

Just How Cynical Are Economists about American Politics?

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Abstract: A survey containing various questions about the political process in the United States was mailed to 1,000 members of the American Economic Association in an effort to assess economists' views of the efficacy of public policy formulation in America. Specifically, propositions were phrased so that we could determine economists' perceptions of (1) the influence that some outside groups exert on elected officials' decision-making, (2) some of the circumstances and methods of discourse elected officials rely on to garner constituents' support for their decisions, and (3) elected officials' voting conduct and a possible motive underlying that conduct. 302 responses were received and the overwhelming majority indicated they have significant skepticism regarding the federal government's potential to improve overall economic welfare in the United States.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1960's polls have shown that large percentages of Americans have lacked trust in the political process and in politicians. In 2005 the Pew Foundation reported that 75 percent of Americans believe that elected officials in Washington, D.C. "lose touch" with their constituents soon after being elected. The same report showed that only forty percent of Americans believe that "most elected officials care what people think." These figures actually represent a moderate degree of improvement in Americans' perceptions of elected officials when compared with the 1990's when political cynicism was at its peak in America.

Decades ago political scientists began studying why so many voters exhibit a substantial lack of trust in politicians. Edward Litt's 1963 article, *Political Cynicism and Political Futility* is perhaps the earliest and most renowned which empirically investigated the link between cynicism about politics and feelings of ineffectiveness in politics. Litt concluded that political cynicism may be rooted in an individual's personality, but it also may be institutionalized across society and handed down to future generations through community norms that are part of society's political milieu—that is, the cultural landscape where politicians interact with voters and lobbyists.

In the United States the political milieu has been characterized as one where special interest groups and large corporations have a disproportionate amount of influence, where voters (and politicians) are incompetent to understand important economic issues, where politicians knowingly make false campaign promises in an effort to be continually re-elected, and one where the corresponding political outcomes are mediocre at best and seem to favor select groups. Do economists agree with this cynical view of America's political milieu? Or, do they reject it? .

In the late 1950's economists began incorporating an element of cynicism into their model building of political behavior through the school of thought known as Public Choice. By applying economic principles to the political process, public choice economists have significantly contributed to our understanding of this process, especially since James Buchanan won the Nobel Prize in 1986 for his contributions to the field. Buchanan asserts (2003) that only a rudimentary comprehension of Public Choice is required to understand, among other things, why government bureaucracies continually grow larger, why pork barrel legislation tends to be the norm, why balanced budgets are ever elusive, why the tax system is filled with loop holes, and why elected officials engage in rent seeking.

Two recent surveys by Heckelman and Whaples (2003;2005) found that economists of various backgrounds generally accept the propositions that public choice scholars accept. Some of the more salient points of agreement include: (1) the size of government has grown due to bureaucratic self-interest and to the proliferation of self-interest groups, (2) bureaucrats are budget maximizers, (3) simple majority rule prevents effective third-party competition, and (4) human beings are self-interested utility maximizers and most politicians are rent-seeking vote maximizers.

The Heckelman and Whapless survey findings imply that many economists are cynical of most government efforts to improve social welfare. However, other recent surveys seem to indicate that large numbers of economists continue to have confidence in the government (Fuller and Geide-Stevenson, 2003; Fuchs, *et.al.* 1998; Klein and Stern, 2006; Blendon *et.al.* 1997; Kearl, 1979; Alston *et.al.* 1992). The bulk of these surveys indicate that economists never reach a complete consensus on any policy issue and that professional economic opinion on many issues has remained unchanged.

While considerable knowledge has been gleaned from the work of Public Choice scholars and others, about the political process, much remains unknown about economists' views of America's political milieu and its impact on the outcomes of that process. In this paper we contribute to the fund of knowledge on that subject through the presentation of findings from a recent survey of professional economists.

2. SURVEY AUDIENCE AND DESIGN

A survey containing twenty propositions was mailed to one thousand randomly-chosen members of the American Economic Association. The survey was pre-tested among a small number of economists to determine the appropriateness of each proposition, minimize the probability of any biased and/or ambiguous interpretation and to maximize the response rate.

