Call Your Legislator:

A Field Experimental Study of the Impact of Citizen Contacts on Legislative Voting

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Abstract

Does contacting one's legislator influence public policy? We answer this question with a field experiment in which Michigan state legislators are randomly assigned to be contacted by their constituents about a specific bill. The field experimental design allows us to produce internally and externally valid estimates of the influence of constituent contacts on legislative voting. The estimated effect is substantial: being contacted by constituents increases the probability of supporting the relevant legislation by about 12 percentage points. We discuss the normative and theoretical implications of these results.

There are multiple mechanisms by which public opinion could influence policymaker behavior. Policymakers hoping to be reelected have an incentive to respond to public opinion (Canes-Wrone, Brady and Cogan 2002). Policymakers may also consider reflecting the desires of their constituents as part of their professional role (Wahlke, Eulau, and Buchanan 1962). Even if willing to enact policies supported by the public, however, enacting policies that reflect public opinion requires elected officials to learn about the preferences of their constituents. This is not a trivial task. Policymakers, like the general public (Katz and Allport 1931, Merton 1968), are prone to inaccuracy in judging public opinion (Kull and Ramsay 2002; McGarrell and Sandys 1996). While polls could offer accurate information about public opinion, in many cases polls are not available to legislators (Lee 2002), especially for new issues. Some policymakers do not trust polls as a source of information (Herbst 1998), which could in part stem from misunderstandings about the science behind polling or from legitimate critiques of its practice. Contacts from constituents, whether face to face or by email, letter, or phone, are a source of information about the state of public opinion on an issue (Bogart 1972; Herbst 1998; Lee 2002), and, if policymakers are concerned with responding to constituent opinion, could influence policymakers' behavior and policy outcomes.

Prior work has explored the influence of constituent contacts on policy (Bartels 2005, Caldeira and Wright 1998, Evans 1996, Fowler and Shaiko 1987, Griffin and Newman 2005), but this work, based on observational methods, is vulnerable to confounding variables. We attempt to resolve this ambiguity with a field experiment. Our experimental design involves randomly assigning state legislators to be contacted by their constituents about an anti-bullying bill under consideration by the Michigan state legislature at the time of the study[1]. Among

[1] This research was approved by an Institutional Review Board.

treatment legislators, we randomly vary the volume of calls placed to the legislators to allow us to estimate the influence of the volume of calls on legislative voting. We find that being contacted by citizens increases the probability of supporting the relevant legislation by 11-12 percentage points, a substantial effect. There is no evidence, however, that the volume of calls matters above the fact of being contacted.

The paper is organized as follows. The first section reviews the literature on the influence of public opinion on policy and previous research on the impact of constituent contacts on legislative behavior. The second section discusses the design of the current study and the third section discusses the results. We discuss the implications for theories of policymaker behavior and normative concerns related to democratic responsiveness. We conclude with caveats and directions for future research.

The Impact of Contacting Policymakers

Contacting legislators is relatively common among citizens in the United States (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). Eleven percent of respondents claim that they or someone in their household have ever contacted their U.S. Representative (American National Election Studies Data 1994) and 28% report having contacted any elected official over the past five years (GSS 1972-2010 Cumulative Datafile). While some of these contacts concern particularistic concerns, often these contacts concern broader policies (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). Some of these contacts occur at the behest of interest groups as part of efforts to influence public policy (Kollman 1998). Although the percentage of respondents contacting policymakers is lower than, say, the percentage of eligible voters reporting voting, contacts are potentially politically

important as they offer an opportunity for citizens to more clearly communicate public opinion than other forms of political behavior (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

The communication of constituent attitudes through contacts is potentially important for a variety of reasons. Even when polls are available, trusted, and understood, for elected officials trying to learn about public opinion, there are a number of advantages to using constituent contacts in gauging public opinion. First, constituent contacts typically represent spontaneous expressions of public opinion, rather than responses to a prompt from an interviewer in a public opinion polls. Even people prompted to contact their policymaker by an interest group are choosing to express an opinion in their own words rather than reacting to questions asked by an interviewer (Lee 2002). Second, constituent contacts, as they require more effort than responses to a public opinion poll, demonstrate a credible commitment to an issue that survey responses do not (Kollman 1998). Finally, if the constituent contacts are in fact prompted by an interest group, these contacts could let policymakers know that interest groups are helping constituents to monitor legislative activity on the issue, providing an electoral incentive for policymakers to respond (Goldstein 1999)[2].

