

Direct Democracy as Necessary Evil?: Perspectives from Interest Group Leaders

Recently, some of the most controversial issues in American politics have not been decided in legislatures, but by the citizenry through the means of direct democracy. Polarizing issues such as marriage equality, abortion rights, raising the minimum wage, marijuana legalization, public healthcare, gun control, and stem cell research have garnered a great deal of national attention, while appearing on isolated state ballots across the country. The appearance of ballot-box lawmaking has witnessed a steady increase beginning in the 1970s. In fact, the previous decade saw the most initiatives in American history.¹

This activity has brought a great deal of attention to the direct democracy process.² In particular, concern has surfaced that policy made through these means is especially susceptible to manipulations by powerful interest groups and skilled political consultants. Central to many studies of direct democracy is the effect these actors have upon public policy. Whether or not policy made through this system best serves the citizenry is more than an academic question. Evaluating the merits of direct democracy is a difficult task. One way scholars have sought to do so is by asking those “in the know” what they think about the process.

This study investigates what interest group leaders think of the direct democracy process. Specifically, the perceptions of group leaders in three states—California, Michigan, and South Carolina are examined. In their study of the increasing movement towards direct democracy, Russell Dalton, Wilhelm Bürklin and Andrew Drummond question whether, “direct democracy may become a tool for established political interests

to court public support for their causes, unmediated by political parties or elites.”³ This question is addressed by examining whether group leaders perceive the process as benefiting the citizenry at-large or whether they believe it is too often manipulated by powerful, well-funded interests. Toward this end, a group’s experience with direct democracy, the type of group, and the group’s organizational characteristics are examined to assess how these factors affect a group’s evaluation of the institution.

Perceived Effects on Democracy

Trying to gauge influence in American politics has always been a troubling proposition. Nonetheless, one way scholars have sought to understand influence is by consulting with elites. Political professionals are in a unique position to evaluate the game of influence in electoral politics. A particularly well-developed stream of research exists in respect to influence in the direct democracy arena.

Several studies examine how political consultants and political marketing firms view their impact upon the political system. Specific attention focuses on their involvement with the direct democracy process. Given the approbation that many feel toward the so-called “initiative industry,” it is informative to see how these individuals believe they affect the political system. Despite popular accounts of mercenary-like behavior, most do not believe they pervert the public’s will. Todd Donovan, Shaun Bowler, and David McCuan find that many consultants take on causes to which they are closely aligned.⁴ Rather than being open to the highest bidder, consultants simply gravitate toward ballot measures *they* would like to see passed. Their findings suggest

that consultants take into account many factors beyond a lucrative paycheck when they agree to take on a ballot campaign.

In their survey of campaign professionals, 73 percent of David Magleby and Kelly Patterson's respondents agreed that initiatives have a "somewhat" or "very positive" effect upon democracy.⁵ However, they found that 57 percent of their respondents believed that "initiatives expand the power of special interests."⁶ Moreover, they contend that "the initiative process is ... less democratic than is sometimes believed because of the control that special interest groups have in the process."⁷ They suggest that interest groups are best able to participate in direct democracy due to their organization and money.

In spite of this research, citizens consistently support the direct democracy process. Stephen Griffin describes what he terms "California constitutionalism" and its role relative to representative democracy.⁸ California constitutionalism refers to the abundance of direct democracy campaigns in the state that run parallel to the three branches of government. Griffin argues that the ubiquity of ballot campaigns occurs due to a lack of trust in representative institutions. "Put simply, citizens are more likely to favor direct democracy when they distrust politicians and how the government works (or appears to work)."⁹ He contends that while many may evaluate the flaws of direct democracy, such arguments must be balanced against the flaws perceived of our representative institutions. Put another way, if citizens had greater trust in the branches of government, there would be little need for the initiative, referendum, or recall. Trust in the three branches of government is a widely documented lament among political scientists. For instance, only about one in four American citizens "trust government to do

what is right most of the time.”¹⁰ Supporting Griffin’s thesis, Mark Baldassare notes that “voters often prefer to turn to citizen initiatives to make public policies because of their impatience with the speed of the legislative process and their distrust of the decisions that politicians make.”¹¹

