying the determinants of public approval. In part, the lack of past research is due to data limitations. Major surveys of American political attitudes, such as the American National

Election Studies, are focused on the national level and generally do not include questions measuring attitudes and opinions about state government. Most of the studies that have been conducted rely on opinion data from a single state or just a few states (Patterson, Hedlund, Boynton 1975; Jewell 1982; Cotter 1986; Patterson, Ripley, and Quinlan 1992; Squire 1993; though Kelleher and Wolak 2007 is an important exception).

Among the central findings of the existing studies are that socioeconomic and political attributes such as education, occupation, income, partisan identification, political ideology, and political efficacy are associated with evaluations of the legislature (Patterson, Hedlund, and Boynton 1975; Patterson, Ripley, and Quinlan 1992; Squire 1993). In terms of state political institutions and other contextual factors, Squire (1993) found that legislative professionalism was negatively related to an individual's level of approval. Squire posited that the reason for the negative association might be that states with highly professional legislatures tend to be populous and economically and socially diverse, and citizens in such states may demand more from their state legislature. "Because professionalized legislatures are likely to have more expected of them," Squire (1993, 488) notes, "they are apt to disappoint people."

Kelleher and Wolak (2007) similarly considered both individual- and institutional-level determinants of confidence in state legislatures, although their models omitted individual-level political attitudes. Consistent with Squire (1993), they found that professionalism levels were negatively associated with public confidence and argued that legislatures with longer sessions, greater complexity, and larger staffs are more distant from "people's ideal of citizen legislatures" (708). In a separate model, they found higher levels of confidence in states with term limits but lower rates of approval in states with either an initiative or referendum. In addition, they found

public confidence in state legislatures to be lower on average in states with divided government but higher in states scoring well in government management practices.

CHALLENGES IN ASSESSING APPROVAL OF LEGISLATURES

In addition to the data constraints previously noted, we argue that studies in the existing literature suffer from three additional problems. First, past work has under-theorized the role that state political institutions have on public approval for legislatures by not considering the full set of potentially relevant institutions. Second, scholars have not taken into account that political ideology conditions the relationship between institutions and individual-level public approval. Third, past work has ignored the likely endogeneity between gubernatorial and legislative approval. We discuss each problem in turn.

Prior studies do not fully consider how state institutions may shape citizen approval of state legislatures. The legislative approval model estimated by Squire, for example, did not consider the possible influence of state institutions beyond legislative professionalism. Kelleher and Wolak considered some other state institutions, but not all together in the same model. We argue that three state institutions – legislative professionalism, term limits, and citizen initiatives – are likely to influence citizens' level of approval of state legislatures, and that each should be included in models to avoid potential omitted variable bias.

Legislative professionalism has a number of institutional and behavioral effects that might enhance public approval of legislatures. Professionalized legislatures have been associated with increased legislative efficiency (Squire 1998), more time for legislators to focus on developing legislation, deliberating on policy, and interacting with other branches (Squire 1988; Rosenthal 1998), greater policy innovation (Kousser 2005), more casework for constituents (Freeman and Richardson 1996), and greater congruence between public opinion

and policy (Maestas 2000). Although scholars have generally viewed these effects positively, past studies have found a negative association between legislative professionalism and public approval of and confidence in state legislatures (Jewell 1982, Patterson, Ripley, and Quinlan 1992; Squire 1993; Kelleher and Wolak 2007). The negative relationship may be due to other outcomes associated with legislative professionalism, including that it provides incumbents with greater electoral safety (Berry, Berkman, and Schneiderman 2000), attracts more ambitious legislators (Maestas 2003), and advantages Democrats (Fiorina 1989, 1994).

Term limits may also shape public approval of state legislatures. Term limit proponents argue that careerism was a major contributor to pork barrel spending, excessive regulation, and inefficient bureaucratic practices (Fiorina 1989). Because state legislatures increased in professionalism from the 1960s to 1980s, they became more attractive for politicians seeking a career in a single chamber (Moncrief and Thompson 1992), and states witnessed increasing levels of tenure and higher reelection margins for incumbents (Breux and Jewell 1992). The conventional wisdom regarding term-limits was that they would produce “citizen legislators” (Glazer and Wattenberg 1996). If proponents were right about term-limited legislators staying closer to the people, then we would expect citizens in states with legislative term limits to exhibit higher levels of legislative approval, as found by Kelleher and Wolak (2007).

A third state institution that might be an important correlate of legislative approval is the citizen initiative. Studies suggest procedures allowing citizen input via direct democracy enhance internal and external efficacy (Bowler and Donovan 2002), and create opportunities for participation that positively influence citizen support for government (Barber 1984). Further, studies have found that the initiative improves legislator information about citizen preferences (Matusaka 1992), and even the threat of the initiative may push legislative outcomes closer to

citizen preferences (Gerber 1996). Such effects are likely to make citizens more favorable toward state legislatures. Conversely, the initiative process could negatively affect legislative approval. Expensive campaigns run by professionals in the “initiative industry” have been used to support or oppose ballot measures, and some are concerned that the initiative process has been captured by special interests (Schrag 1998; Broder 2000). Also, some state legislatures have largely ignored, substantially amended, or subverted ballot measures (Waters 2001). Such concerns could cause citizen frustration with the policy process and reduce legislative approval. The negative relationship found by Kelleher and Wolak (2007) would support this view.