For these reasons, constituent contacts could provide evidence about public opinion. Is policymaker behavior in fact influenced by constituent contacts? Evidence about the impact of citizen contacts on policy comes from two sources: self reports from policymakers and

[2] Note that we are not suggesting that the data provided by constituent contacts present an unbiased representation of the preferences of the population of all constituents. We discuss bias in contacting behavior below.

observational data estimating the relationship between citizen contacts and legislative behavior. Neither of these methods produces internally valid estimates of the influence of citizen contacts on policy.

Evidence based on self reports from legislators suggests that citizen contacts have a large impact on legislative decision-making (Kingdon 1989; Rosenthal 2001). However, legislators' reports of the relative influences of contacts and other factors on their attitudes may reflect an inaccurate understanding of the influence of constituent contacts on their own behavior (Nisbett and Wilson 1977), may be inaccurately remembered, or may express socially desirable responses about the influence of citizen input on legislative behavior.

A number of observational studies estimate the impact of constituent contacts with regressions of legislative behavior on a measure of citizen contacts (Bartels 2005, Caldeira and Wright 1998, Evans 1996, Fowler and Shaiko 1987, Griffin and Newman 2005). Many of these studies rely on self reports to measure constituent contacts, introducing many of the same problems faced by the studies discussed above. More important, observational studies do not provide internally valid estimates of the impact of citizen contacts. Citizens' likelihood of contacting policymakers about a public policy issue may be influenced by the legislators' ideology and other factors related to the legislators' position on the issue. Interest group-instigated grassroots lobbying campaigns may be strategically targeted towards relatively friendly legislators (Hojnacki and Kimball 1998, 1999). Even with the inclusion of control variables, there may be other unmeasured differences between legislators who are contacted and those who are not that are correlated with support for the relevant legislation (Gerber and Green 2000). Any of these threats to validity could bias the causal estimates produced by observational research.

We conduct a field experimental test of the influence of citizen contacts on legislative behavior. The study involves accurate measurement of citizen contacts, as the number of citizen contacts to each legislator is observed directly, eliminating the need to rely on self reports. Random assignment of legislators to citizen contacts allows unbiased estimation of the influence of contacts on legislative behavior. The current study is similar to the first author's prior work on the influence of citizen contacts on New Hampshire legislators' behavior (Bergan 2009), although with some changes. First, the experiment is conducted in a professionalized legislature. The New Hampshire state legislature is a citizen legislature, composed of a large number of part-time legislators receiving little pay with few resources at their disposal (Squire 2007). The influence of constituent contacts may be especially influential on citizen legislators who have little experience or resources with which to independently evaluate the state of public opinion. Second, the current study involves phone calls instead of emails. We anticipate that phone calls will exhibit a stronger influence on policymakers, as these contacts require greater effort on the part of constituents than emails, demonstrating the salience of the issue (Kollman 1998), and greater resources on the part of interest groups, demonstrating greater commitment to the issue and indicating group strength (Goldstein 1999). Finally, unlike the prior study, in the current study the *number* of citizen contacts to each legislator is randomly assigned, allowing the estimation of the volume of constituent contacts.

Method

All members of both houses of the Michigan legislature (N=148: 38 state senators, 110 house members) are randomly assigned to a control group or one of three treatment groups

corresponding which would be targeted with constituent calls[3]. Legislators are stratified by a number of variables including prior positions on similar legislation[4] and randomly assigned to treatment into four treatment categories: a control group, or one of three treatment groups assigned to receive 22, 33, or 65 calls from constituents (the number of actual completed calls differed slightly from these numbers). The probability of being assigned to each treatment group was the same across the different strata. The distribution of legislators across treatment groups and the actual number of calls completed is presented in Table 1. The Table also presents the percentage from each treatment group who supported final passage of the antibullying bill (discussed below).