While data on the subject is scarce, polling from several states is instructive. For instance, a poll of California voters conducted after the November 2010 elections found that 66 percent of voters were either “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with the initiative process.¹² In fact, 60 percent of voters were either “somewhat happy” or “very happy” to have voted on the nine initiatives appearing on the ballot that year.¹³ Conversely, the same study found that 66 percent of voters had little-to-no confidence in policymaking produced by the state’s elected officials.¹⁴ In that same election cycle, voters in the state of Washington were even more enthusiastic regarding the virtues of direct democracy. Nearly three out of four voters in the state agreed that “ballot measures were a good thing,” with only one in ten indicating that “ballot measures were a bad thing.”¹⁵

These polls suggest that citizens express far greater confidence in law made through direct democracy than laws made through representative democracy. Citizens further believe that special interests are more inclined to get what they want through the *legislative* process, than through the *direct democracy* process. A 2011 survey conducted by Mark Baldassare, Dean Bonner, Sonja Petek, and Jui Shrestha found that 62 percent of voters in the state of California thought decisions made through the initiative process were better than those made by the governor or legislature.¹⁶ Less than a quarter of those surveyed believed that decisions made by the citizenry were worse than those made by

policymakers. Taken together, these polls suggest that the citizenry has much greater confidence in direct democracy over representative democracy.

Moreover, Todd Donovan and Jeffrey Karp find that such support for direct democracy is generally widespread among the citizenry.¹⁷ This support has not only been witnessed in the United States, but throughout many countries in Europe as well. While Donovan and Karp note that the trend in greater usage of direct democracy may have occurred due to an increase in the distrust in representative governments, they also note that the rise of such practices could also have occurred through greater enthusiasm and desire among citizens to be more directly involved in political affairs.¹⁸ They set out to understand the motivation among those who are supportive of direct democracy as a means toward public policymaking. Although their research examines support for direct democracy across six nations, their findings are relevant to the research presented here. Among their most interesting findings is that younger voters are more enthusiastic about direct democracy as are those whose party is not in the majority.¹⁹ Their findings were mixed when it comes to the dissatisfaction with representative democracy argument. While they found support for that view in several countries, they found the opposite to be true in at least one country. Thus, it would appear further research is warranted to better understand which citizens are more or less likely to support direct democracy as an institution.

It is clear that scholars have learned a great deal about perceptions of direct democracy. This is particularly the case among those in the electorate and the public relations firms charged with running direct democracy campaigns. However, one important player that is absent from our understanding of perceptions of influence in

these campaigns is that of organized interests. While they are major players, few studies have analyzed who interest groups perceive is advantaged through citizen lawmaking. This study seeks to fill this void by asking interest group leaders what *they think* of the process.

Data and Methods

To find out what organizers think of the direct democracy process, a large-scale survey was distributed to groups in three states—California, Michigan, and South Carolina. These states were chosen for several reasons. Direct democracy usage varies a great deal among these states. California is viewed as a high user, Michigan as a moderate user, and since South Carolina only has the legislative referendum, it is seen as an infrequent user. As well, the power of interest groups in these states varies quite a great deal. Clive Thomas and Ronald Hrebenar classify South Carolina as having a dominant interest group system, California as having a dominant/complimentary interest group system, and Michigan as having a complementary interest group system.²⁰ Consequently, the power of interest groups in each of these states is thought to differ significantly. Although groups were surveyed in only three states, the sample states represent a nice cross-section of the American states. This design is similar in many ways to other studies of interest group behavior in the U.S.²¹

Each survey was addressed to the ‘Director/Executive’ for each organization. After obtaining lists of organizations registered to lobby in each of the states, an attempt was made to eliminate the names of all organizations that appeared to be non-membership organizations. This included corporations, government entities, think tanks, colleges and universities, and hospitals. This decision yielded a list of 511 groups in

Michigan and 221 groups in South Carolina. Surveys were sent to all groups on the final list in these states. Unfortunately, financial resources limited the ability to survey all groups in California. Thus, 350 groups were randomly selected (from a list of over 1,000) to survey. The surveys were circulated in two waves during the spring of 2003, providing a snapshot of group perceptions during that time period.

