Understanding the Party Brand: Experimental Evidence on the Role of Valence

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Abstract

The valence component of a party’s reputation, or brand, has been less scrutinized than other components of party-based theories of legislatures, despite being a central element of many such theories. This lack of scrutiny results from the difficulty of isolating the valence component from policy-related components and the difficulty of studying legislators’ motives. We overcome these challenges by conducting survey experiments on both legislators and voters that show (1) that scholars have underestimated the impact of valence’s potential role in elections, (2) that legislative party leaders pressure members more on votes when the outcome affects the valence component of the party brand, and (3) that the value of the party brand can directly affect how legislators vote, but only when constituents are split on the measure. Our results provide a rationale for why legislative leaders put so much effort into media spin battles, and suggest that parties’ reputations affect legislative leaders’ ability to pass their agenda.

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Introduction

Donald Stokes, in his seminal article on “Spatial Models of Party Competition” (Stokes, 1963), outlined two components of a party’s reputation, or label, that influence voters’ decisions and subsequent legislative action. First, party labels convey information about members’ ideologies or policy positions, which Stokes referred to as “positional” information. Second, party labels influence voters’ decisions because of what Stokes termed the label’s “valence component.” A party’s valence, conceptually, measures the degree to which voters reward or punish parties for non-ideological actions such as scandals or good governance activities.

The valence component of the party brand plays an important role in understanding legislative politics. For examples, scholars have used the valence component of the party brand to answer what Monroe and Robinson (2008) call the “core puzzle” of partisan theories of lawmaking: how do the relatively weak political parties of American politics, with their diverse and locally-elected members, influence legislative policy-making? Scholars have answered this question by arguing that legislators’ desire to improve the valence component of their party brand—thereby gaining an electoral advantage—leads rank-and-file legislators to give their party leaders both the power and the incentive to pressure them on roll-call votes (Cox and McCubbins, 1993; Lebo, McGlynn and Koger, 2007).

Despite the importance of the valence component of the party brand, scholars have done little to empirically test valence-based arguments related to the party label. This omission may, in large part, be explained by two formidable empirical hurdles. First, it is difficult to isolate the valence component from the ideological component of the party brand, a result of their effects often being observationally equivalent. Second, the valence argument for legislative organization relies on assumptions about, and has implications for three different sets of actors: voters, rank-and-file legislators, and legislative leaders. Although technological improvements have made it easier to conduct experiments on voters, it remains difficult to experimentally test the behavior and beliefs of legislators, and, therefore, difficult to test the valence argument. We overcome these hurdles by conducting our own set of survey experiments on samples of both legislators and voters.

In the next section we explain why we are using state legislators to study the valence component
of the party brand. We then review the theoretical arguments about the party label. Our subsequent survey of the empirical literature on the party brand highlights how the empirical literature has not tested arguments about the valence component of the brand. Because the valence arguments have not been tested, we start our empirical analysis with experiments on voters that test whether they reward/punish legislators for the non-ideological actions of their party. This assumption is not controversial in the literature, but has not been tested despite being a fundamental assumption on which other predictions are based.

Our results show that voters reward legislators for the legislators’ party’s record of legislative performance and also punish legislators if their party is caught in a scandal. Further, these effects are larger in magnitude than factors that previous research has identified as being important determinants of citizens’ vote choice. Voters thus give rank-and-file legislators and legislative leader, the incentive to improve the valence component of their party label. Conversely, legislators and legislative leaders are also incentivized to hurt the valence component of the opposing party.

Having provided evidence for the basic assumption underlying the valence argument, we then use a series of survey experiments on state legislators to study essential and previously untested questions. After describing our unique survey sample, we test whether legislators believe that party leaders are more likely to pressure party members when they expect that passing the measure will improve the valence component of the party label. Our evidence shows that they do.

In our third and final empirical section we present the results of our experiments on whether the value of the party label directly affects whether legislators vote with their party leaders. Namely, does a party’s reputation ever influence legislators’ voting decisions directly, in the absence of pressure from party leadership? Significantly, a party’s having more support within the electorate also directly affects whether legislators will vote with their party leader on the bill, but only when public opinion is split on the issue.

In sum, we provide some of the first empirical findings on the valence dimension of the party brand at both the elite and citizen levels. While many of our findings are consistent with the

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1To conduct these experiments we created an internet-based survey for state legislators in the United States. The state legislators who agreed to participate in the survey were given one of several vignettes. In each vignette we randomly varied some part of the hypothetical scenario to see whether our experimental manipulation changed how the legislator responded.
assumptions and theories of previous literature, we find some empirical limits to that support (for example, it is only when constituents are split on an issue that a strong party brand can directly induce a member to vote with her or her party). Relatedly, our empirical results, by measuring the impact of valence considerations relative to other factors, show that we have been underestimating the role that valence plays in American elections and legislative politics. Valence has an impact on constituents’ vote choice that is comparable or even bigger than other important factors (such as economic and ideological factors) and at the same time is easier to influence. These heretofore unrecognized dynamics help explain why legislative leaders put so much effort into media spin battles as opposed to other legislative activities. We conclude the paper by discussing this and other implications of our findings for elections and legislative theory.

Studying State Legislators

In this article we study how the valence component of the party brand affects legislative elections and intra-chamber politics in the United States at both the citizen and elite-levels. We draw upon well established survey experiment techniques and samples for our citizen studies using multiple waves of the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) and Mechanical Turk. Studying legislative behavior is, however, more challenging. While we are interested in the behavior of United States legislators in general, we conduct our elite-level empirical tests with a sample of state legislators only. In designing our tests, however, we draw on theoretical claims from the federal congressional literature, because that literature is more fully developed than the state legislative politics literature.

Although the theoretical literature on the party brand’s role in Congress is well developed, it has not been tested. Here lies a major advantage of studying state legislators. As a research community, we do not have access to members of Congress for the purpose of carrying out the type of survey experiments we do here. We do, however, have access to state legislators. Certainly, other research designs can be used to study the party label using data from Congress, but our design allows us

\footnote{To be precise, there are no formal limitations on attempting to survey members of congress, but given low response rates of the modern era, combined with the heavy demands on members’ time, we would be unlikely to obtain a sufficient sample size.}
to examine the micro-foundations of theories about the valence component of the party label. In other words, we are able to draw on the strengths of studying Congress (the well-developed theory), and the strengths of studying state legislators (i.e., the available data) to learn about American legislators.

Of course, using state legislators to test theories that have been developed in the Congressional literature raises questions. Can these theories about Congress be applied to state legislators? And, given that we study state legislators, can the results be applied to Members of Congress? In this investigation, we believe that the answer to both of these questions is yes. The phenomenon we are studying has its roots in the role of partisanship in legislative elections. With the exception of Nebraska - which we excluded from the sample because it is a non-partisan legislature - the party label plays an important role in both federal and state legislative elections. For this reason we do not think that the impact of a party label’s valence should be qualitatively different in Congress than it is in the vast majority of state legislatures.