Placing calls from constituents to legislators involved two steps. First, American Directions Group, a political consulting firm, placed calls to constituents of legislators in the treatment group. Within each of the treatment legislators' districts, a list was prepared of constituents with a variety of characteristics: females who were registered voters at the time of the calls and who had school aged children (aged 6 to 17) in the household at the time of the calls. A list of constituents with these characteristics was provided by a separate firm

[3] To assess the balance of the treatment assignment, treatment category was regressed on control variables using logit and multinomial regression (Table A1). Control variables included W-NOMINATE score, party, indicators for term, an indicator for gender, percentage voting for the Republican candidate in the previous election, an indicator for membership on the education committee in either chamber and an indicator for state senators. There is no statistically significant relationship between the control variables and the four category treatment variable ($p = .92$) or a two-category treatment variable that collapses the three treatment categories into one category ($p=.70$).

[4] The variables used to stratify legislators include indicators for members of the state senate, party identification, sponsorship of the anti-bullying law under consideration in the state house (HB 4163) and the state senate (SB 45) as of late summer 2011, membership in each chamber's education committee, and a variable divided into four roughly equal categories based on proportion of two-party support for the Republican candidate in the previous election, and a variable based on voting on an anti-bullying bill in the previous legislative session with categories for support for the bill, opposition to the bill, or not voting/not in the legislature yet at the time of the vote.

specializing in voter and consumer lists. Callers read the script to any member of the household who picked up the phone[5].

The script used for the constituent calls is in the Appendix. Respondents were read a brief description of the anti-bullying legislation then under consideration in the Education Committee of the Michigan House of Representatives. Constituents were asked if they would be willing to ask their legislator to support the bill. If respondents agreed, the constituent was immediately patched through to their legislators' phone line, allowing the constituent to leave a message or to speak to the legislator or, more likely, an aide who answered the phone. Calls in this first step were placed during business hours on weekdays. Calls were made over the course of two weeks (September 14 – 30, 2011). Of all calls completed (20% of the total calls attempted), 24% resulted in a patch through the targeted legislators' office. Overall, 2068 calls were placed to 51 legislators. The patch-through process allowed us to verify that the constituent call to the legislator had, in fact, been placed, allowing for direct measurement of contacts placed to legislators' offices.

The influence of phone calls on legislative voting is estimated with ordinary least squares regressions. The dependent variable is the final vote for an anti-bullying bill. House Bill 4163 was named "Matt's Safe School Law" after Matt Epling, a Michigan teen who committed suicide presumably in reaction to intense bullying, in 2002. The legislation requires schools in Michigan to have anti-bullying policies in place by the start of the 2012-2013 school year. On the final

[5] If a child was detected, callers asked to speak with an adult. If the caller was told that they were speaking to someone who was not registered to vote, callers asked to speak with a registered voter in the household, and if none was available, the call was terminated. Otherwise, the call was completed with the person who answered the phone.

vote, 123 legislators supported the legislation, 20 opposed it, four had not voted, and one had left the legislature. The five members who did not vote on the bill were excluded from the analysis.

There are advantages to using the issue of anti-bullying to test the influence of constituent contacts on legislative behavior. First, anti-bullying is a relatively low salience issue, meaning that the results of the phone calls should not be attenuated by a large number of other persuasive efforts targeted at policymakers. In addition, policymakers at the time of the study most likely had little evidence about the state of public opinion about the issue, increasing their reliance on cues such as constituent contacts to draw inferences about the level of public support for anti-bullying legislation. Second, although Democrats were more likely to support the bill than Republicans, the policy is not clearly associated with either party. We anticipate that these conditions are favorable to the effects of constituent contacts (although the estimates of the influence of contacts on voting on the anti-bullying bill do not depend on assuming that this characterization is accurate), but, as with any issue that could have been selected for this study, the results may not generalize to different types of issues. We expect that citizen contacts may have a smaller effect with issues that are highly salient and/or are linked to important partisan values, although testing this possibility is beyond the scope of this paper.