The response rates were as follows: 38 percent from South Carolina (84 responses), 37 percent from Michigan (189 responses), and 38 percent from California (133 responses). The overall response rate was 37.8 percent. These rates compare quite favorably with those of similar mail surveys. Although the decision to eliminate non-membership groups may miss important behavior, the number of groups contacted and the diversity of the sample states provide a fair account of group perceptions of direct democracy in the United States. Moreover, the data provides an important bridge to information gleaned in the previously mentioned studies of elite opinions relating to direct democracy.

While scholars know how campaign professionals and citizens perceive the direct democracy process, surprisingly little is known about what interest group leaders think of the process. Given the important role of interest groups in direct democracy campaigns, it is worthwhile to examine who *their leaders* believe is advantaged by the institution. Particular attention is devoted to understanding how institutional context (i.e., state usage of direct democracy), direct democracy involvement, group type, and group characteristics influence group perceptions.

Group Perceptions of Direct Democracy

Previous research suggests that campaign professionals believe that initiatives positively impact democracy.²² To understand what group leaders think of the process, they were asked to indicate whether or not they agreed or disagreed with a number of common arguments surrounding the practice of direct democracy. These arguments can be categorized as positive and negative assessments of direct democracy. Common criticisms include the manipulation of voters by special interests through political marketing techniques, the dominance of the institution by an initiative industry, that money is unduly influential in these campaigns, that direct democracy leads to the tyranny of the majority, and the inability of voters to understand initiative proposals. Proponents claim direct democracy allows citizens to voice their opinions, holds government accountable to the people, and that wealth does not equate to influence in these campaigns. Tables 1 and 2 (appendix 1 and 2) delineate how group leaders perceive these arguments enveloping direct democracy. A number of interesting, yet ambivalent findings surface from this exercise.

Table 1 presents data relating to negative arguments concerning direct democracy. The numbers represent the percent of groups in each of the states that agree with the negative statements about direct democracy. A great amount of disparity occurs across states and questions. However, several consistent patterns persist. For instance, agreement with the negative assessments appears to concentrate in three tiers. These tiers remain consistent across the states and among the questions asked. The greatest amount of agreement occurs among those group leaders believing that organized interests mislead the populace through deceptive advertising and those agreeing that a sophisticated

initiative industry dominate the process. Greater ambivalence occurs when it comes to the influence of money in ballot contests. Leaders on the whole are not in agreement whether wealthy interests get what they want in ballot contests. Although one could reasonably assume a group's budget and the type of group would direct the answers to this line of questioning, no apparent connections emerged. Finally, leaders were reticent to suggest that citizens were incompetent to decide policy at the ballot box or that direct democracy leads to a tyranny of the majority.

When looking more specifically at how group leaders in these states view direct democracy, it appears that groups in California are more skeptical than are groups in Michigan and South Carolina. The starkest difference can be seen in whether leaders believe citizens are competent to evaluate particular legislative proposals. Nearly half of the groups in California (45 percent) believe that citizens are incompetent, while only 1 in 5 groups in Michigan and South Carolina agree that citizens are incompetent. The same pattern occurs among many of the other questions. It appears that the greater the exposure to direct democracy, the more skepticism occurs among groups. South Carolina leaders have very little exposure given that only the legislative referendum is available in the state, and they are the least critical of direct democracy among the sample states. This observation suggests that exposure to the practice of direct democracy may generate lower levels of efficacy among groups relative to the institution. Alternatively, less experience with direct democracy yields less skepticism over its practice. Thus one's experience with the institution alters one's confidence in the institution. This finding is important to consider among those who would like to see the practice spread to states with little direct democracy usage.