In addition to the similar party label dynamics at the state and federal levels, we believe that a strong case can be made that state legislators are the closest possible comparable sample to members of Congress. Fully forty-six percent of U.S. Senators and fifty percent of U.S. House Members previously served as state legislators (National Conference of State Legislators, 2013). Thus, the population from which we are drawing is also the population from which nearly half the members of Congress are drawn. This combination of similar population compositions and party label legislative dynamics makes state legislators the best available substitute to Members of Congress.

We do not suggest that there are no important differences between federal and state legislative institutions. Where there are important differences, it is inappropriate to use state legislators to test theories that have been developed with respect to Congress. However, partisanship plays an important role in legislative elections at both the state and federal levels. We therefore feel comfortable using state legislators to study the valence component of the party brand at both the state and federal level. The appropriateness of this approach to answer other questions should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
Moreover, even if we are incorrect, and our results only speak to the behavior of state legislators, we believe that our insights about state legislators are an important contribution. State legislators play a significant role in the lives of their constituents.\(^3\) We turn now, therefore, to a review of the congressional literature on the party brand.

The Party Brand and Legislative Theory

Stokes (1963), in discussing voters’ decision-making process, draws the distinction between the positional and valence components of the party brand. Subsequent scholars have built on these two aspects of the party brand to theorize about how legislative leaders influence rank and file members. The first set of arguments focuses on the party label as a type of valence advantage/disadvantage.\(^4\)

In this formulation, the party label is modeled as an intercept term in the voter’s utility function. When a party label is “good” (or takes a positive value), constituents are more likely to vote for a member of that party in the election. When a party label is “bad” (or takes a negative value), the candidates from that party all receive fewer votes. We use the term “party valence brand” to refer to this aspect of a party’s label.

The second set of arguments focuses on how the candidates’ ideological position affects constituents’ voting decisions. Often these arguments rely on the idea that the party brand is an informational short cut that voters use to make inferences about candidates’ ideological positions. We refer to this aspect of a party’s label as the “party’s policy brand.”

Significantly, the valence argument is prominent in the theoretical literature on legislative organization, but not in the empirical literature. Instead, the empirical literature has focused on the ideological arguments related to the party label, which is why we focus on the valence argument (though we discuss both arguments in our literature review to highlight our overall contribution to

\(^3\) According to the Tax Policy Center, states, and thus state legislatures, collect 22% of all taxes and are responsible for an even higher percentage of the distribution of government spending once federal transfers are taken into account (much of this they pass on to local governments). As a very rough comparison, the federal government collects approximately 60% of all revenue, thus state legislators are responsible for approximately 1/3 of what members of congress are responsible for (Tax Policy Center, 2013).

\(^4\) For some recent examples discussing models of valence advantage as it relates to a given candidate see: Groseclose (2001); Snyder and Ting (2002); Aragones and Palfrey (2003); Hummel (2010); Ashworth and Bueno de Mesquita (2009).
research on the party label).

Valence-based arguments about the party brand, such as Cox and McCubbins (2005)’s Procedural Cartel Theory (see also Lebo, McGlynn and Koger, 2007) typically rest on two assumptions related to the party brand. First, that the party brand is a valence term in voter’s utility that influences a member’s probability of re-election and their majority status. Second, the value of a party’s brand depends on its “legislative record of accomplishment.” As an example of how legislative accomplishment can influence the party brand in a negative fashion, Cox and McCubbins (2005) point to the 1995 government shutdown. They argue that the Republican party label was dramatically hurt as voters blamed them for the shutdown.

If voters hold parties accountable for their legislative accomplishments (or lack thereof), then legislators have incentives to improve their party’s valence brand by helping pass their party leadership’s agenda. However, this does not mean that legislators will necessarily vote with their party leaders. Although they have incentives to pass their party’s agenda, legislators also have strong incentives to vote in line with their constituents’ preferences. Because the party label is a collective good, legislators will under-invest in its maintenance without some type of intervention. In the cartel model, party leaders provide that intervention. As Brady and McCubbins (2002, pg. 4) describe it, “...incumbents’ probability of reelection is in part a function of their party’s reputation among voters and that maintaining that reputation requires collective action by members of the party caucus. So party members delegate to party leaders the authority to enforce cooperation and maintain the party’s ‘brand name.’ ”

In contrast, the ideological (or positional) based argument focuses on the party label’s potentially informative function. In elections, voters must be sufficiently informed (or at least act as if they are sufficiently informed) to create meaningful non-random decisions (Druckman, 2001; Arce-

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5This description leaves plenty of room for a variety of interpretations. As Smith (2007, pg. 134) describes, “Ambiguity reigns. Plainly, being ‘associated’ with popular causes, as Mayhew emphasizes, establishing a ‘legislative record of accomplishment,’ as Cox and McCubbins emphasize, and avoiding floor losses are not identical recipes for a favorable party record.... Effort and accountability are expected. Thus, there remains a gap in the causal argument. A favorable record of accomplishment surely is important to the majority party, but it is hardly the only way to establish a favorable party record. If it is not, then the majority party may be willing to lose a legislative battle in order to realize a net gain in party reputation and public support. Avoiding losses on the floor is not a necessary or a sufficient strategy for enhancing party reputation.”

6See Stimson (2004) for a more detailed discussion of the reputational consequences faced by the Republican party following the shutdown.
neaux, 2008). Parties, or more precisely party labels, serve as heuristic cues to voters about a candidate’s ideology (Snyder and Ting, 2002; Grynaviski, 2010). Because voters punish politicians for changing positions (Tomz and Van Houweling, 2010, 2012), party members who will be running in the future, which includes most incumbent legislators, have incentives to maintain a consistent party policy brand (see also Wittman, 1989; Jones and Hudson, 1998).

The primary difference between the arguments is the motive behind voters’ decisions (and thus the motive that legislators respond to). This difference in motives, in turn, leads to different expectations about the bills party leaders will exert pressure on. The party policy brand argument suggests that pressure will come on the more ideological, and thus more divisive bills. In contrast, party valence brand argument focuses more on the party’s reputation for efficiency and accomplishment. While this will include passing some divisive bills, it will also include other good government issues that are not necessarily partisan. Because the two theories differ in their normative implications and much less is known empirically about how the party valence brand influences legislative behavior, we turn now to test the valence aspects of the party brand.

What Do We Know about the Party Brand Empirically?

In terms of the party policy brand, Woon and Pope (2008) use the 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey to demonstrate that voters recognize the ideological content of party labels (see also Pope and Woon, 2008; Tomz and Sniderman, 2005; Grynaviski, 2010). Peskowitz (2012) further shows that the party’s ideological brand (position) has a meaningful effect on the vote share of non-incumbent challengers who are less well known to voters (though little effect on incumbents’ vote share).

Another group of studies focus on the electoral cost incurred by members who vote with their party at high levels and accrue more ideologically extreme voting records (Canes-Wrone, Brady and Cogan, 2002; Bovitz and Carson, 2006; Carson et al., 2010; Lebo and O’Geen, 2011; Koger and Lebo, 2012).7 Consistently these studies find that voters appear to punish the more ideologically

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7Though it should be noted that these studies focus exclusively electoral cost members pay in the general election for ideologically extreme voting records, and not any pressure they may receive from primary electorates.
extreme incumbents who contribute to the creation of a strongly ideological brand.