In the first set of regressions, the independent variable is an indicator designating assignment to one of the three treatment categories or the number of phone calls placed to a legislator's office. Regressions are run with and without control variables and indicators for strata. Control variables include indicators for legislator party, membership of the Education Committee in each chamber, legislator gender, as well as legislator's term in office (1-3), percentage in the legislators' district voting for the Republican candidate in the prior election, and a legislator ideology score based on roll calls. This last variable is a W-NOMINATE (Poole

and Rosenthal 2000) score based on roll call votes. Roll call votes were selected from a random selection of 20 legislative session dates from the first six months of 2011. If the most recent action on a bill involves a legislative vote on one the 20 dates in the sample, that legislative vote and all prior votes on the same legislation were coded[6].

A second set of regressions evaluates the effects of the number of calls on legislative voting. These regressions leverage the random assignment to the number of calls received within the treatment group, regressing voting behavior on number of calls received. We estimate the linear relationship between number of calls and legislative voting, controlling for assignment to any treatment group. The actual number of calls differed in some cases from the intended number of cases (see Table 1). We use the intended number of cases in these analyses, but using the actual number of calls does not change the substantive results. Robust standard errors are estimated for regression coefficients in both sets of regressions.

Results

The first set of regressions estimates the influence of being assigned to receive any calls supporting the anti-bullying bill. Voting for the anti-bullying bill was regressed on an indicator which equals 1 for those assigned to receive phone calls and 0 otherwise. Table 2 presents the

[6] W-NOMINATE scores were created separately for each chamber. Although there is considerable overlap in the legislation voted on in both chambers, the roll calls used in either chamber are not identical. However, regressing the W-NOMINATE score on an indicator for chamber, party, and an interaction term for these two variables found no statistically significant main effect of state senate membership or interaction effect of state senate X Democrat. The W-NOMINATE score correlated highly with an interest-group-created vote score (Americans for Prosperity-Michigan) created from bills voted on in 2011 ($r = .95$).

regression results[7]. The coefficients for the treatment indicator are statistically significant for each of the models ($p<.05$, two-tailed). The coefficients for the treatment variable indicate that receiving constituent calls increases the probability of supporting the bill by 11-12 percentage points.

Table 3 presents estimates of the influence of call volume on the final vote. The Table presents the same set of regressions as Table 2, with the addition of a variable representing the intended number of calls placed to each legislator. The coefficient for the indicator for being in any treatment group is statistically significant in 3 out of the 4 regressions. However, the coefficient for number of calls is negative, statistically insignificant, and close to zero.

Why does the volume of calls not seem to matter in influencing legislative voting? We propose three reasons. First, the study, with a relatively small number in each treatment group, may be underpowered to detect a small effect of additional calls on each legislator. The 95% confidence interval for the effect of number of calls from the first model is (-.007, .003), suggesting that the marginal effect of 10 additional phone calls could increase the probability of supporting the bill by as much as .03. Second, because of the high levels of support for the anti-bullying bill among Michigan legislators, a ceiling effect may limit the apparent influence of constituent phone calls. Finally, because state legislators receive relatively few contacts about all except the most salient issues (Rosenthal 2001), receiving any phone calls may be a much more important indicator of public opinion than the number of calls received. Future research should explore the influence of volume of contacts on policymaker behavior, although the results here

[7] The coefficients for the regression with controls are presented in an Appendix (Table A2). Of the control variables, only the coefficient for state senators is statistically significant. The state senate had earlier in the year passed an anti-bullying bill that was criticized for including language that exempted certain behaviors from what the bill classified as bullying. Media attention to this bill may have increased pressure on the state senate to support the more recent version of the bill.

suggest that, at least for some policies, the fact of receiving calls is more important than the volume of calls[8].

Discussion

Prior research has shown that public opinion generally influences policy, although most of this research is non-experimental, raising concerns about the validity of the causal claims in this research (e.g. Lax and Phillips 2009; Stimson, MacKuen and Erikson 1995). The current study presents experimental evidence that policymakers respond to public opinion. More specifically, constituent contacts influence legislative voting.