This finding is echoed when considering how group leaders perceive the benefits associated with direct democracy. Table 2 documents these findings. This time, the numbers represent the percent of groups in each of the states that agree with the positive statements about direct democracy. A robust 71 percent of leaders in the sample believe that direct democracy is a valuable tool for ordinary citizens. A strong majority further believe that the institution helps keep government accountable (64 percent) and acts as a much needed check on the power of government (59 percent). However, these findings are difficult to square with Table 1's finding that 80 percent also believe that the process is susceptible to special interest groups who influence voters through misleading statements and deceptive advertising. Yet, it appears that just as California group leaders were more likely to be critical of direct democracy, they are also less likely to show their support for the institution. A group's participation in direct democracy was expected to affect its assessments of the institution. However, assessments among users and non-users were virtually identical. A group's exposure to the process at the macro-level (i.e., by state) appears to be more significant to its assessments of the institution than its exposure to the process at the micro-level (i.e., the group's own experiences). This observation deserves further investigation.

To explore the findings further, a number of bivariate correlations were run to examine these relationships in more detail. Table 3 in the appendix presents the results of only those variables where statistically significant relationships could be established. A negative sign indicates a negative relationship between the two variables whereas no sign represents a positive relationship between the two variables. For instance, those that have drafted a ballot measure disagree that direct democracy leads to a "tyranny of the

majority.” Conversely, Table 3 shows that trade groups would agree with that direct democracy may very well lead to a “tyranny of the majority.”

Surprisingly, a number of relationships that were anticipated simply did not surface. For example, the size of a group’s budget did not reveal any statistically significant relationships with various perceptions relating to the benefits or problems associated with direct democracy. One would expect the conflict expansion associated with direct democracy would be particularly attractive to citizen groups. These groups would seem to have the most to gain by having the citizenry at-large involved in policymaking, rather than limiting the process to the state legislature. After all, Elisabeth Gerber’s examination of the Populist Paradox hinges on the ability of citizen groups to effectively advocate among the masses *vis-à-vis* ballot campaigns.²³ However, the survey suggests that citizen groups did not show any marked associations to these statements about direct democracy. Yet, group type does appear to affect one’s perceptions of the process. This is taken up further below.

Table 3 allows one to explore the findings from Tables 1 and 2 regarding state context in greater detail. To understand how one’s experience with direct democracy affects perceptions of the institution, Table 3 examines those groups that have drafted a ballot measure—which would indicate the most active among direct democracy participants. Next, how group leaders in South Carolina and California perceive the process is examined. These reflect the states with the least and most exposure to direct democracy. Finally, different types of interest groups are examined (i.e., trade associations, charities, and labor unions) to gather what they think about the institution. As noted above, no statistically significant relationships could be drawn from citizen

groups and professional associations in relation to their evaluation of direct democracy.

It is thought that trade associations may be less likely to support ballot-box policymaking, while charities and labor unions may be more supportive of such measures given the expanded scope of conflict in these contests.

Table 3 examines perceptions of direct democracy along two fronts. First, it details whether group leaders believe direct democracy is perceived as good government (loosely constituted). Specifically, it presents information detailing whether group leaders believe that direct democracy leads to a tyranny of the majority, if it is a valuable tool for ordinary citizens, if it is desirable because it helps to keep government accountable, whether it serves as a valuable check on the power of government and if they believe direct democracy is harmful because of incompetent voters. Second, Table 3 presents information detailing the most common criticism of direct democracy—that it is a process dominated by wealthy interests. To understand this better, leaders were asked if they believe direct democracy is dominated by an initiative industry composed of political consultants, public relations firms, and interest groups; if they believe that direct democracy contests have been captured by wealthy interests; whether they believe that the side with the most money prevails in direct democracy campaigns; if they think that wealthy groups dominate direct democracy contests; and whether they believe that the process is susceptible to groups who work to deceive the citizenry.