State institutions may therefore affect how citizens feel about their legislature, but should we expect these feelings to be the same for everyone? Previous studies have not considered the possibility that political attitudes may condition the effect of state institutions on approval.² Jones and McDermott (2002) have argued that ideology directly affects ratings of Congressional performance, and one would expect a similar relationship with state legislatures.

We argue that political ideology conditions the relationship between legislative professionalism and approval. For example, if professionalism is associated with a larger government that spends more money (Owings and Borck 2000), conservatives in states with professional legislatures may have more negative reactions. Further, if Fiorina (1994) is correct that professionalism advantages Democrats, and if conservatives in states with a professional legislature see incumbency effects as primarily helping the opposition, conservatives may express less support for the legislature.

A similar argument can be made about the relationship between political ideology and term limits. Ideological conservatives were vocal proponents of term limits (Petraicca 1991; Will 1992), seeing them as a way to curtail careerism and other ills perceived as plaguing state

legislatures. Our expectation is that because conservatives were more likely to support the passage of term limits, prefer limited government, and like the outcomes from legislatures with fewer ambitious Democrats, ideology will interact with the presence of term limits in shaping public approval of state legislatures. Term limits would not have a consistent effect across all citizens; rather, conservatives in term limited states would more positively view the legislature.

A third potential problem with the existing literature is that gubernatorial approval is likely endogenous to legislative approval, yet studies in the literature typically include it as a right-hand side variable without treating it as such (Patterson, Ripley, and Quinlan, 1992; Squire 1993).³ There are at least two reasons for this potential endogeneity problem. First, to the extent to which citizens given credit or attribute blame to one institution or the other, evaluations of a state government's elected officials are likely to be jointly determined. Second, endogeneity may result from an omitted variables problem. If there are unobserved factors correlated with evaluations of the governor and the error term, estimates from a model including gubernatorial approval as an explanatory variable will be inconsistent. Omitted variables of this type might include a scandal, a bad fiscal situation, or an unfavorable policy outcome. Regardless of the source of endogeneity, including gubernatorial approval in a model explaining variation in legislative approval may be problematic.

DATA AND METHODS

We examine the determinants of public approval of state legislatures using data primarily from the 2007 and 2008 CCES surveys (Ansolabehere 2007, 2008).⁴ Each survey is composed of two parts: a common section asked of all respondents, and team modules administered to subsamples of 1,000 persons. In the analysis here, we pool respondents from the 2007 and 2008 common content portion of the two surveys, which had sample sizes of 10,000 and 32,500,

respectively. Once missing values are dropped, the final usable sample is just over 36,000. The matched random sample methodology used by YouGov/Polimetrix seeks to produce a nationally representative sample but not a state-representative sample. An important advantage of the large survey, however, is that there is good coverage of each state's population. On average, there are 735 respondents from each state in the pooled sample.⁵ By comparison, Squire's (1993) survey had about 300 respondents from each of the seven states covered, while the survey analyzed by Kelleher and Wolak (2007) had only 36 respondents from each state, on average.

As a starting point for our analysis we estimate the following baseline model:

$$\text{Legislative Approval}_i = \alpha_i + \beta_1 \text{Legislative Professionalism}_s + \beta_2 \text{Gubernatorial Approval}_i + \beta_3 \text{State Economic Conditions}_s + \beta_4 \text{Political Attributes}_i + \beta_5 \text{Demographics}_i + \beta_6 \text{CCES 2007} + \varepsilon_i$$

where i indexes individuals and s indexes states. *Legislative Approval* is the respondent's approval of the state legislature, and is coded on a five-point scale ranging from strongly disapprove (1) to strongly approve (5).⁶ *Gubernatorial Approval* is coded on the same five-point scale. *Legislative Professionalism* is measured in the standard way using legislator salary, number of professional staff, and session length with a theoretical range from zero to one with Congress as the standard at a score of one (Squire and Hamm 2005).⁷ *State Economic Conditions* is measured as the state unemployment rate to control for the effects of economic circumstances on approval rates (Patterson, Ripley, and Quinlan 1992; Kelleher and Wolak 2007). *Political Attributes* is a vector of individual-level political attributes, including ideology (measured on a five-point scale ranging from very liberal to very conservative) and party self-identification represented by Republican and Democrat dummy variables (other party and no party are the excluded category). In addition, we include a variable we term "home team" legislature coded as a one if a citizen identifies as of the same party controlling both chambers of

the state legislature, another variable called “opponent team” legislature if a citizen is of the opposite party controlling both chambers, and a third excluded category for independents or partisans with a divided legislature.⁸ Consistent with research on attitudes about Congress (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995; Kimball and Patterson 1997), partisans are more likely to approve of an institution controlled by their “team” than one that has divided or full control by another party. Last, *Demographics* is a vector of individual-level attributes that includes age, indicator measures for gender and minority groups (whites are the excluded category), education (measured on a five-point scale), income (measured on a 15-point scale),⁹ and a dummy variable for whether the respondent was registered to vote. An online Appendix presents descriptive statistics for all of the variables in the model.