There are significant normative implications of this work for democratic theory. The influence of citizen preferences on policy has been called the "central normative problem" of democracy (Rehfield 2009). Our work suggests that state legislators act as delegates, responding to constituent opinion (Pitkin 1967, Rehfield 2009). Many (but not all) normative theories of democracy take policymaker responsiveness as an integral element of democratic governance, and evidence of policymaker responsiveness, from these perspectives, is encouraging.

However, the unequal distribution of contacting behavior could have implications for representation. Figure 1 presents the percentage of households in each income quintile that include someone who has ever contacted their U.S. Representative (ANES 1994 data; see also

[8] As an exploratory analysis, we also explored the interaction of the treatment indicator with a variety of controls, including closeness of the prior election (|proportion of two party vote-.5|, Republican percentage of the two party vote in the prior election, first term legislator, final term legislator (legislators at the time of the vote who were serving their final term due to term limits), state senate membership, gender, party, education committee membership, liberalism (W-NOMINATE score), and extremism (|W-NOMINATE score|). For each of these ten variables, we ran a separate regression including a treatment, each of these controls, and a treatment X control interaction term. The only statistically significant interaction was for treatment X Republican ($p<.05$, two tailed), although after accounting for multiple comparisons, this coefficient is not statistically significant. See Appendix Table A3.

Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba et al. 1995). Well over 20 percent of households in the top quintile include someone who contacted their U.S. Representative, while fewer than 5 percent of households in the bottom quintile include someone who has done so. A recent survey the top 1% or so of wealth-holders in the U.S. found that 37% of these individuals report contacting the U.S. Representative or their staffs in the past six months, often about broad policy issues (Page, Cook, and Moskowitz 2011) and that the policy opinions of these individuals differ from those of the population as a whole, especially on social welfare policy, regulation of business, and taxes (Page, Bartels, and Seawright 2011). The opinions that legislators hear are not representative of the public's views. Establishing that constituent contacts have a substantial effect on public policy in our study provides evidence that differential rates of participation across different groups in society bias policy towards the preferences of the well off.

In recent work, Gilens (2005; 2012) and Bartels (2005; 2008) provide empirical evidence that federal policymakers are more responsive to the wealthy than to lower or middle income citizens. Both cautiously attribute this unequal influence to the role of campaign contributions rather than other forms of political engagement, such as contacting one's legislator. Gilens (2012), for example, observes that while income is related to other types of engagement such as voting and volunteering for a campaign, the rich are unusual with respect to their contributing behavior, contributing at higher rates than those in the middle of the income distribution. This makes campaign contributing behavior a likely candidate to explain the unique degree of policy responsiveness to the preferences of the wealthy.

Assuming that these studies are correct in demonstrating that policy is especially responsive to the preferences of the wealthy, there are a number of reasons that Gilens (2012) and Bartels (2008) are correct to be cautious about this explanation. Contacts to legislators

should be seriously entertained as a possible source of unequal influence based on the available evidence. First, neither of the authors directly measures the influence of campaign contributions on policy due to data availability; for example, the Senate Election Study data Bartels (2008) analyzes does not include data on campaign contributions. Second, the rich are not distinctive only with respect to contributing behavior. According to Figure 1, the wealthy are also unusual in their contacting behavior, with the number of contacts rising sharply for the highest income quintile. Third, the evidence in favor of the influence of campaign contacts on policy is less ambiguous than the influence of campaign contributions. While prior studies estimating the effect of campaign contributions on policy have produced mixed results and rely on a number of strong methodological assumptions (Ansolabehere, de Figuieredo and Snyder 2003; Stratmann 2005), the field experimental evidence presented above demonstrates that constituent contacts can influence policy. Moreover, Bartels' (2008) observational analysis itself suggests that contactors have a distinctive effect on policy. Bartels downplays the influence of contacts, noting that controlling for the influence of constituent contacts does not completely eliminate the disparity of policy responsiveness between the rich and the poor, suggesting that campaign contributions may offer an alternative explanation for this gap in spite of the lack of direct evidence for this claim. However, methodological factors, such as measuring citizen contacting behavior with error, could explain the persistence of this gap after controlling for contacting behavior.