At first glance studies showing that individual members pay an electoral price for acting in a partisan manner appear to contradict theories involving a valence conception of the party brand; the party brand is supposed to help legislators not hurt them. However, it is important to remember that these studies generally compare the outcomes across legislators serving together. The party valence brand argument, however, is about the overall value of the label to the party and not about the variation observed between members serving together. As Cox and McCubbins (2007, pg. 102) write, “A party’s record, thus, is a commonly accepted summary of the past actions, beliefs and outcomes with which it is associated. Of course, it is quite possible under this definition that some aspect of a party’s record (some particular action, belief, or outcome) will help some of that party’s incumbents, have no effect on some, and hurt still others. This does not mean that the party’s record varies from district to district, just that evaluations of it vary.”

Similarly, Lebo, McGlynn and Koger (2007), in their theory of Strategic Party Government, argue that partisan voting has a direct negative effect when members are voting with the party and against their constituents interests, but has an indirect positive effect through legislative victories that enhance the party’s reputation. As these arguments imply, we cannot evaluate the party valence brand argument by simply looking at whether legislators who act in a more partisan way do better or worse on Election Day. Analogously, we cannot look at the candidate-level valence to test claims about the valence of the party label. Although good studies have examined the candidate-level valence directly (e.g. Stone and Simas, 2010), these studies cannot tell us about the party-level valence.

Relatedly, Harbridge and Malhotra (2011) find, using a survey experiment on attitudes toward partisan conflict, that while voters are opposed to party conflict in general, strong partisans support individual members behaving in a partisan manner.

Taking this logic a step further, Grynaviski (2010) argues that “centrist” members have an incentive to develop a private candidate brand name to differentiate him or herself from the party. To that end, Grynaviski (2010) finds empirically that centrist incumbents are more likely to contact their constituents than their more ideologically extreme peers.

One could look at partisan electoral tides Cox and McCubbins (2007, pg. 104). However, there is disagreement about whether this is evidence for the party label. Cox and McCubbins note that if one accepts the view that these tides are the result of actions outside of congressional control, say the result of rewarding the president’s party for a strong economy, then the prospects for “the remainder of [Cox and McCubbins’s] argument—or for any argument that views congressional parties as instruments to improve the collective electoral fate of their members—are bleak.” (Cox and McCubbins, 2007, pgs. 111-112).
In sum, the empirical literature on voters has largely focused on the party policy brand. Perhaps even more glaring, researchers have rarely tested the implications of the theoretical claims on legislators’ behavior (for recent exceptions see Lebo, McGlynn and Koger, 2007; Grynaviski, 2010). In other words, data on the party valence brand is quite limited.

**Does the Party Valence Brand Matter to Voters?**

We test the party valence brand’s effect by looking at the behavior of both voters and legislators. We begin with survey experiments on respondents in the Cooperative Congressional Election Survey (CCES) that test whether voters respond to the record of the incumbent\textsuperscript{11} candidate’s party in the way the valence based argument assumes.

By using survey experiments to study the electoral impact of the party valence brand we can avoid concerns that confounding effects are in fact driving the results. For example, observational approaches struggle to distinguish between whether electoral swings against a party are due to a poor reputation or if it was simply because bad things were happening. In contrast, our experiments isolate the effects by presenting hypothetical scenarios to voters and legislators that hold all other non-treatment factors constant.

For our first two experiments on voters we followed the template of Tomz and Van Houweling (2009), providing the CCES respondents with a brief summary of two competing candidates’ biographical information and issues positions.\textsuperscript{12} Our 2010 experiment, which was on the October wave of the CCES, provided respondents with the following information about the Candidates:

| Candidate A | Incumbent from the majority party who has served in the legislature for 4 years. During the previous session [TREATMENT]. He supports caps on carbon emissions and supports fining businesses that hire illegal immigrants. |

\textsuperscript{11}We designed the experiments to only discuss incumbent candidates because in the extant theoretical models the party brand assumption explains only how legislators behave while in office in anticipation of upcoming elections (Cox and McCubbins, 2007) - thus a focus on incumbents seeking reelection.

\textsuperscript{12}For both of our experiments we chose issues that were part of the planning document for what questions would be asked as part of the common content for the CCES (Ansolabehere, 2010). In both cases at least one of the two issues we chose was either not asked on the common content or was only asked to a randomly chosen subset of the sample. In the Supplementary Materials we present results that control, when possible, for the constituent’s positions on these issues.
Candidate B is the sitting mayor of a mid-size town in the district. During his time in office, his town has experienced slightly above average economic development and population growth. He opposes caps on carbon emissions and opposes fining businesses that hire illegal immigrants.

We assigned respondents, with equal probability, to one of the four treatment conditions given below (where the text in quotes was substituted into the text above in place of “[TREATMENT]”). We designed these treatments to capture non-ideological information about a party’s actions that affect the party label, including good actions (such as passing the budget on time) and bad actions (such as being caught in a scandal).

**Treatment 1 - Passed the Budget on Time:** “his party passed the budget on time for the first time in 20 years”

**Treatment 2 - Passed the Budget Late:** “his party passed the budget late for the first time in 20 years”

**Treatment 3 - Rated as being Ethical:** “ethics watchdog groups have praised his party for being the most ethical in recent years”

**Treatment 4 - Rated as being Unethical:** “ethics watchdog groups have condemned his party for being the least ethical in recent years”

In the experiment, we showed respondents the short bios for candidates A and B and then asked them which candidate they would vote for based on these descriptions. The results of the experiment are presented in the first column of Table 1 and show that voters are sensitive to information about the incumbent’s party. Respondents who were told that candidate A’s party passed the budget on time were 12 percentage points more likely to vote for candidate A than those who were told that his party passed the budget late; a statistically and substantively significant difference. The effect of the ethical ratings was even larger. Respondents who were told that candidate A’s party was praised for being the most ethical in recent years chose candidate A 60 percent of the time. In contrast, those who were told that candidate A’s party was condemned as being the least ethical in recent years, chose candidate A only 43 percent of the time. This 17-percentage point difference is also statistically significant.\(^{13}\)

\(^{13}\)In the Supplementary Materials we present the results when estimating both OLS and probit regression models that control for the respondent’s partisan identification, ideology, and positions on the two issues that the candidates in the vignette took positions on. Controlling for those factors does not change the results.
While this strong evidence is consistent with the claim that the party’s non-ideological actions, and hence the party’s valence brand, affect voters’ support for the incumbent, one alternative interpretation is that this result is driven by respondents using the party’s ethical rating to make inferences about the incumbent legislator’s ethical behavior. In other words, the effect of the party’s valence brand in this area might be confounded with (inferred) information about the individual legislator.

In actual practice this may be a reason that party labels matter. Legislators try to claim credit for their party’s good actions (even if they did not contribute) and voters may assume that they are guilty by association when fellow party members are caught in scandal (even if they themselves did nothing wrong). With that said, we decided to run a follow up experiment on the 2011 CCES to see if we could still detect an effect even if respondents were not using information about the party to infer anything about the individual legislator.