The propositions were phrased so that we could determine economists' perceptions of (1) the influence that some outside groups exert on elected officials' decision-making, (2) some of the circumstances and methods of discourse elected officials rely on to garner constituents' support for their decisions, and (3) elected officials' voting conduct and a possible motive underlying that conduct.

Respondents were asked to respond to each proposition on a five-point Likert Scale; a response of one indicates strong disagreement and five indicates strong agreement. Moderate degrees of agreement or disagreement are indicated with a response of two or four respectively. The weighted opinion, measured as the mean of the responses, and the degree of consensus were computed for each proposition. The degree of consensus for each proposition was estimated using a relative entropy score, denoted as E. Relative entropy measures the degree of consensus among respondents, ranging between zero, implying perfect consensus and one, implying complete dissension. It is not a linear measure, however. A value of 0.5 for instance cannot be interpreted to lie in the middle between perfect consensus and complete dissension. Entropy scores less than 0.9 typically imply a high degree consensus.

Over an eight-week period 302 completed surveys and 87 undeliverable surveys were returned, yielding a response rate of 33 percent—a rate similar to many other surveys of AEA members. The respondents were asked to indicate their sex, degree vintage, type of employment, and political affiliation. The background characteristics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Background Characteristics of the Respondents

Percentage of respondents that:	
Were:	Completed their degrees:
Male 87	Before 1981 47
Female 13	After 1980 53
Were employed as/by:	Reported a political affiliation of:
University Professor 65	Democrat 40
Government 13	Republican 13
Business & industry 11	Independent 36
Other 11	Libertarian 5
	Other 6
N = 302	

Of the 302 respondents, 87 percent were male and 13 percent were female. Forty seven percent had completed their highest degree before 1981 and 53 percent had completed theirs during or after 1981. The majority of respondents (65 percent) were employed in academia; 13 percent were employed in government, 11 percent in business or industry and another 11 percent indicated they were employed in something other than the preceding categories. Forty percent of respondents indicated they were Democrat, while 13 percent reported they were Republican, 36 percent reported they were Independent, five percent Libertarian and six percent indicated they were affiliated with some other political party.

The distribution of the respondents' background characteristics roughly approximates that of other recent surveys of members of the American Economic Association. In two surveys of AEA members by Davis (1997, 2007) 89 percent were male and 11 percent were female. In both surveys Davis also reported that 62 percent were employed in academia, 15 percent were employed in industry and 11 percent were employed in government. Citing statistics reported by the AEA, Siegfried (1998) reported that 64 percent of all AEA members were employed in academia and nine percent were employed in business and/or industry. In two surveys of AEA members, Klein and Stern (2004, 2006) reported that 58 percent of their respondents typically voted Democrat and 23 percent typically voted Republican.

3. THE SURVEY RESULTS

Survey results of the entire sample, including the percentage response, the mean and entropy score are reported for each proposition in Tables 2 through 5. Survey results are also reported by the respondents' gender, employment category, and political affiliation in Tables 2A-C through Tables 5A-C.

Table 2 contains five propositions related to the influence that certain groups may exert on the formulation of public policy in the United States. Public Choice theory indicates that some who have strong preferences for a certain public well may coalesce into a special interest group to influence elected officials' decisions.

First, respondents were asked about the impact that special interest groups in general have on public policy formulation. Almost 70 percent strongly agreed that special interest groups have more than a negligible impact and another 23 percent expressed moderate agreement with the proposition. Less than six percent disagreed with this proposition and less than two percent expressed a neutral opinion. Overall, the respondents' weighted opinion was 4.55 and the entropy score was .531—the strongest weighted opinion and the second largest consensus of all propositions in the survey.

While there is some variation in the weighted opinions across respondents' backgrounds, each group expressed a relatively strong affirmative opinion on this proposition. The means across political affiliation ranged from 4.51 among Democrats to 4.67 among Libertarians. The means were the same (4.55) for those employed as college professors and those employed in business or government positions. However, males expressed a stronger weighted opinion (4.60) than females (4.21) on this proposition.