The estimates we present below are not sensitive to the pooling of the surveys across the two years. We estimated each of the regression models separately for 2007 and 2008 with substantively identical results. However, to account for any differences in the surveys (including differences in survey context), we also include a 2007 dummy variable. Also, because respondents are grouped by state, we correct all standard errors for clustering by state (Primo, Jacobsmeier and Milyo 2007).

After estimating the base model, we serially address the shortcomings in extant work we highlighted previously. First, we address the endogeneity of gubernatorial approval with an instrumental variables approach. We use two variables as instruments in the first stage estimating gubernatorial approval: the Beyle measure of gubernatorial power (1968, 2010) and home team governor, which indicates whether the respondent is of the same party as the current governor (+1), independent (0), or in the opposite party (-1). The original Beyle measure has six categories (appointment power, budget power, organizational power, party control in the

legislature, tenure potential, and veto power), but one category (legislative party control) is closely related to other variables in the model so we dropped it from the index. The justification for these instruments is that they are analogous to legislative professionalism and the home team legislative variable so we have roughly parallel construction in the models. Diagnostic tests such as the Hansen J-test, F-tests, and a test of joint significance of endogenous regressors (reported in the online appendix) suggest that the instruments are appropriate.

We then estimate the model including term limits and citizen initiatives. These institutions are measured as dummy variables coded as one if a state has the institution in place and zero otherwise.¹⁰ The term limits data come from National Conference of State Legislatures (2010), and the information on initiatives comes from Bowler and Donovan (2004). Last, we test our argument that political ideology conditions the effects of legislative professionalism and term limits. To do so, we include interaction terms between ideology and legislative professionalism and ideology and term limits. Our expectation with professionalism is that it will have no independent impact on evaluations of state legislatures, but that conservatives in states with professional legislatures will have lower levels of support for the legislature. Similarly, we anticipate that conservatives in states with term limits will show more support for the legislature.

RESULTS

The estimates in the first column of Table 1 are from an OLS regression of the baseline model described above, which reflects the standard approach taken in the literature.¹¹ The results are consistent with past studies so there is nothing unusual about the CCES survey or the time-period studied. The model estimates indicate a negative association between the state legislative professionalism score and public approval for that institution as found by Squire (1993) and Kelleher and Wolak (2007). In addition, the positive coefficient on the home team measure

suggests that individuals are more supportive of the legislature when they are of the same party controlling the legislature, and the negative opponent team variable suggests less support for a legislature controlled by the other party. Also, compared to political independents, Democrats and Republicans were on average more favorable toward the state legislature. Further, consistent with Patterson, Ripley, and Quinlan (1992) and Squire (1993), there is a positive association between evaluations of the executive and legislative branches of state government.

[Table 1 about here]

Many of the control variables suggest systematic relationships with public approval of state legislatures. Women and African-Americans were, on average, more likely to approve of their state legislature, while older Americans and those with higher levels of education and income were more likely to disapprove. These patterns hold across model specifications.

The estimates reported in the second column are from a 2SLS-IV model, where we have instrumented for gubernatorial approval to address endogeneity concerns.¹² The coefficient on gubernatorial approval remains positive and statistically significant. The negative relationship between legislative professionalism and public approval also remains as do the relationships between each of the other institutional and individual determinants found to be systematically related to legislative approval in the base model. Although the relationships with these variables do not change, the 2SLS-IV estimates provide more consistent estimates.

The next set of results considers the effects of institutions, first in isolation, and then interacted with political ideology. We estimate this and each subsequent model with 2SLS-IV to continue to address the endogeneity concern with gubernatorial approval. The regression reported in the third column adds dummy variables to the previous model indicating whether the respondent's state had in place term limits and/or the citizen initiative. The coefficients on the

term limits and citizen initiative variables are not statistically different from zero, suggesting that citizens in states with and without these institutions do not systematically vary in their approval of state legislatures.¹³ This result stands in stark contrast to Kelleher and Wolak's (2007) findings that citizens in initiative states were significantly more negative and citizens in states with term limits were significantly more positive in their assessments of the state legislature. Finally, the coefficients on the other variables of principal interest are largely unchanged, with the exception of state economic conditions. In this model, an individual is more likely to disapprove of the state legislature when his or her state's unemployment rate is high.