For the 2011 CCES, we again provided respondents with short bios for two candidates that provided information about their previous office-holding experience and their issue positions (see Figure A1 in the Appendix for a screen shot that gives the full text). In the 2011 CCES vignette we provided the following information about the incumbent (Candidate B):

Candidate B is the incumbent from the majority party who has served in the legislature for 4 years. He supports caps on carbon emissions and supports a free trade agreement with South Korea. The state’s ethics watchdog group gave the following ratings to Candidate B and his party:

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<td>Ratings for Candidate B</td>
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<td>Ratings for Candidate B’s Party</td>
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<td>[TREATMENT]</td>
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We designed the experiment to provide ratings of both the candidate and his party to minimize the possibility that respondents were using the ratings about the party to make inferences about the ethical behavior of the incumbent candidate. We manipulated the ethical rating of the party such that half of the respondents were randomly chosen to learn that the party received an “A-” rating in 2011 and the other half were informed that the party received a “D” rating in 2011.

The last column of Table 1 shows that when his party’s rating from the watch dog group went
from a D to an A, voters became 8-percentage points more likely to vote for Candidate B (a statistically significant difference). The fact that the result is about half the size of the results in the 2010 study may be an indication that the 2010 study was confounding the effects of the party’s valence brand with possible inferences about the incumbent’s own behavior. However, we need to be cautious in reaching any conclusions because the results may also be different because we are using a different rating system (A-/D versus most/least ethical). Either way, when we isolate the party’s rating separately from any information about the individual legislator’s behavior, the party’s rating (and hence the party’s valence brand) significantly affects voters’ decisions.

While the CCES experiments have shown that the party’s valence brand significantly affects citizens’ vote choice, there are several unanswered questions. What is the baseline? Does a good valence brand help or a bad valence brand hurt or both? How does partisanship affect the results? Do partisans react at all to the treatments? What is the size of the effect of the party valence brand relative to the size of the effect of the party policy brand?

In July 2013 we conducted a third survey experiment to help answer some of these questions. We used Amazon’s Mechanical Turk service to recruit respondents with IP addresses in the United States to take the survey.15

At the beginning of the survey we asked respondents about their partisanship, their ideology, their gender, their highest level of education, and whether they voted in the 2012 presidential election. In writing these questions we used the same wording as used on the CCES (the full text of the survey is given in the Supplementary Materials). We then asked respondents to place themselves and the Republicans and Democrats in Congress on an ideological scale ranging from 0 to 100 (See Figure A2 in the Appendix). As we explain below, we used this question to help explore the effect of the party policy brand on citizens’ vote choice.

For the vignette, we asked the respondents how they would vote in state legislative elections in a nearby state. In the experiment we randomized which party controlled the legislature and

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14 Results presented in the supplementary material show that this difference holds when we control for the respondent’s partisanship, ideology, and issue positions.

15 For an extended discussion and analysis of the use of Amazon.com’s Mechanical Turk for survey experiments see Berinsky, Huber and Lenz (2012). The advertisement described the survey as follows: “Answer some questions about yourself and your views on public policy. Easy and fun. Payment is auto-approved in 5 days. The survey takes about 5 to 7 minutes.” We paid respondents $0.75 for taking the survey.
information about the state and the party in control of the legislature (the randomized parts are given in brackets and bolded):

In a nearby state they are having state legislative elections next year. Currently, [Republicans/Democrats] control the state legislature.

[State unemployment is 1% [above/below] the national average.]

[Ethics watchdog groups have rated the [Republican/Democratic]-controlled legislature as the [most/least] ethical in recent years.]

[The [Republicans/Democrats] have passed the budget [on time/late] for the first time in twenty years.]  

[A nonpartisan group has rated the [Republicans/Democrats] in the state legislature as more [liberal/conservative] than the [Republicans/Democrats] in the U.S. Congress.]

If you were in this state, how would you vote in the next election?

The first piece of information dealt with the state’s unemployment. We included this question because we wanted to compare the size of the effect of the party valence brand to an important benchmark - economic voting (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000). The second and third pieces of information capture the aspects of the party valence brand, and the same language, we have been investigating in the other voter experiments (ethics and the timeliness of passing the budget). The fourth piece of information tells the ideological location of the state legislative party relative to their copartisans in Congress. We included this information to measure an aspect of the party policy brand. Because we know how the respondents placed themselves relative to the two parties in Congress,\textsuperscript{16} we know whether they are being told that the state legislative party is, relative to their Congressional counterpart, ideologically further away from them or has taken a position in their direction. We can thus see whether voters reward and/or punish politicians for their ideological positions.

\textsuperscript{16}Figure A2 in the Appendix gives the question we used to elicit this information.
For each of these four pieces of information we randomized whether the information was included and, if included, what information was provided. For example, a third of respondents did not hear anything about state unemployment, another third were told that it was 1 percent above the national average, and the last third learned that state unemployment was 1 percent below the national average. As noted above, we used the final piece of information to create variables that measure whether the party was ideologically closer or ideologically further from the respondent. For example, if the respondent indicated that they were more liberal than the Republican party in Congress and also were assigned to the treatment that “rated the Republicans in the state legislature as more conservative than the Republicans in the U.S. Congress”, then the dummy variable Republicans - Ideologically Further took a value of 1. Similarly, if the Republicans had been “more liberal” then the dummy variable Republicans - Ideologically Closer would take a value of 1. Because we are including this information to help test the importance of the party policy brand, we decided to drop the respondents who misplaced the parties (i.e., who marked that Democrats in Congress were more conservative than the Republicans in Congress) - about 6 percent of the sample. We dropped these respondents to make sure that the party policy brand had the best chance of success. In this sense we wanted to give the party valence brand a stiffer test. Including these respondents back in the sample has almost no effect on the estimates associated with the party valence brand and makes the estimates associated with the party policy brand only slightly weaker.

Because we randomized which party controlled the state legislature, we can estimate how each of these pieces of information affects the political fortunes of each party. We estimate these returns by predicting whether the respondent said they would vote for the Republicans (the dependent variable=1) or the Democrats (the dependent variable=0). Table 2 presents the results of predicting the respondents’ vote based on the information in the vignette. Column 1 presents the regression using all of the voters in the sample. Columns 2-4 then present the results broken down by the respondent’s self-identified partisanship.

Finally, for space reasons, we do not include most of the control variables. The controls include the respondents’ level of education, their gender, whether they voted in the 2012 election and which
party controlled the legislature. None of these factors have much of an effect on how respondents' voted. One control variable that did predict respondents' vote was their own partisanship. Column 1 shows that Republicans are 70 percentage points more likely to vote for the Republicans in the state legislative elections than are Democrats. While this is by far the largest predictor of vote choice, the information that we included in the vignette also affected vote choice.

For example, if the Democrats in the state went from being rated as the most ethical to being rated as the least ethical, the respondent would be 25-percentage points more likely to vote for the Republicans. There was a similar 25-percentage point effect for the ethics ratings of the Republican party. Given that this effect is about a third of the size of partisanship, which is arguably the most important predictor of vote choice (Campbell et al., 1960), the ethics ratings for the party has a substantial effect on how citizens vote.