Following observations that corporations exert a disproportionate amount of influence on the political process, respondents were asked if corporations have more influence on public policy formulation in the United States than individuals do. Almost 44 percent strongly agreed and 35 percent agreed. Less than 10 percent disagreed with this statement, yielding a weighted mean of 4.12 and an entropy score of .776. Respondents expressed similar affirmative opinions (mean = 4.23) with substantial consensus ($E = 0.717$) that larger corporations have more influence on public policy formulation in the United States than do smaller ones.

Table 2: Perceptions of Outside Influence

Proposition and Proposition #	Response	% Responding	Mean	Entropy
5. In the United States special interest groups typically have more than a negligible impact on public policy formulation.	SD 1	2.0	4.55	0.531
	D 2	3.3		
	N 3	1.7		
	A 4	23.5		
	SA 5	69.5		

7. Typically, corporations have more influence on public policy formulation in the United States than do individuals.	SD 1 D 2 N 3 A 4 SA 5	2.7 5.4 13.1 34.9 43.9	4.12	0.776
8. Typically, larger corporations have more influence on public policy formulation in the United States than do smaller ones.	SD 1 D 2 N 3 A 4 SA 5	1.3 4.7 9.8 38.1 46.1	4.23	0.717
13. In the United States, professional economists have less influence on the formulation of public policy today than twenty years ago.	SD 1 D 2 N 3 A 4 SA 5	4.2 20.5 28.5 31.6 15.2	3.33	0.911
17. In the United States economic science has more than a negligible impact on public policy formulation pertaining to economic issues.	SD 1 D 2 N 3 A 4 SA 5	3.7 12.5 24.6 49.1 10.1	3.49	0.812
3. In the United States elected officials' political agendas typically affect professional economists' research findings.	SD 1 D 2 N 3 A 4 SA 5	24.6 31.8 23.5 16.3 3.8	2.429	0.913
20. In the United States the direction and scope of professional economists' research is typically influenced by elected officials' political agendas	SD 1 D 2 N 3 A 4 SA 5	13.0 29.8 25.6 26.7 4.9	2.807	0.917

Note: The proposition number represents the order of its appearance in the survey.

In column 2, R = Response, 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

Table 2A Perceptions of Outside Influence by Gender

Proposition and Proposition #	Response	% Responding	
		Male	Female
(5) In the United States special interest groups typically have more than a negligible impact on public policy formulation	1 SD	1.1	7.9
	2 D	3.5	2.6
	3 N	1.6	2.6
	4 A	21.8	34.2
	5 SA	72.0	52.6
	Mean	4.60	4.21
(7) Typically, corporations have more influence on public policy formulation in the U.S. than do individuals.	1 SD	2.7	2.7
	2 D	4.3	13.5
	3 N	13.2	13.5
	4 A	36.0	29.7
	5 SA	43.8	40.5
	Mean	4.14	3.91
(8) Typically, larger corporations have more influence on public policy formulation in the U.S. than do smaller ones.	1 SD	1.2	2.7
	2 D	3.9	10.8
	3 N	10.2	8.1
	4 A	38.1	37.8
	5 SA	46.7	40.5
	Mean	4.25	4.03
(13) In the United States, professional economists have less influence on the formulation of public policy than twenty years ago.	1 SD	3.9	7.1
	2 D	21.1	14.2
	3 N	28.0	35.7
	4 A	32.3	28.6
	5 SA	14.7	14.3
	Mean	3.33	3.29
(17) In the United States economic science has more than a negligible impact on public policy formulation pertaining to economic issues.	1 SD	3.5	5.2
	2 D	12.8	10.5
	3 N	24.5	23.6
	4 A	48.6	55.3
	5 SA	10.5	5.2
	Mean	3.48	3.44
(3) In the United States elected officials' political agendas typically affect professional economists' research findings.	1 SD	24.1	27.0
	2 D	30.5	40.5
	3 N	24.5	16.2
	4 A	16.5	16.2
	5 SA	4.5	0.0
	Mean	2.47	2.22
(20) In the United States the direction and scope of professional economists' research is typically influenced by elected officials' political agendas.	1 SD	11.3	23.7
	2 D	29.1	34.2
	3 N	27.5	13.2
	4 A	27.1	23.6
	5 SA	4.9	5.2
	Mean	2.83	2.52