Last, we test our hypothesis that political ideology conditions the relationship between legislative institutions and public approval for the legislature. The parameter estimates support this conclusion for legislative professionalism. When including this interaction term, the negative association between legislative professionalism and public approval found in Squire (1993), Kelleher and Wolak (2007) and in our base model diminishes. The coefficient on a state's legislative professionalism level is positive and not statistically significant. The coefficient on the interaction term, however, is significant and negative. Political ideology conditions the effect of legislative professionalism and in a particular way: conservatives in states with professional legislatures are less approving of their state legislature.¹⁴ Counter to our expectations, the same is not true for term limits. Public approval neither systematically differs among residents of states with or without this institution, nor is the relationship conditional on an individual's political ideology as anticipated.¹⁵

Figure 2 further illustrates how political ideology conditions the relationship between legislative professionalism and citizen approval of the legislature. Using the coefficients from the final model presented in Table 1, the graph shows the predicted values of legislative approval

for each respondent set against the legislative professionalism score of the respondent's state. Using a linear fit with 95% confidence levels on the predicted mean, we estimate the predicted legislative approval for conservatives, moderates, and liberals. *Ceteris paribus*, liberals do not vary much in their approval of legislatures across different levels of state professionalism, moderates show a slightly lower level of approval as professionalism increases, but conservatives have much lower levels of approval as professionalism increases.¹⁶

[Figure 2 about here]

CONCLUSION

Squire's (1993) seminal work on the determinants of state legislative approval has led to a longstanding belief that legislative professionalism leads to lower public approval of state legislatures, perhaps because so much more is expected of more professionalized bodies. However, we demonstrate that this observation is an artifact of limited data and model misspecification.¹⁷ The negative relationship between professionalism and legislative approval is observed primarily among ideological conservatives, somewhat among moderates, but not among liberals. This is inconsistent with Squire's hypothesis as it is likely to be liberals that "expect more" (in a positive sense) from more professionalized legislatures.

These results also inform our understanding of how state institutions themselves can create rifts among citizens. Institutions such as legislative professionalism and term limits are often conceived as tools to improve the performance of state legislatures, for example by providing resources to help elected officials produce better policy or by curtailing the shirking of career-minded politicians. The findings presented here, however, remind us that these institutions represent different things to different segments of the electorate. We show that one's political ideology matters as it relates to approval of legislatures, but these types of relationships

also may be present in other contexts. We believe that one particularly promising area for research in this regard would be preferences about state voting reforms that purport to either facilitate participation (such as election-day registration and vote by mail) or enhance the integrity of elections (such as photo identification).

The public's view of state legislatures has ebbed and flowed over time, and the survey of attitudes analyzed here suggest that state legislatures are currently not well regarded. In the past, major institutional reforms have been adopted during times of public scorn for legislatures so low levels of approval could have long-term impacts. Combined with the fiscal strains that have been affecting (and will likely continue to affect) the states in the period after the surveys were conducted in 2007 and 2008, one can expect difficult times for incumbent legislators in upcoming elections and perhaps tumultuous times for the state legislatures as organizations.

An important implication of our research is that past institutional remedies, such as the citizen initiative, various organizational facets comprising legislative professionalism, and term limits, do not appear to have much impact in enhancing public approval of legislatures. While it is possible that these institutions – most of which were implemented decades ago – led to improvements in public assessments of state legislatures, any such effects seem to have been short-lived. Our results suggest that citizens' attitudes toward their legislature in states with term limits and the citizen initiative are no different than those of citizens residing in states without these institutions. Further, higher levels of legislative professionalism have no appreciable effect on self-identified ideological liberals and modestly negative impacts on moderates. Most importantly, conservatives living in states with professionalized legislatures express considerably less approval of their state legislatures. These findings make one less than sanguine about the efficacy of the next round of institutional reforms in shaping public approval of state legislatures.

NOTES

¹ The CCES survey includes respondents from all states, but the samples are not representative of each state. For this reason, the data presented in Figure 1 should be interpreted cautiously.

² Squire (1993) and Kelleher and Wolak (2007) neither controlled for political ideology nor considered how it might condition the effect of professionalism.

³ Kelleher and Wolak (2007) estimated legislative approval and gubernatorial approval models separately. To the extent one is correlated with the other, this creates an omitted variable bias.

⁴ YouGov/Polimetrix uses a matched random sample methodology to generate samples. The firm develops a target population from general population studies, and then draws a random set of respondents from this target population to create a “target sample.” Using a matching algorithm, the firm selects potential respondents from its pool of opt-in participants that match the target sample (Ansolabehere 2008, Rivers 2007, and Vavreck and Rivers 2008).

⁵ The sample contains a large number of respondents from a few large states with highly-professionalized state legislatures and low public approval (California, Michigan, and New York). We therefore estimated the full model while sequentially excluding each of these states as a robustness check. Excluding each state has no impact on findings except that the estimates without California show a significant positive result for the term limits and ideology interaction.

⁶ The variable for legislative approval was coded differently in 2007 and 2008. In both years, categories included strongly approve, approve, disapprove, and strongly disapprove. In 2007, the question also included a “neither approve nor disapprove” option, but in 2008 the only neutral option was “not sure.” We treated each of these as the middle category in our analysis, but we also tested all models separately for the two years as well as with different coding scales for the variables in unreported tables, and the main results were substantively the same.

⁷ Although scores for each state vary over time, Squire (2007) has shown stability in the rankings of states, especially those in the extremes of the measure.