It is also worth noting that, relative to the baseline, the parties benefit from good ethics and suffer from news of bad ethical ratings. This pattern does not hold for the results relating to the timing of the budget. Turning in the budget late has no effect that is discernable from the baseline of no information. This most likely reflects the Congressional politics of recent years where the parties rarely agree to move things forward resulting in gridlock. In our current environment, passing the budget late is simply not a knock on the parties; perhaps the respondents are just impressed that they passed the budget at all. Indeed, the point estimates suggest that if anything the parties do slightly better when respondents are told that they passed the budget late (though the result is statistically insignificant). By contrast, the parties enjoy a significant reward for passing the budget on time. When the Republicans pass the budget on time, respondents are 16 percentage points more likely to vote for them. When the Democrats pass the budget on time, respondents are 10 percentage points more likely to vote for them.

These effects are larger than the effects related to changes in unemployment in the vignette. In the vignette both parties are punished by about 3 percentage points for having high unemployment (1 percent above the national average) and both are rewarded for low unemployment, though Republicans enjoy a slightly larger benefit (perhaps reflecting our respondents’ expectations about the parties’ priorities in regard to unemployment). Still, even for Republicans the 2-percentage
point movement in unemployment only moves respondents' vote choice by 12-percentage points (it is only a 6-percentage point change for Democrats). Outside of partisanship, economic voting is one of the more important predictor of vote choice. Still, we see that the aspects of the party valence brand move voters by more than a change of 2 percent in unemployment.

The results of the experiment also show that the party policy brand is an important predictor of vote choice. The results in column 1 show that there is about a 10-percentage point difference in respondents’ vote choice when a party goes from being “further” from them ideologically to being “closer” to them ideologically. The results further show that most of this result comes because voters reward both parties when they are ideologically closer to them. By contrast, they do not punish them much when the parties are further away ideologically. This suggests that most voters might start with a baseline expectation that the parties are already fairly distant from them. Further the political returns of changing the party policy brand are actually smaller than the political returns from changing the party valence brand (at least as conceptualized here).

The results in columns 2-4 show that independents are particularly sensitive to information about the party valence brand. The party valence brand still matters to partisans (see columns 3 an 4), but it matters even more for Independents. Because Independents often act as the median voter in elections, these results only serve to highlight the strong incentives that politicians have to care about the party-valence brand. Whether it reflects the party’s legislative performance or their ethical behavior, the parties’ valence brands affect the electoral fortunes of the individual legislators.

**Legislative Leaders and the Party Valence Brand**

Do party leaders act on the incentive to improve their party’s valence brand by pressuring members to vote with the party when passing legislation that would improve the party valence brand? A major advantage of our study is that we test this prediction using a survey experiment on state legislators.\(^{17}\) The experiment was part of a survey that was created with the web-based program

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\(^{17}\)Ideally, of course, given that most of the traditional literature on the party brand centers on the U.S. Congress, the best sample would be of U.S. House Members. Unfortunately, the chamber is small enough, and response rates have been so low in recent years, that it is not a feasible to sample that population for our purposes. We believe that
Qualtrics and emailed to state legislators in the United States in March 2012. A full description of the survey is presented in the Supplementary Materials.

Because the survey was administered via the web, we knew that sometimes staff members would be filling out the survey. In order to help account for this, our first question on the survey asked the respondent whether they were a state legislator or a staff member. We present all of the results with the self-identified state legislator sub-sample; the results with the full sample are presented in the Supplementary Materials and are, if anything, even stronger.

In administering the survey we tried to keep the survey under five minutes because of concerns about burdening state legislators.\footnote{Like response rates in the general population, response rates of congressional candidates have declined precipitously in recent years. As Shor (2009, pg. 4) describes, “While more than a majority of incumbents answered the [NPAT] survey in [1996 & 1998], nowadays only about a third do.” One of the legislators who was invited to take the survey, explained that he couldn’t take the survey because “I’ve gotten 5 similar requests this week”. Given the small population of legislators, we were very conscious of keeping the length of our survey to a bare minimum.} To keep the survey within the short time frame, we administered some of the longer questions (including the survey experiments in this and the next section) to only a subsample of the respondents. \textit{Thus although the overall response rate for the survey was about 15 percent\footnote{A response rate of 15 percent is actually higher than recent Internet surveys; surveys that have themselves been shown to help produce representative samples (Fisher and Herrick, 2013).} (a total of over 1,000 responses), any individual question was shown to only a randomly chosen sample of about 150 respondents.}

The party pressure experiment presented respondents with a short vignette about party leaders who can only pass the budget on time if two members who come from districts that are not happy with the current budget vote to pass it anyways (the full vignette is presented in Figure A3 of the Appendix). We chose to use a bill that was close to passing because this is where we would most likely expect a leader to exercise pressure and where it would be most important if they did so (Snyder and Groseclose, 2000). The vignette ends by asking the respondents whether they think that the leaders will pressure these members to pass the budget. The key to the experiment is that the vignette signals, and randomly varies, how important passing the budget on time is for the party label by reporting the results of the following public opinion poll question:

Is the \{Adjective Form of Legislator’s Party\} majority’s ability to pass the budget on
Respondents were randomly assigned to either see that 72% of voters answered yes (and 28% answered no) or see that only 18% of voters answered yes (and 82% answered no). In other words, half of the respondents were told that voters would use this roll call in deciding how to vote in the next legislative election and half were told that voters would not use this as a major consideration. Table 3 shows that over 70 percent of respondents thought the party leaders would pressure the members to vote for the budget even if passing it on time did not affect the valence of the party brand. In other words, legislators thought that party leaders were likely to pressure members on this vote regardless of its effect on the party’s valence brand. We think this reflects the fact that budgets are one of the most important tools that the legislature has for affecting policy. Assuming that legislators care about policy (Fenno, 1973), they have a strong incentive to help the budget pass on time because it directly affects many of the policies that the legislators and their party leaders care about.

Despite the high level of whipping in the control condition, it is even higher in the treatment condition. Legislators who learned that the budget vote would affect the valence of the party brand were twelve percentage points more likely to say that the party leaders would exert pressure on the moderate members to vote with the party. Given that the level of whipping is so high to begin with because of the importance of budget votes, this might actually be a lower bound because of a potential ceiling effect. If we were to look at an issue that had less policy significance for so many legislators but still had a strong effect on the party label, we would expect an even larger difference.

Does the Party Brand Directly Affect Legislators’ Votes?

We have shown that legislative leaders work to build their party valence brand when they expect an electoral return for their party. However, because leaders have a limited amount of capital (both carrots and sticks), they are only likely to pressure members on a small portion of thousands of votes taken during a legislative session. Although such party pressure on close votes is an important way in which the party valence brand can affect legislative outcomes, only looking at the behavior
of party leaders will underestimate the importance of the party valence brand if it also has a direct
effect on how legislators vote. In this section we test if legislators directly respond to variation in
support of their party (a measure of the party valence brand) when deciding how to vote.

We conducted two survey experiments on state legislators to evaluate whether the party label
has a direct impact on how legislators’ vote. These experiments were part of the larger survey that
was conducted in Spring 2012 (see the description in the previous section). Again, while the overall
response rate for the survey was about 15 percent (a total of over 1,000 responses), we asked these
longer survey questions to only a subsample of about 150 respondents in order to keep the survey
close to the targeted five-minute time frame.