Note: The proposition number represents its order of appearance in the survey. 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)

Table 2B: Perceptions of Outside Influence by Employment Class

Proposition and Proposition #	Response	% Responding	
		College Prof.	Bus. or Govt.
(5) In the United States special interest groups typically have more than a negligible impact on public policy formulation	1 SD	2.1	1.9
	2 D	2.6	4.9
	3 N	1.6	1.9
	4 A	25.3	18.4
	5 SA	68.4	72.8
	Mean	4.55	4.55
(9) Typically, corporations have more influence on public policy formulation in the U.S. than do individuals.	1 SD	2.6	2.9
	2 D	5.8	4.0
	3 N	11.6	16.3
	4 A	34.4	36.5
	5 SA	45.5	40.4
	Mean	4.14	4.07
(10) Typically, larger corporations have more influence on public policy formulation in the U.S. than do smaller ones.	1 SD	1.6	1.0
	2 D	5.8	3.8
	3 N	9.0	11.7
	4 A	37.0	40.1
	5 SA	46.6	44.7
	Mean	4.21	4.26
(14) In the United States, professional economists have less influence on the formulation of public policy than twenty years ago.	1 SD	5.4	1.1
	2 D	23.2	20.0
	3 N	25.0	31.1
	4 A	31.0	43.3
	5 SA	13.8	4.4
	Mean	3.30	3.38
(17) In the United States economic science has more than a negligible impact on public policy formulation pertaining to economic issues.	1 SD	4.8	1.9
	2 D	12.2	13.5
	3 N	28.6	17.3
	4 A	45.0	57.7
	5 SA	9.5	9.6
	Mean	3.42	3.59
(3) In the United States elected officials' political agendas typically affect professional economists' research findings.	1 SD	25.0	22.9
	2 D	35.0	26.0
	3 N	22.9	24.0
	4 A	14.4	20.8
	5 SA	2.7	6.3
	Mean	2.34	2.61
(20) In the United States the direction and scope of professional economists' research is typically influenced by elected officials' political agendas.	1 SD	16.5	5.3
	2 D	29.8	29.5
	3 N	27.7	22.1
	4 A	21.8	36.8
	5 SA	4.3	6.3
	Mean	2.67	3.09

Note: The proposition number represents its order of appearance in the survey. 1 = Strongly Disagree

(SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)