Those that have drafted a ballot measure report being much more supportive of direct democracy as an institution. They do not agree that the process leads to a tyranny of the majority and these groups show positive correlations with those statements suggesting the process keeps government accountable, checks the power of government,

and is a valuable tool for ordinary citizens. Perhaps users see that direct democracy provides an additional point of access to affect change upon public policy. Boehmke has found that states with more permissive forms of the institution have higher interest group populations.²⁴ Having direct democracy as an additional tool may lead to greater participation among groups and therefore amongst the citizenry. Non-users may see direct democracy as an impediment to their getting what they want through conventional means. It has been argued that the initiative and referendum processes widen the scope of conflict and thereby create disturbances in cozy relationships between established groups and public policymakers.²⁵

Given their commitment to drafting a ballot measure, it would be surprising if users would have seen the institution negatively. Yet, when it comes to criticisms of direct democracy, it appears that groups who have drafted ballot measures are a bit more ambivalent. The only statistical relationship that emerged was that users of direct democracy agree that it is a process dominated by an initiative industry composed of political consultants, public relations firms, and wealthy interest groups. So while practitioners of direct democracy believe it is a valuable tool for citizens and works to check the power of government, they apparently believe the process is shaped by this industry—an industry that may not be equally accessible to all groups.

When examining state context, Michigan groups showed no statistical relationships to the questions posed in Table 3. However, several of the trends noted in Tables 1 and 2 continue to appear here. While groups in both South Carolina and California are silent in their perceptions of the *merits* of direct democracy, they differ substantially in their perceptions of the *criticisms* of the institution. Leaders of groups in

South Carolina show strong negative relationships to questions relating to the importance of money in initiative campaigns, while leaders in California appear to agree that the process is dominated by an initiative industry, wealthy groups have undue influence, and that the side with the most money tends to prevail in direct democracy contests. This speaks to the suggestion that experience with the institution matters. Whether this experience occurs at the macro or micro level seems to affect how groups perceive the process. It is clear that very different relationships are established among users of the process (as seen in column one) from those at the macro-level (as seen in the differences between those who have drafted a ballot measure and those groups answering from different states). Predictably, direct democracy users are quite supportive of the process. However, group leaders in California (where direct democracy is much more prevalent) are much less likely to see its benefits and much more likely to agree that it is a process that has been captured by wealthy interests than are group leaders in South Carolina, which has minimal experience with direct democracy. This finding deserves further examination.

Considering how different group leaders view the process yields several interesting findings. First, trade associations are much more critical of direct democracy as producing good government than are charities and labor unions. Furthermore, trade associations agree that the process leads to the tyranny of the majority and it is harmful due to incompetent voters. Of course, trade associations are often thought to enjoy close relationships with policymakers and therefore may have the most to lose by opening the lawmaking process up to the citizenry through direct democracy.

Charities disagree with the notion that direct democracy leads to a tyranny of the majority. Similarly, labor unions show a positive statistical relationship with the statement that the process provides a valuable check on the power of government. A similar pattern emerges when considering how these different group types evaluate the process in regard to the role of money in these contests. Trade associations take issue with the statements that direct democracy has been captured by wealthy interests, that the side with the most money tends to prevail, and that wealthy groups dominate the process. Conversely, labor unions agree that in direct democracy contests, the side with the most money tends to prevail. Similarly, charities appear to show more faith in the process as these groups do not agree that citizens are susceptible to groups deceiving them in direct democracy campaigns. Additionally, charities seem to take issue with the statement that the direct democracy process is dominated by an initiative industry.

Data from Table 3 suggests that, not surprisingly, direct democracy users are most supportive of the institution. These same groups believe that the process is dominated by an initiative industry that may not be available to all groups. Similarly, group leaders in California (the state with the most experience with direct democracy) are most critical of the role of money in direct democracy campaigns. Additionally, trade associations differ greatly from other groups in their perceptions of the process. In particular, these leaders are most likely to agree that the process creates majoritarian policies and is harmful due to incompetent voters. These groups also are most likely to question whether direct democracy keeps government accountable, serves as a valuable check on government, or is a valuable tool for ordinary citizens. Finally, trade associations are much less likely to agree that money plays an important role in ballot contests. In short, the leaders of trade

associations in this sample would likely prefer policymaking through more traditional means that would be less likely to draw public attention to their policy interests.