For these experiments we gave respondents a vignette about a legislator who was considering
whether to vote for a bill supported by their party leaders (Figure A4 in the Appendix shows the
full text of the vignette). The respondents were given two pieces of information from a recent
public opinion poll of voters in his/her district: (1) what percent of voters in the district favored
the bill, and (2) the generic party ballot for voters in the district (i.e., what percent of voters
intended to vote for the legislator’s party in the next election). The downside to using the generic
party ballot is that voters use both valence and policy considerations when answering this question.
Voters might like the party because it is accomplishing voters’ ideological goals or because of its
non-ideological actions. We cannot fully resolve this ambiguity, but our July 2013 voter experiment
specifically used the language of the generic party ballot as the outcome measure. The results of
that experiment (see Table 2) suggest that the party valence brand is a significant determinant of
the generic party ballot (perhaps even more significant than the party policy brand). Further, the
generic party ballot is the type of information that legislators might actually use in practice when
trying to estimate the value of their party’s valence brand.

We varied the results of the generic party ballot poll question to see whether legislators were
more likely to vote with the party leaders when the value of the party valence brand was higher (i.e.,
when more people intended to vote for the party in the next election). In the low-valued treatment
only 29 percent of the voters indicated that they were planning to vote for the legislator’s party
(and 65 percent planning to vote for the opposite party with 6 percent undecided). In the high-
valued treatment the numbers were reversed with 65 percent of the voters indicating that they were planning to vote for the legislator’s party (and 29 percent were planning to vote for the opposite party with 6 percent undecided).

In the first experiment we portrayed the voters in the district as being split about the merits of the bill with 45 percent favoring passage, 46 opposing passage, and 9 percent expressing no opinion. In the second experiment the voters were against the bill with only 34 percent favoring passage (with 57 percent opposing passage and 9 percent expressing no opinion). The two experiments were thus designed to capture the situation when voters are split on the measure and the situation when they are opposed to the measure. In all other ways, the two experiments were the same. We did not conduct a third experiment where voters supported the measure because theoretically it is a much less interesting case; when constituents and party leaders both support the measure (and no other information is given) we do not have theoretical reasons to expect the legislators to vote against the measure.

The first column of Table 4 shows the results from the survey experiment where voters in the vignette are split on the measure. Note that the modal response in both treatments is the same: 93 percent of the respondents exposed to the high-valued, party label treatment and 74 percent of the respondents exposed to the low-valued, party label treatment thought that the legislator would vote with the party leaders. Krehbiel (1998) argues that one reason legislators from the same party vote together is they have shared preferences and not because leaders effectively pressure them to change their votes. Our results provide partial support for that view. The legislator in the divided public opinion vignette faces no pressure from party leaders or voters (who are split on the issue). Instead the only information for them to rely upon is that the party leaders support the measure. Respondents seem to have used that information to infer that the legislator would also support the measure because they have shared preferences. Thus, part of the reason that legislators vote together is that they have similar preferences.\footnote{Alternatively, it is possible that in addition to using leadership support to impute the legislator’s position on the issue, they are also responding to partisan incentives to vote with the leadership in the hopes of abstract rewards for party loyalty. However, any abstract party loyalty rewards legislators may assume, are effectively held constant across the experimental manipulation, such that our results should be unaffected by this interpretation.}

The results in the first column of Table 4 also show that legislators were responsive to the value
of their party brand. Respondents exposed to the low-valued treatment were about 19 percentage
points less likely to think that the legislator would vote with the party leaders than were their
counterparts who saw the high-valued treatment.

This result stands in contrast to how legislators behave when constituents are clearly opposed.
The last column of Table 4 shows that when when constituents opposed the bill (only 34 percent
favored passage), there was almost no difference between the low-valued and high-valued, party
brand treatments.

Significantly, the value of the party brand only has a direct effect on how legislators vote in cases
where voters are split. What might explain why the party label has a heterogeneous treatment
effect? Significantly, it cannot be explained by the idea that legislators simply vote against the
party when they are unpopular as a way to bolster their own electoral position (Carson et al.,
2010). If that were going on, then we would expect the value of the party label to have a treatment
effect in both experiments.

Bianco (1994) provides a possible explanation for the observed heterogeneous treatment effect.
Bianco argues that legislators have leeway on their votes when two conditions are met: (1) con-
stituents are uncertain about the proposal and (2) constituents trust the legislator to act in their
interest. The logic is that when voters know exactly what they want, legislators need to respond
to those preferences and they have no leeway. However, when the constituents are uncertain about
an issue (e.g., when they are split on the measure), the legislators can exercise more discretion if
voters trust them. One possibility is that the party label’s value captures constituents’ level of trust
for the legislator’s party (and thus the legislator) and the opinion poll about the bill captures con-
stituents’ uncertainty about the proposal. This view suggests that we see no treatment effect when
constituents are opposed to the bill because the legislator has no leeway in that case; legislators
respond to their constituents’ clear preference. In contrast, when voters are split on the measure,
legislators can exercise leeway to vote more with their party if constituents trust her party.
Discussion

The term party brand can be divided into two different elements: the party valence brand and the party policy brand. The party policy brand captures the idea that voters infer the ideological position of (at least some) candidates based on their party label and has received more attention in the empirical literature.

The idea behind the party valence brand is that voters hold politicians accountable for the non-ideological actions of the party as a whole and not just the behavior of the individual legislator. This argument is the foundation for important work that has connected party organization to legislators’ electoral incentives. The key claim is that because the party valence brand affects incumbents reelection prospects, legislators and their party leaders have incentives to improve the value of their party’s valence brand. This desire to improve the party valence brand is why legislators empower legislative leaders to enforce party discipline.

Despite the importance of the party valence brand in explaining how parties in legislatures function, it has not received much attention in the empirical work. In part this is because the two aspects of the party brand are interrelated. A party’s ability to get things done - a key aspect of the party valence brand - is often measured by the degree to which a party passes it’s ideological agenda, which is directly related to the party policy brand. We employed a series of survey experiments with voters and state legislators to isolate, to the best extent possible, the party valence brand.

Our results, which represent some of the first empirical tests of the party valence brand, help answer three fundamental questions about this aspect of the party brand:

1. Does a party’s record of legislative accomplishment influence constituent’s voting decisions?
   A: Yes. Voters reward legislators for their party’s record of non-ideological legislative performance. Further, the size of this effect is comparable, and sometimes even larger, in magnitude to other important determinants of vote choice.

2. Do legislative leaders act in anticipation of affecting the party valence brand?
   A: Yes. Legislators believe that leaders exert more pressure when the outcome of a legislative performance vote (passing the budget) is likely to affect constituents’ voting decisions at the polls.

3. Does the party label ever influence legislator’s voting decisions directly in the absence of pressure from the leadership?
A: Yes and no. When constituents are strongly opposed to a bill, a stronger party brand will not induce a legislator to vote with the party. When constituents are split on a bill, a stronger party brand will induce legislators to vote with the party.