Neither Gilens nor Bartels offer direct evidence that campaign contributions are responsible for the unique responsiveness of policy the preferences of the rich, and their evidence is in fact consistent with the explanation that the influence of the wealthy is explained by constituent contacts. Without additional direct evidence, we cannot determine the relative

importance of citizen contacts and campaign contributions in producing disparities in representation. However, the influence of citizen contacts should not be ruled out as a plausible explanation for unequal representation.

Conclusion

We conclude with some caveats and possibilities for future research. First, a methodological issue with the current study is that the treatment may influence those in the control group if, for example, members of the control group hear about citizen contacts from legislators in the treatment group. However, the impact of the treatment on the control group would bias the estimated treatment effect downwards, meaning that our estimates represent a lower bound of the influence of constituent contacts on legislator behavior.

Second, we have presented the results of a single experiment involving a single issue. The impact of citizen contacts on legislative behavior may be smaller on other issues, such as those that have been on the public agenda longer, especially those where policymakers have prior information about public opinion, or where the policy in question is central to one or both of the parties' legislative agendas. Second, the experiment involves a particular legislature, and the results may be generalizable to similar legislatures. Although the generalizability of the results is an open question, for now we note that the results are consistent with the first author's prior work on citizen contacts in a different legislature dealing with a different issue (Bergan 2009).

The results of this study should be taken as indicating the influence of citizen contacts *in some contexts.* Future experiments will need to be conducted to determine the scope of this influence. We optimistically anticipate that the trajectory of future experimental research on

citizen contacts and other influences on legislative behavior will follow the same trajectory of field experimental research on voter turnout. Early field experimental research on turnout demonstrated a strong influence of face to face, nonpartisan canvassing on turnout in nonpresidential elections (Gerber and Green 2000). These early results suggested that contacts could influence voting behavior, at least under certain conditions. Later field experimental research on turnout explored the influence of partisan appeals (Nickerson, Friedrichs, and King 2006), explored moderators of turnout efforts (Arceneaux and Nickerson 2009), and many other topics (Green and Gerber 2004). While the current study demonstrates the influence of phone calls on legislative voting for a certain type of issue in a certain type of legislature, future research can explore the effects of citizen contacts in other contexts.

The current work represents an application of field experimental methods to policymaking. The results offer strong evidence that public opinion, and citizen contacts in particular, influence legislators' actions. We believe that the strong evidence we offer about policy responsiveness, an issue central to political representation, will inspire future field experimental work on policymaking.

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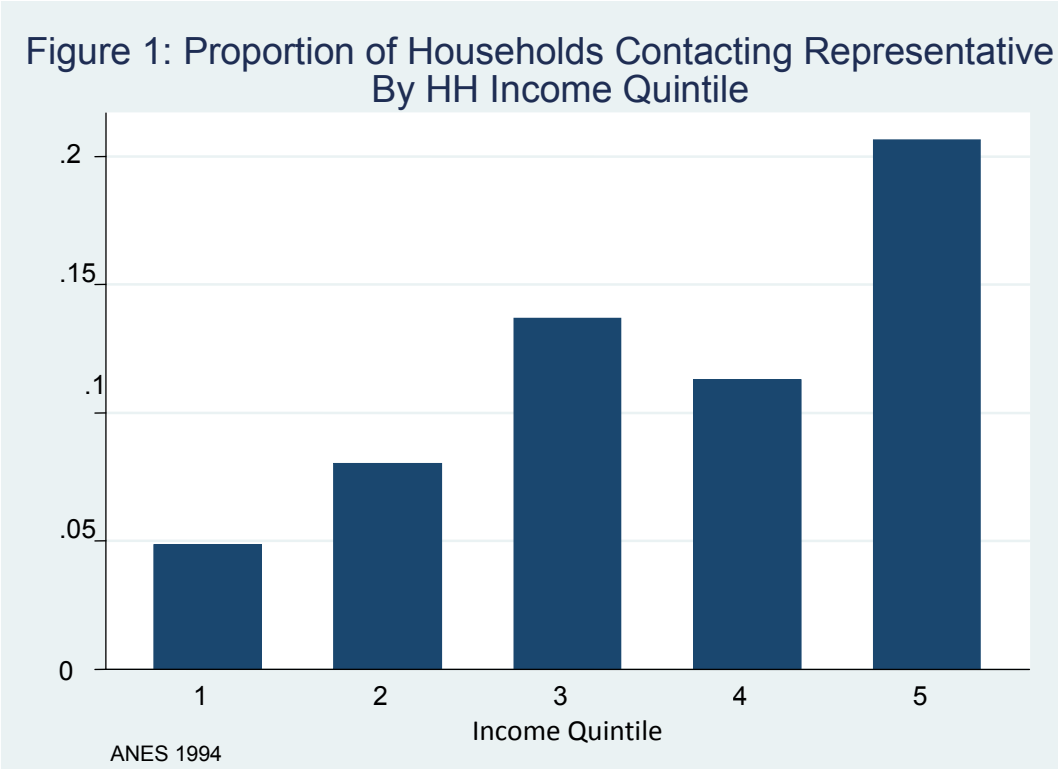
Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Legislators by Treatment Group and Number of Calls Completed