Conclusion

While some research has been conducted to investigate the perceptions of campaign professionals relative to the direct democracy process, little has been done to examine what interest group leaders think about direct democracy. This study sought to fill this void. The data suggests that group leaders most closely associated with direct democracy view the institution as a necessary evil. This is especially true when considering a group's experience with the institution. On the micro-level, those groups who have drafted a ballot measure believe it is an important institution, yet recognize that it is a process that may be dominated by political consultants, public relations firms, and wealthy interest groups. On the macro-level, California groups are most likely to agree that money plays an important part in direct democracy contests. On the whole, most group leaders in the sample believe the process seeks to manipulate the populace, that the initiative industry dominates campaigns, and that money is likely to determine outcomes. They also agree that direct democracy serves as a valuable check on government and acts to hold government accountable to the people.

It is worth noting that the enthusiasm among leaders in this sample is not as strong as that found in similar surveys of both the citizenry and political consultants. Among interest groups, much more skepticism appears to exist in their assessments of direct democracy. This skepticism is most pronounced among California group leaders—those who have the greatest exposure to the direct democracy process. Conversely, those with the least experience with the institution have the least concern regarding potential

problems associated with direct democracy. These findings have implications for those states considering broadening their own experiences with direct democracy. In all, these findings represent a significant advancement concerning interest group perceptions of direct democracy. While the public continues to support the institution of direct democracy, the survey suggests that “those in the know” express some ambivalence regarding the vices and virtues of direct democracy. This is particularly the case when it comes to the perceived dominance of wealthy interests in the process. Whether a group has drafted an initiative and whether one has much experience with initiatives at the state-level largely determines how groups perceive the process. These findings are instructive as advocates consider expanding direct democracy practices throughout the United States.

Appendix 1

Table 1. Negative Assessments Relative to Direct Democracy by State

Statement	% Agreeing			
	CA (n = 126)	MI (n = 175)	SC (n = 74)	All Groups
Initiatives, referenda and other forms of direct democracy are susceptible to special interest groups that influence voters by the way of misleading statements and deceptive advertising	80	82	76	80
Initiatives, referenda, and other forms of direct democracy tend to be dominated by sophisticated political consultants, lawyers, and paid signature-gatherers	79*	71*	55*	70
In initiative, referenda, and recall campaigns, the side with the most money tends to prevail	68*	56*	39*	57
Wealthy interest groups dominate initiatives, referenda, and other forms of direct democracy at the expense of the public interest	65*	57*	46*	57
Initiatives, referenda, and other forms of direct democracy have been captured by the wealthy interest whose power they were designed to curb	55*	48*	30*	46
Initiatives, referenda, and other forms of direct democracy are harmful because voters are not competent to judge particular legislative proposals	45	15	22	20
Initiatives, referenda, and other forms of direct democracy are damaging because they lead to a 'tyranny of the majority'	20	15	15	17

Source: Author's Data; * chi-square significant at .05 level (2-tailed)

Notes: Survey Question – Initiatives and referenda have become quite popular in recent years. Below you will find a number of statements about the wisdom and effectiveness of direct democracy. We are interested in your opinions about direct democracy. For each statement, please indicate if you strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, or have no opinion.

Appendix 2

Table 2. Positive Assessments Relative to Direct Democracy by State

Statement	% Agreeing			
	CA (n = 126)	MI (n = 175)	SC (n = 74)	Total
Initiatives, referenda, and other forms of direct democracy are valuable tools through which ordinary citizens can register their opinions and desires	63	76	75	71
Initiatives, referenda, and other forms of direct democracy are desirable because they keep government officials accountable to the people who put them in power	62	67	61	64
Initiatives, referenda, and other forms of direct democracy represent a much-needed check on the power of government	59	61	51	59
In initiative, referenda, and recall campaigns, big spending does not necessarily mean big influence	39*	45*	43*	42

Source: Author's Data; * chi-square significant at .05 level (2-tailed)

Notes: Survey Question – Initiatives and referenda have become quite popular in recent years. Below you will find a number of statements about the wisdom and effectiveness of direct democracy. We are interested in your opinions about direct democracy. For each statement, please indicate if you strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, or have no opinion.