⁸ In the reported models the measure includes partisans and strong partisans, but the results are not sensitive to the inclusion of citizens leaning toward a party.

⁹ Approximately nine percent of the sample did not respond to the income question. Rather than exclude these respondents from the analysis, we coded these responses as zero, and then included a dummy variable to indicate whether the respondent answered this question.

¹⁰ The measure of citizen initiative does not include state referendum initiated by the legislature.

¹¹ One could be concerned with the use of OLS on a dependent variable with a five-point scale.

While we report the results of the OLS for ease of interpretation and consistency with the instrumental variables regression, ordinal logistic regression showed no substantive differences.

¹² The first stage regression explaining gubernatorial approval includes the same set of demographic variables as the main legislative approval model, including ideology, partisanship, demographics and the year variable. The coefficients for the main variables of interest as well as diagnostics for the IV regression are reported in the online appendix.

¹³ Because term limits are in effect only in states with ballot measures, there is potential for collinearity that could suppress the effects for either institution. We tested the model with each institution in isolation, and results reported in an online appendix show no major differences.

¹⁴ Because ideology and partisanship are closely related, it is difficult to fully sort out the conditional effect of ideology and legislative professionalism versus partisan assessments. Self-identifying Republicans are more likely to be conservative, and it may be that the reason conservatives are less likely to approve of their legislature in professional states is that they view such legislatures as benefitting Democrats in purely partisan terms rather than because of

perceptions of unfavorable policy options or views on career politicians. In other words, it may be the case that partisanship is driving the negative relationship between the ideology-legislative professionalism interaction term and legislative approval. Because self-identified partisanship and ideology are highly correlated, we cannot rule out this possibility. We dealt with this issue by separately including partisanship and ideology in the models, and each has an independent effect. Further, in models not reported here, we included an interaction term between partisanship and professionalism in place of the ideology and professionalism interaction, and we obtained similar results in that strong Republicans in more professional states had lower public approval ratings than moderates or Democrats in those states.

¹⁵ Although the interaction variable for term limits and ideology was not significant in the model with the full sample, in the online appendix we present results of the model with separate samples for each of the three ideological groups. We find that term limits are positively and significantly associated with legislative approval for a sample of conservatives only, but it is not significant for liberals or moderates.

¹⁶ At the time of the survey, three of the four most professional legislatures had divided party control (Michigan, New York, and Wisconsin) and the most professional legislature (California) had a Republican governor with a Democratic legislature so this result appears to not be driven purely by Democratic control of the state governments with the most professional legislatures.

¹⁷ One caveat is in order: our study, like those before us, cannot control for unobserved state-specific heterogeneity through the use of state-fixed effects as we do not have several years of survey data covering a time period in which there are many changes to legislative institutions.

REFERENCES

- Ansolabehere, Stephen, COOPERATIVE CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION STUDY, 2008:
COMMON CONTENT. [Computer File] Release 1: February 2009. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T.
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, COOPERATIVE CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION STUDY, 2007:
COMMON CONTENT. [Computer File] Release 1: April 2008. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T.
- Barber, David. 1984. *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*. Berkeley:
University of California Press.
- Berry, William D., Michael B. Berkman, and Stuart Schneiderman. 2000. "Explaining
Incumbency Re-Election." *American Political Science Review* 94:859-874.
- Beyle, Thad L. 1968. "The Governor's Formal Powers: A View from the Governor's Chair."
Public Administration Review 28:540-545.
- Beyle, Thad L. 2010. "Gubernatorial Power: The Institutional Power Ratings for the 50
Governors of the United States." Found at - <http://www.unc.edu/~beyle/gubnewpwr.html>.
- Bowler Shaun, and Todd Donovan. 2002. "Democracy, Institutions, and Attitudes about Citizen
Influence on Government." *British Journal of Political Science* 32:371-390.
- Bowler, Shaun, and Todd Donovan. 2004. "Measuring the Effect of Direct Democracy on State
Policy: Not All Initiatives Are Created Equal." *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* 4:345-363.
- Breaux, David, and Malcolm Jewell. 1992. "Winning Big: The Incumbency Advantage in State
Legislative Races." In *Changing Patterns in State Legislative Careers*, ed. Gary Moncrief and
Joel Thompson. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Broder, David. 2000. *Democracy Derailed: Initiative Campaigns and the Power of Money*. New
York: Harcourt Brace Publishers.
- Cotter, Patrick. 1986. "Legislatures and Public Opinion." *State Government* 59:46-51.