	Number of Calls Completed	***Number of Legislators***	***Percent Voting For Anti-Bullying Bill***
Control	0	97 *N* = 97	81.9 *N* = 94
Treatment Group 1 Intended # of calls =22	21 22 23 24 25	3 6 5 1 1 *N* = 16	93.8 *N* = 16
Treatment Group 2 Intended # of calls =33	32 33 34 35	2 10 4 1 *N* = 17	100 *N* = 17
Treatment Group 3 Intended # of calls =65	61 62 63 64 65 66	2 1 10 3 1 1 *N* = 18	87.5 *N* = 16

Note: N's in right hand column report numbers in each treatment group who voted on final passage of th bill. Five members did not vote.

Table 2: Ordinary Least Squares Estimates of Influence of Assignment to Any Treatment Group on Support for Anti-Bullying Bill Final Passage				
	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*
Treatment	.120* (.052)	.115* (.051)	.115* (.050)	.110* (.062)
Constant	.819 (.040)	1.025 (.160)	.951 (.026)	.853 (.134)
N R^2	143 .03	143 .16	143 .22	143 .23
Strata Indicators?	N	N	Y	Y
Controls?	N	Y	N	Y
Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. * p <.05, two tailed				

Table 3: Ordinary Least Squares Estimates of Influence of Number of Calls on Support for Anti-Bullying Bill Final Passage				
	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*
Treatment	.200* (.095)	.189* (.095)	.168+ (.092)	.164 (.100)
# of calls	-.002 (.002)	-.002 (.002)	-.001 (.002)	-.001 (.002)
Constant	.819 (.040)	1.016 (.161)	.951 (.027)	.866 (.138)
N R^2	143 .03	143 .17	143 .22	143 .23
Strata Indicators?	N	N	Y	Y
Controls?	N	Y	N	Y
Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. * p <.05, two tailed; + p<.05, one tailed. "# of calls" is number of intended calls; number of actual calls placed differs slightly from number of intended calls.				



Have you (or anyone in your family living here) ever contacted Representative (NAME) or anyone in (his/her) office?

Appendix 1: Script Read to Prospective Constituent Callers

Hello,

My name is _____ and I'm calling you on behalf of the nonprofit School-Community Health Alliance of Michigan. I am calling about anti-bullying legislation being considered in Lansing.

This legislation was created in response to a series of incidents involving the late Matt Epling, a Michigan middle school student. Matt was assaulted by some high school students as part of what was called a "Welcome to High School" hazing. Matt was the victim of a crime, Assault and Battery, which adults dismissed as routine "bullying". Because Matt stood up to his assailant, the pressure of future retribution may have been too much. The night before Matt's parents were to talk with Police about formal charges, Matt ended his life.

The anti-bullying legislation would require every school district in Michigan to have an anti-bullying policy to prevent future tragedies. Currently it is only suggested that schools have such a policy—so many schools don't. Without a policy, many teachers, students and parents alike do not know the boundaries of what is and what is not acceptable behavior, let alone what to do when bullying occurs.

May I connect you now at no charge to your local legislator to encourage him or her to vote yes on this very important anti-bullying bill?