Our results provide support for the assumptions and theories of previous literature, but also yield new insights. For example, our results show that it is only when constituents are split on an issue that a strong party brand can directly induce a member to vote with his or her party. Relatedly, it is only with these empirical tests that we can begin to make claims about the relative magnitude and impact of these different factors on constituent and legislator opinion. While we are hesitant to overgeneralize from our survey experiments, we provide preliminary evidence that parties, politicians and political scientists may all have been underestimating the importance of the valence component of the parties’ reputations in shaping elections and legislative politics. Specifically, we find that the ethics and governance (passing the budget on time) treatments move voters more than the economic voting and ideological proximity treatments. Because the valence component is also one of the easiest components to influence, understanding the role of valence provides important insights electoral and legislative politics.

The Electoral Environment and Its Effect on Legislative Politics

Among other things, our results highlight the importance of understanding how changes in the electoral environment affect the salience of the party valence brand and its effect on politics. Electoral rule changes, for example, that make the party label more salient to voters should cause leaders to be more likely to try to pressure members to vote for policy that will affect the party label in a positive manner. One important change is the timing of elections. As late as the 1970 many states still held presidential and congressional (House) elections on different dates.21 This disconnect in election timing meant that the role of the presidential’s party label was likely to play less of a role in congressional elections (Engstrom and Kernell, 2005).

More recently, there has been a persistent shift away from straight-ticket voting. In 1942 eighty-one percent of states included an option that allowed voters in their state to vote a straight party

21It was not until the passage of the 17th Amendment in 1913 mandating the direct election of Senators and accompanying congressional legislation in 1914 that formally required senatorial elections to join House and presidential elections on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November.
ticket by marking one box (Albright, 1942); in 2012 only thirty percent of states have that option (National Conference of State Legislators, 2011). The move away from making straight ticket voting easy should decrease the salience of the party valence label on legislative elections.\textsuperscript{22}

At the same time, other forces have worked to increase the importance of the valence and policy components of the party brand in elections. For example, the decline of the local media industry means that voters hear more about the national party and less about their own local representatives. These changes in the media industry mean that the party brand is more salient to voters because they hear more about the party as a national entity and less as a collection of local, individual representatives.

**Practical Politics: What Actions Can Legislators Take?**

Our results also highlight the incentives that legislators and their leaders have to control their own electoral fates. A legislative party can attract more votes by taking actions that affect either their positional or valence reputations. Positionally, consistent with median voter theories, we find that moving ideologically closer to voters of the opposite party helps to attract their votes. However, for a variety of reasons—personal policy preferences and primary elections among them—this is a practical non-starter for both parties. Similarly, if they knew how to easily lower unemployment during a time of fiscal crisis, taking actions to do so would be electorally advantageous. But again, as a practical matter there are limits to what parties can do to affect unemployment levels.

By contrast, valence related actions tend to be feasible, attractive to swing voters, and not distasteful to base voters. By behaving more ethically themselves (or at least appearing to do so) or making the other party appear less ethical, parties can improve their relative value of their own valence brand vis-a-vis their opposition’s valence brand. Similarly, the majority party can improve their valence brand by passing the budget on time\textsuperscript{23}, while the minority party can deny the majority party the benefits of an improved valence brand by preventing the budget from being passed on time.

\textsuperscript{22}See Carey and Shugart (1995) for a discussion of how other electoral rules incentivize voters to use the party label.

\textsuperscript{23}We find no reputational cost to passing the budget late, which, perhaps, can be explained by low voter expectations in the current fiscal and political climate.
The Media Spin Battle

As the foregoing discussion hints at, parties do not always actually have to change their behavior to affect their party valence brand. Perceptions are an important part of the party valence brand. One way legislative leaders affect voters’ perceptions of the parties’ valence brands is through winning the media spin battle (Sellers, 2010). Party leaders engage in spin to take credit for good outcomes and shift blame to the other party for bad outcomes. This behavior is certainly partly about electioneering, but it also is about achieving the more immediate goal of passing legislation on the party’s agenda. When leaders successfully build up the party brand, legislators are more willing to vote for the party agenda because they have leeway that comes from having their constituents’ trust. The desire to pass legislation also explains why leaders engage in this type of label building activities at the beginning of a legislative session when elections are two years away. As researchers, we cannot fully evaluate the impact that party leaders have on legislative outcomes without evaluating both the direct and indirect paths through which they influence their rank-and-file members.

Consistent with the incentives to indirectly influence party loyalty, legislative leaders have been putting an increasing amount of their resources into dealing with communication. Frances Lee shows that as late as 1976, the U.S. Senate leadership did not devote any of their staff to working in this area (Lee, 2013). In 2012, by contrast, about forty-five percent of the leadership staff was working on communication. A similar pattern exists in the U.S. House and applies to both parties. Leaders want to win this battle both to win elections and to affect their ability to pass legislation (or at least to hamper the opposition from doing so).24

The downside of this trend is that the legislative parties are putting more resources into their appearances and less into their governing. But given the relatively high return to working on the party valence brand and the relatively low level of effort that it takes to work on this aspect, legislative leaders are simply responding to their incentives.

Unfortunately, we expect the media spin battle to continue to be important because of the high stakes involved. We also expect it to skew in the negative direction, reflecting the reality

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24One reason that legislative leaders may be putting more resources into communication is that reporting about politics has become nationalized. With more focus on the national party - rather than individual legislators - the legislative leaders have even more incentives to focus on the party valence brand because it now has an even bigger impact on their party’s rank-and-file members.
that a tremendous amount of partisan activity is aimed more at harming the opposition party’s reputation rather than helping their own reputations. Parties, especially when they are in the minority, have incentives to tear down the party label of the other party; weakening the opposition, increases the relative strength of one’s own position in two-party system. This negative flip-side to the valence component of the party brand is entirely consistent with the evidence presented here and the incentives created because of the media’s focus on negative news (Niven, 2001; Groeling and Kernell, 1998), yet it is an under-appreciated component of these theories that in many ways best mirror’s the empirical reality of American politics today.