- Fiorina, Morris P. 1989. *Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment*, Second Edition. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Fiorina, Morris P. 1994. "Divided Government in the American States: A By-Product of Legislative Professionalism?" *American Political Science Review* 88:304-316.
- Freeman, Patricia, and Lilliard E. Richardson, Jr. 1996. "Explaining Variation in Casework Among State Legislators." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 21:41-56.
- Gerber, Elizabeth. 1996. *The Populist Paradox: Interest Group Influence and the Promise of Direct Legislation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Glazer, Amihai, and Martin P. Wattenberg. 1996. In *Legislative Term Limits: Public Choice Perspectives*. Edited by Bernard Grofman. Boston: Kluwer.
- Hibbing, John R., and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse. 1995. *Congress as Public Enemy: Public Attitudes Toward American Political Institutions*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Jewell, Malcolm E. 1982. *Representation in State Legislatures*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press.
- Jones, David R. and Monika L. McDermott. 2002. "Ideological Distance from the Majority Party and Public Approval of Congress." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 27:245-264.
- Kelleher, Christine A., and Jennifer Wolak. 2007. "Explaining Public Confidence in the Branches of State Government." *Political Research Quarterly* 60:707-721.
- Kimball, David C. and Samuel C. Patterson. 1997. "Living Up to Expectations: Public Attitudes toward Congress." *The Journal of Politics* 59:701-28.
- Kousser, Thad. 2005. *Term Limits and the Dismantling of State Legislative Professionalism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Maestas, Cherie. 2000. "Professional Legislatures and Ambitious Politicians: Policy Responsiveness of State Institutions." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 25:663-690.
- Maestas, Cherie. 2003. "The Incentive to Listen: Progressive Ambition, Resources and Opinion Monitoring Among State Legislators." *The Journal of Politics* 65:439-456.
- Matusaka, John G. 1992. "Economics of Direct Legislation." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 107:541-571.
- Moncrief, Gary F., and Joel Thompson. 1992. "Electoral Structure and State Legislative Representation." *The Journal of Politics* 52:246-257.
- National Conference of State Legislatures. 2010. "The Term Limited States." Accessed online at <http://www.ncsl.org/Default.aspx?TabId=14844>.
- Norris, Pippa. 1999. *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Owings, Stephanie, and Rainald Borck. 2000. "Legislative Professionalism and Government Spending: Do Citizen Legislators Really Spend Less?" *Public Finance Review* 28: 210-225
- Patterson, Samuel C., Ronald D. Hedlund and G. Robert Boynton. 1975. *Representatives and the Represented: Bases of Public Support for the American Legislatures*. New York: Wiley.
- Patterson, Samuel C., Randall B. Ripley, and Stephen Quinlan. 1992. "Citizens' Orientations Toward Legislatures: Congress and State Legislatures." *Western Political Quarterly* 45:315-38.
- Petracca, Mark P. 1991. "The Poison of Professional Politics." Cato Institute, No. 151.
- Primo, David M., Matthew L. Jacobsmeier and Jeffrey Milyo. 2007. "Estimating the Impact of State Policies and Institutions with Mixed-Level Data." *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* 7:446-59.