Yes: Great! When you reach their office please tell them your name and that you urge them to support the current anti-bullying bill to protect all students' rights.

Now hold on while I transfer you. Thank you for your support.

Direct Connect Procedure

No: I understand, thank you for your time today. Good bye.

Appendix 2: Supplementary Tables

Table A1: Balance of Treatment Groups				
	Model 1	*Model 2*		
	Dependent Variable=2-Two Category Treatment Variable	**Dependent Variable=4-category Treatment Variable**		
	Logit Estimates	**Multinomial Logit Estimates**		
	Treatment=Any Calls	**22 calls**	**33 calls**	**65 calls**
W-NOMINATE	1.336	1.106	-.954	3.475+
	(1.240)	(1.947)	(2.124)	(1.828)
Democrat	1.606	2.040	-1.757	3.799
	(1.833)	(2.922)	(3.165)	(2.581)
Term 2	-.402	-.198	-.849	-.239
	(.440)	(.687)	(.729)	(.657)
Term 3	.105	.424	-.082	.153
	(.618)	(.936)	(.908)	(.928)
Female	.815	.173	.906	1.326*
	(.449)	(.734)	(.649)	(.638)
Republican Vote	-.821	.704	-.772	-2.260
	(1.549)	(2.387)	(2.337)	(2.441)
Education Cmte	.080	1.009	-.576	-.529
	(.480)	(.650)	(.835)	(.851)
State Senate	-.107	.046	-.217	-.148
	(.421)	(.651)	(.644)	(.644)
Constant	-1.221	-3.488	-.320	-3.059
	(1.321)	(2.147)	(2.036)	(1.996)
N	148	148		
LR χ^2	5.55	14.95		
Prob > χ^2	.700	.922		
Pseudo R^2	.029	.049		
Notes: + p<.05, one tailed. * p<.05, two tailed.				

Table A2: Ordinary Least Squares Estimates of Influence of Assignment to Any Treatment Group on Support for Anti-Bullying Bill Final Passage With Control Coefficients	
Treatment	.115*
	(.051)
W-NOMINATE	-.207
	(.143)
Democrat	-.221
	(.202)
Term 2	.057
	(.056)
Term 3	.100
	(.086)
Female	.073
	(.048)
Republican Vote	-.280
	(.221)
Education Cmte	-.037
	(.075)
State Senate	.151*
	(.062)
Constant	1.025
	(.160)
N	143
R^2	.16
Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. * p<.05, two tailed.	

Table A3: Ordinary Least Squares Estimates of Interaction Effects					
Moderator:	*Close Election*	*First Term*	*Final Term*	*Rep. Percent In district*	*Democrat*
Treatment	.092 (.086)	.158* (.060)	.118* (.057)	-.080 (.067)	.168* (.082)
Moderator	-.029 (.336)	-.039 (.081)	.061 (.126)	-.576 (.148)	.242* (.065)
Treatment X Moderator	.169 (.354)	-.055 (.096)	.007 (.132)	.377* (.189)	-.139 (.087)
Constant	.824 (.070)	.842 (.060)	.814 (.043)	1.119 (.060)	.729 (.059)
N R^2	143 .03	143 .03	143 .03	143 .12	143 .11
Strata Indicators?	N	N	N	N	N
Controls?	N	N	N	N	N
Moderator:	*State senate*	*Female*	*Education Committee*	*W-Nominate*	*|W-Nominate|*
Treatment	.136* (.068)	.119+ (.065)	.091 (.059)	.099* (.039)	.087 (.202)
Moderator	.137+ (.075)	.136+ (.080)	-.102 (.123)	-.161* (.042)	-.400* (.191)
Treatment X Moderator	-.056 (.087)	-.053 (.092)	.175 (.130)	.077 (.062)	.012 (.310)
Constant	.783 (.050)	.797 (.046)	.835 (.042)	.858 (.031)	1.128 (.135)
N R^2	143 .05	143 .04	143 .04	143 .12	143 .06
Strata Indicators?	N	N	N	N	N
Controls?	N	N	N	N	N
Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. * p <.05, two tailed; + p<.05, one tailed. "Moderator" refers to the control variable listed at the top of each column.					