We hope that these findings shed new light on the most promising future directions of party research. In this paper, we have focused exclusively on the valence component of the party brand, which we believe has been under-studied empirically to this point. While for the purposes of this analysis we have largely set aside the ideological component of the party brand, we believe that both ideological and valence components of the brand are likely operating simultaneously. The integration of these two aspects of the brand is a promising avenue for future research, and potentially has wide ranging consequences for legislative behavior, voter behavior, and the policy-making process.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Treatment Variables (Info about Incumbent’s Party)</th>
<th>2010 Experiment</th>
<th>2011 Experiment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party Passed Budget on Time</td>
<td>65.3%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Passed Budget Late</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Point Difference</td>
<td>11.7**</td>
<td>–</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(t=2.34)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Party Rated as being Ethical</td>
<td>60.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Party Rated as being Unethical</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
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<td>Percentage Point Difference</td>
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<td>(t=3.49)</td>
<td>(t=3.11)</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<td>1,579</td>
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Notes: Data comes for the 2010 and 2011 Cooperative Congressional Election Surveys. T-statistics in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Table 2: The Generic Party Label Experiment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DV: Vote Republican</th>
<th>(1) All Voters</th>
<th>(2) Independents</th>
<th>(3) Democrats</th>
<th>(4) Republicans</th>
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<td><strong>VARIABLES</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Unemployment Treatments</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Democrats - High Unemployment</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>-0.013</td>
<td>0.039</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.031)</td>
<td>(0.062)</td>
<td>(0.037)</td>
<td>(0.081)</td>
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<td>Democrats - Low Unemployment</td>
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<td>0.021</td>
<td>-0.042</td>
<td>-0.225***</td>
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<td>(0.062)</td>
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<td>-0.066</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>-0.088</td>
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<td>(0.030)</td>
<td>(0.061)</td>
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<td>(0.082)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Republicans - Low Unemployment</td>
<td>0.095***</td>
<td>0.132**</td>
<td>0.074**</td>
<td>0.056</td>
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<td>(0.031)</td>
<td>(0.064)</td>
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<td><strong>Ethical Treatments</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Democrats - Most Ethical</td>
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<td>-0.056</td>
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<td>(0.031)</td>
<td>(0.062)</td>
<td>(0.038)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democrats - Least Ethical</td>
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<td>0.145**</td>
<td>0.181***</td>
<td>0.124*</td>
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<td>(0.031)</td>
<td>(0.063)</td>
<td>(0.039)</td>
<td>(0.075)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Republicans - Most Ethical</td>
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<td>0.255***</td>
<td>0.141***</td>
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<td>(0.062)</td>
<td>(0.037)</td>
<td>(0.075)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Republicans - Least Ethical</td>
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<td>-0.136**</td>
<td>-0.091**</td>
<td>-0.182**</td>
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<td>(0.060)</td>
<td>(0.037)</td>
<td>(0.077)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democrats - Budget on Time</td>
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<td>-0.170***</td>
<td>-0.014</td>
<td>-0.145*</td>
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<td>(0.030)</td>
<td>(0.060)</td>
<td>(0.038)</td>
<td>(0.077)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democrats - Budget Late</td>
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<td>-0.024</td>
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<td>(0.083)</td>
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<td>0.216***</td>
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<td>(0.063)</td>
<td>(0.038)</td>
<td>(0.083)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Republicans - Budget Late</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.030)</td>
<td>(0.060)</td>
<td>(0.036)</td>
<td>(0.074)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideology Treatments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats - Ideologically Closer</td>
<td>-0.088***</td>
<td>-0.162**</td>
<td>-0.049</td>
<td>0.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.031)</td>
<td>(0.063)</td>
<td>(0.038)</td>
<td>(0.078)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats - Ideologically Further</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.165**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.030)</td>
<td>(0.061)</td>
<td>(0.038)</td>
<td>(0.076)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans - Ideologically Closer</td>
<td>0.067**</td>
<td>0.060</td>
<td>0.073**</td>
<td>-0.091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.030)</td>
<td>(0.061)</td>
<td>(0.036)</td>
<td>(0.080)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans - Ideologically Further</td>
<td>-0.033</td>
<td>-0.013</td>
<td>-0.046</td>
<td>-0.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.030)</td>
<td>(0.062)</td>
<td>(0.038)</td>
<td>(0.075)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>0.381***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.042)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>-0.324***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.037)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>-0.084**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.037)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.398***</td>
<td>0.291***</td>
<td>0.102</td>
<td>0.892***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.062)</td>
<td>(0.105)</td>
<td>(0.062)</td>
<td>(0.150)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Controls Included?</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>1,925</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.341</td>
<td>0.159</td>
<td>0.135</td>
<td>0.213</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other controls: education levels, gender, voted in 2012 election, and Democratic control of legislature. Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.
Table 3: Do Leaders Pressure in Expectation of Improving the Party Label?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment Variables</th>
<th>DV: Percent who Say that Party Leaders will Pressure Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vote Will Affect Party Label</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote Would Not Affect Party Label</td>
<td>72.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Point Difference</td>
<td>12.1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(t=1.79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: T-statistics in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. The response rate for the survey was about 15 percent (over 1,000 responses total), but we asked these longer survey questions to only a subsample of about 150 respondents to keep the survey close to the targeted five-minute time frame.

Table 4: Does the Party Label have a Direct Effect on Legislators’ Votes?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Label Treatments</th>
<th>Voter Support for Measure in Vignette:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voters Split on Measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority Support in Poll:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...For Legislators’ Party</td>
<td>92.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...For Opposition Party</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Point Difference</td>
<td>18.6***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(t=3.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Dependent Variable: Legislator would Vote with Party Leaders. T-statistics in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. The response rate for the survey was about 15 percent (over 1,000 responses total), but we asked these longer survey questions to only a subsample of about 150 respondents to keep the survey close to the targeted five-minute time frame.
Appendix: Survey Questions - Screen Shots

Figure A1: 2011 CCES Survey Experiment

Non-partisan groups often rate legislators’ performance and provide voter guides that include short descriptions of both legislative candidates. We would like your opinion about two candidates who we refer to as Candidate A and Candidate B.

Candidate A is the sitting mayor of a mid-size town in the district. During his time in office, his town has experienced slightly above average economic development and population growth. He opposes caps on carbon emissions and opposes a free trade agreement with South Korea.

Candidate B is the incumbent from the majority party who has served in the legislature for 4 years. He supports caps on carbon emissions and supports a free trade agreement with South Korea. The state’s ethics watchdog group gave the following ratings to Candidate B and his party:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethics Rating for Candidate B</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics Rating for Candidate B’s Party</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on these descriptions, which candidate would you vote for?

- Candidate A
- Candidate B
Figure A2: Ideologically Placing The Congressional Parties

Please rate how liberal and conservative you think each of the following actors are (higher values = more liberal, lower values = more conservative)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Republicans in Congress
- Yourself
- Democrats in Congress

Figure A3: Party Pressure Experiment

${e://Field/Party_Adjective} leaders who control the state legislature are two votes short of passing the budget on time. Days before the budget vote, a reputable firm releases the following poll result:

Question: "Is the ${e://Field/Party_Adjective} majority's ability to pass the budget on time likely to be a deciding factor in whether you would vote to return the ${e://Field/Party_Adjective} majority to power next year?"
- Yes - 72% / 18%
- No - 28% / 82%

To pass the budget on time, two ${e://Field/Party_Adjective} members who come from moderate districts where voters are unhappy with the current budget need to vote for the budget. Do you think that ${e://Field/Party_Adjective} leaders in this situation are likely to pressure these members to vote for the budget?

- Yes, they will pressure these members to vote for the budget
- No, they will not pressure these members to vote for the budget
The day before the legislature votes on a bill that the $\langle Field/Party\_Adjective \rangle$ leaders in the chamber are trying to pass, a reputable polling firm releases the following poll of 600 voters in a $\langle Field/Party\_Adjective \rangle$ legislator’s district:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 1: Attitude on the Bill.</th>
<th>Question 2: Vote Intention in Next Election.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favor Passage - 45/34%</td>
<td>$\langle Field/leg_party \rangle$ - 65/29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose Passage - 46/57%</td>
<td>$\langle Field/leg_otherparty \rangle$ - 29/65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Opinion - 9%</td>
<td>Undecided - 6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do you think the $\langle Field/Party\_Adjective \rangle$ legislator who represents this district would vote on this bill?

- [ ] Vote to pass the bill
- [ ] Vote against the bill
References