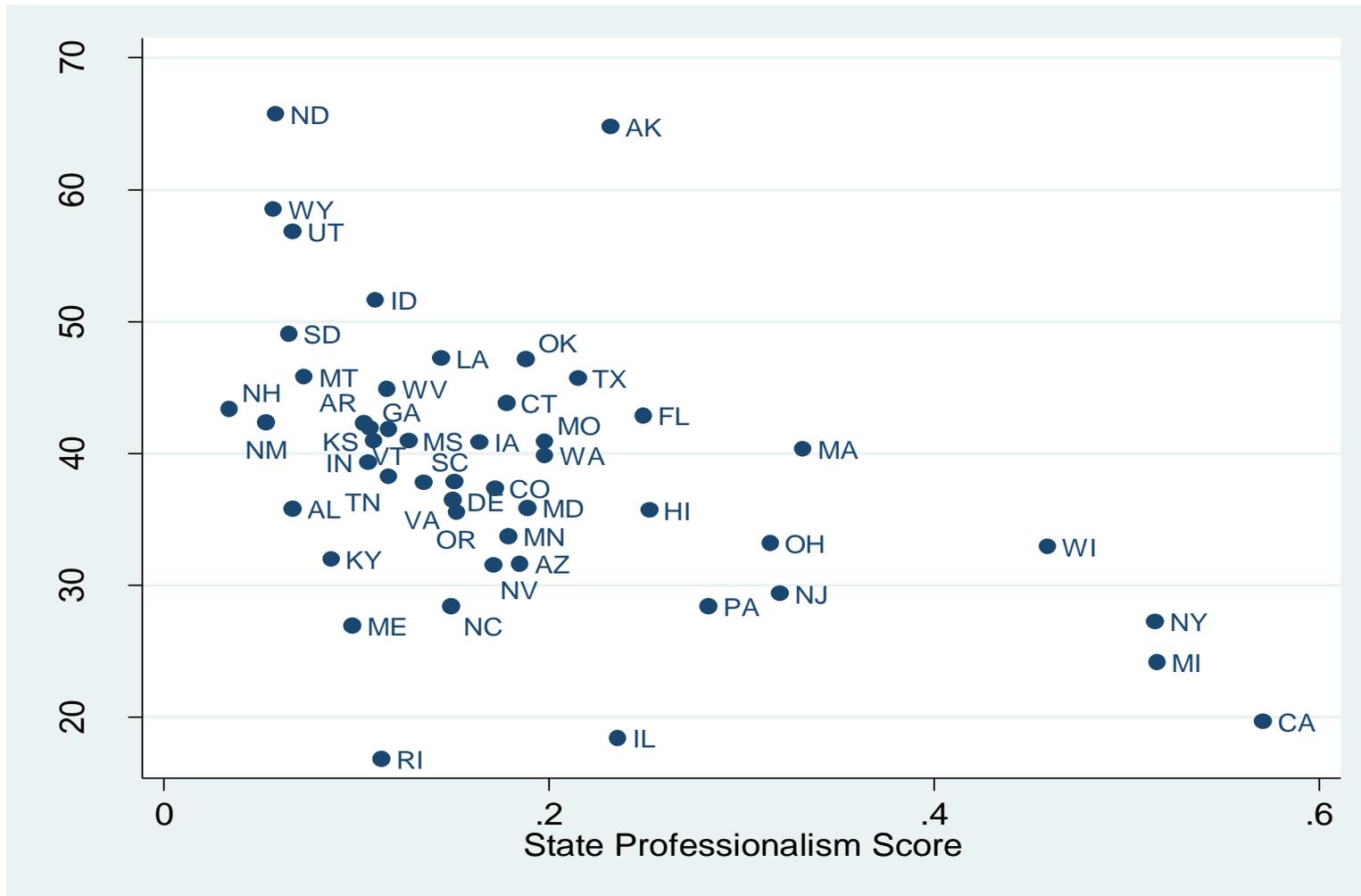
- Rivers, Douglas. 2007. "Sampling for Web Surveys." Paper presented at the 2007 Joint Statistical Meetings, Salt Lake City, Utah.
- Rosenthal, Alan. 1998. *The Decline of Representative Democracy*. Washington DC: CQ Press.
- Rosenthal, Alan. 2009. *Engines of Democracy: Politics & Policymaking in State Legislatures*. Washington DC: CQ Press.
- Schrag, Peter. 1998. *Paradise Lost: California's Experience, America's Future*. New York: New Press
- Squire, Peverill. 1988. "Career Opportunities and Membership Stability in Legislatures." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 13:65-82.
- Squire, Peverill. 1993. "Professionalization and public opinion of state legislatures." *The Journal of Politics* 55:479-491.
- Squire, Peverill. 1998. "Membership Turnover and the Efficient Processing of Legislation." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 23:23-32.
- Squire, Peverill. 2007. "Measuring State Legislative Professionalism: The Squire Index Revisited." *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* 7:211-227.
- Squire, Peverill and Keith Hamm. 2005. *101 Chambers: Congress, State Legislatures, and the Future of Legislative Studies*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- Vavreck, Lynn and Douglas Rivers. 2008. "The 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Study." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 18:355-366.
- Waters, M. Dane. 2001. *The Battle over Citizen Lawmaking*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press.
- Will, George F. 1992. *Restoration: Congress, Term Limits, and the Recovery of Deliberative Democracy*. New York: Free Press.

TABLE 1. STATE LEGISLATIVE INSTITUTIONS AND APPROVAL OF THE STATE LEGISLATURE

	<i>Base Model (OLS)</i>	<i>Governor Approval (2SLS-IV)</i>	<i>Institutions (2SLS-IV)</i>	<i>Ideology Interaction (2SLS-IV)</i>
Legislative Professionalism	-.904** (.199)	-.961** (.178)	-1.038** (.196)	.591 (.415)
Ideology X Legislative Prof.	-	-	-	-.522** (.154)
Term Limits	-	-	.073 (.078)	-.175 (.177)
Ideology X Term Limit	-	-	-	.076 (.050)
Citizen Initiative	-	-	.027 (.071)	.030 (.070)
Home Team Legislature	.329** (.042)	.353** (.043)	.320** (.049)	.307** (.055)
Opponent Team Legislature	-.427*** (.071)	-.459** (.067)	-.495** (.066)	-.468** (.055)
Governor Approval	.336** (.025)	.224** (.038)	.226** (.037)	.224** (.030)
State Unemployment Rate	-.030 (.024)	-.042 (.027)	-.055* (.023)	-.052* (.022)
Ideology	-.030 (.039)	-.046 (.042)	.046 (.042)	.064 (.047)
Republican	.162** (.061)	.172** (.064)	.197** (.065)	.188** (.062)
Democrat	.172** (.036)	.193** (.033)	.217** (.038)	.213** (.038)
Female	.188** (.018)	.199** (.017)	.199** (.017)	.199** (.017)
Age	-.005** (.001)	-.004** (.001)	-.005** (.001)	-.005** (.001)
African-American	.101** (.032)	.109** (.032)	.116** (.031)	.120** (.030)
Hispanic	.080 (.046)	.082 (.044)	.080 (.047)	.079 (.048)
Other Minority	.055 (.034)	.045 (.035)	.042 (.035)	.038 (.036)
Education	-.030** (.006)	-.030** (.006)	-.029** (.006)	-.030** (.006)
Income	-.012** (.002)	-.012** (.002)	-.012** (.002)	-.012** (.002)
Income Answered	.140** (.026)	.152** (.024)	.146** (.024)	.150** (.023)
Registered Voter	-.061 (.037)	-.066 (.038)	-.069 (.038)	-.066 (.034)
CCES 2007	-.039 (.051)	-.056 (.053)	-.069 (.048)	-.067 (.049)
Constant	2.328** (.286)	2.759** (.346)	2.818** (.345)	2.453** (.228)
N	36,036	36,036	36,036	36,036
F-test	248.6**	205.3**	178.4**	177.3**