Appendix 3

Table 3. Bivariate correlations: Direct Democracy as a necessary evil?

	Drafted a Ballot Measure	SC	CA	Trade Groups	Charity	Labor Union
Direct Democracy as good government						
Initiatives, referenda, and other forms of direct democracy are damaging because they lead to a 'tyranny of the majority'	-.102*			.142*	-.133*	
Initiatives, referenda, and other forms of direct democracy are valuable tools through which ordinary citizens can register their opinions and desires	.123*			-.136**		
Initiatives, referenda, and other forms of direct democracy are desirable because they keep government officials accountable to the people who put them in power	.116*			-.115*		
Initiatives, referenda, and other forms of direct democracy represent a much-needed check on the power of government	.122*			-.114*		.119*
Initiatives, referenda, and other forms of direct democracy are harmful because voters are not competent to judge particular legislative proposals				.183**		
Direct Democracy as tool for the wealthy						
Initiatives, referenda, and other forms of direct democracy tend to be dominated by sophisticated political consultants, lawyers, and paid signature-gatherers	.130*	-.255**	.174**		-.101*	
Initiatives, referenda, and other forms of direct democracy have been captured by the wealthy interest whose power they were designed to curb		-.211**	.116*	-.166**		
In initiative, referenda, and recall campaigns, the side with the most money tends to prevail		-.213**	.164*	-.171**		.121*
Wealthy interest groups dominate initiatives, referenda, and other forms of direct democracy at the expense of the public interest		-.165**		-.128*		
Initiatives, referenda and other forms of direct democracy are susceptible to special interest groups that influence voters by the way of misleading statements and deceptive advertising		-.103*			-.139*	

Notes: * correlation is significant at .05 level (2-tailed); **correlation is significant at .01 level (2-tailed)

Survey Question – Initiatives and referenda have become quite popular in recent years. Below you will find a number of statements about the wisdom and effectiveness of direct democracy. We are interested in your opinions about direct democracy. For each statement, please indicate if you strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, or have no opinion.

Endnotes

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- ² The late 1990s and early 2000s witnessed a great deal of research examining the direct democracy process. See for example, Shaun Bowler and Todd Donovan, *Demanding Choices Opinion, Voting, and Direct Democracy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); Shaun Bowler, Todd Donovan, and Caroline Tolbert, *Citizens as Legislators: Direct Democracy in the United States* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998); David S. Broder, *Democracy Derailed: Initiative Campaigns and the Power of Money* (New York: Harcourt, 2000); Richard Ellis, *Democratic Delusions: The Initiative Process in America* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002) and Elisabeth R. Gerber, *The Populist Paradox Interest Group Influence and the Promise of Direct Legislation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).
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- ⁵ David Magleby and Kelly Patterson, "Consultants and Direct Democracy: The Politics of Citizen Control" in *Campaign Warriors: The Role of Political Consultants in Elections*, edited by James Thurber and Candice Nelson, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), 142.
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- ⁷ *Ibid.*
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- ¹⁰ *American National Election Studies*, Center for Political Studies (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014).
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- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.
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- ¹⁷ Todd Donovan, and Jeffrey Karp, "Popular Support for Direct Democracy," *Party Politics*, Vol. 12, No. 5. (2006): 671-88.
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- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 680-1.

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- ²⁰ Clive Thomas, and Ronald Hrebenar, "Interest Groups in the States" in *Politics in the American States: A Comparative Analysis*, Edited by Virginia Gray, Russell L. Hanson and Herbert Jacob, Seventh Edition (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1999), 113-43.
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