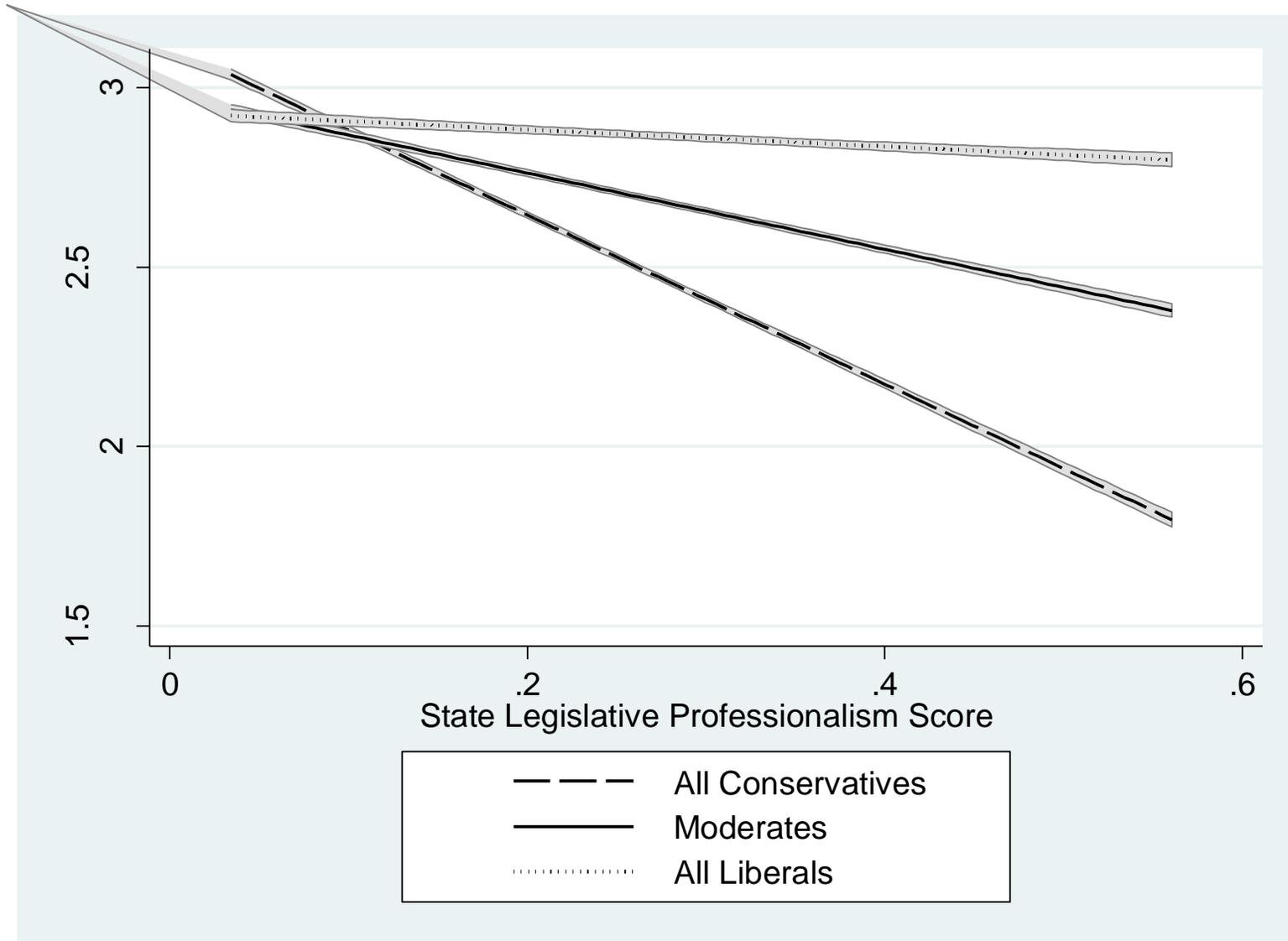
Note: Standard errors clustered by state in parentheses. Significance levels: * p<.05, ** p<.01.

FIGURE 1. LEGISLATIVE APPROVAL ACROSS THE STATES, 2008



Note: Legislative approval data are from the 2008 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey. State professionalism scores are from Squire and Hamm (2005).

FIGURE 2. INTERACTION EFFECT OF CONSERVATISM AND PROFESSIONALISM SCORE ON LEGISLATIVE APPROVAL



Note: Calculated from estimates for the full model presented in the last column of Table 1.