Table 2C
Perceptions of Outside Influence by Political Affiliation

Proposition and Proposition #	Response	% Responding				
		Dem.	Rep.	Ind.	Lib.	Other
(5) In the United States special interest groups typically have more than a negligible impact on public policy formulation	1 SD	3.5	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0
	2 D	1.8	8.3	3.0	6.7	5.9
	3 N	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0
	4 A	26.1	19.4	21.0	13.3	17.6
	5 SA	68.7	72.2	72.0	80.0	76.5
	Mean	4.51	4.55	4.58	4.67	4.65
(7) Typically, corporations have more influence on public policy formulation in the U.S. than do individuals.	1 SD	2.6	5.7	2.0	6.7	0.0
	2 D	3.5	8.6	5.9	0.0	0.0
	3 N	11.3	20.0	12.9	33.3	0.0
	4 A	31.3	34.3	38.6	33.3	47.1
	5 SA	51.3	31.4	40.6	26.7	52.9
	Mean	4.21	3.77	4.10	3.73	4.52
(8) Typically, larger corporations have more influence on public policy formulation in the U.S. than do smaller ones.	1 SD	1.7	5.7	0.0	6.7	0.0
	2 D	2.6	8.6	5.0	13.3	0.0
	3 N	6.1	20.0	14.9	6.7	5.9
	4 A	32.4	34.2	43.6	40.0	41.1
	5 SA	57.0	31.4	36.6	33.3	52.9
	Mean	4.33	4.09	4.12	3.80	4.47
(13) In the United States, professional economists have less influence on the formulation of public policy than twenty years ago.	1 SD	7.1	0.0	1.0	0.0	28.6
	2 D	13.1	33.3	20.0	38.4	14.2
	3 N	29.2	25.0	31.1	30.8	28.6
	4 A	33.3	33.3	36.7	0.0	7.1
	5 SA	17.1	8.3	11.1	30.8	21.4
	Mean	3.40	3.17	3.37	2.85	2.71
(17) In the United States economic science has more than a negligible impact on public policy formulation pertaining to economic issues.	1 SD	3.5	8.3	2.0	13.3	0.0
	2 D	10.4	11.1	13.9	20.0	23.5
	3 N	24.3	30.6	24.8	6.7	17.6
	4 A	53.0	38.9	50.4	46.7	47.1
	5 SA	8.7	11.1	8.9	13.3	11.7
	Mean	3.53	3.33	3.50	3.27	3.47
(3) In the United States elected officials' political agendas typically affect professional economists' research findings.	1 SD	21.9	14.2	27.3	42.9	23.5
	2 D	37.7	37.1	27.3	14.3	29.4
	3 N	19.2	25.7	26.3	28.6	23.5
	4 A	17.5	14.2	14.7	14.2	23.5
	5 SA	3.5	8.6	4.2	0.0	0.0
	Mean	2.39	2.66	2.41	2.14	2.47
(20) In the United States the direction and scope of professional economists' research is typically influenced by elected officials' political agendas.	1 SD	11.6	5.6	14.6	6.7	6.7
	2 D	28.6	25.0	33.3	5.3	26.7
	3 N	25.9	36.1	26.0	26.7	13.3
	4 A	28.5	27.7	20.8	53.3	53.3
	5 SA	5.4	5.6	5.2	6.7	0.0
	Mean	2.86	3.03	2.68	2.73	3.08

Note: The proposition number represents its order of appearance in the survey. 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). Percentages may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Respondents, regardless of their backgrounds, expressed affirmative opinions on these propositions. Those who indicated “other” as their political affiliation registered the strongest opinions while the means were virtually the same across employment classification. Males expressed a slightly stronger affirmative opinion than females on both propositions.

Following empirical evidence (Davis, 2007; Davis, 1997) which indicates economists believe their influence is waning in the political sphere, we included two propositions related to that belief. Based on the same evidence, we also included two propositions pertaining to the influence that elected officials may exert on economic science. The results for these propositions are also presented in Table 2.

Nearly 47 percent of respondents expressed moderate to strong agreement (mean = 3.33) with little consensus ($E = 0.91$) that professional economists have less influence on the formulation of public policy than they did twenty years ago. However, 59 percent of respondents expressed strong to moderate agreement (mean = 3.49) with more consensus ($E = 0.81$) when asked if economic science has more than a negligible impact on public policy formulation pertaining to economic issues.

On both propositions, Democrats expressed the strongest affirmative opinions with means of 3.40 and 3.53 respectively. Libertarians and those who identified themselves as some other political affiliation registered a slightly negative opinion on proposition (13). Regardless of employment classification and gender, respondents expressed virtually the same affirmative opinions on both propositions (13) and (17).

Respondents were also asked if they believed elected officials’ political agendas typically affect professional economists’ research findings. Not surprisingly, 56 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with this proposition, yielding a weighted mean of 2.42 and an entropy score of 0.91. As shown in Tables 2A, 2B and 2C, virtually the same opinion of mild disagreement was expressed regardless of the respondents’ background characteristics.

When asked if they believe that the direction and scope of economic research is influenced by elected officials, less than half expressed strong to moderate disagreement (mean = 2.81) with little consensus ($E = 0.91$). Males, females, college professors, Democrats, Independents, and Libertarians expressed an opinion of mild disagreement with this proposition, while all others expressed essentially a neutral opinion.

Table 3 contains seven propositions related to the political milieu in which elected officials conduct themselves. Four statements pertain to the circumstances which may facilitate elected officials’ conduct and three pertain to the methods of discourse they may employ to generate support for that conduct.

Respondents were asked if they believe the typical elected official is competent in understanding those economic issues for which they formulate public policy. Over 64 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement; only 13 percent expressed an affirmative opinion, yielding a mean of 2.3 and an entropy score of 0.83. Respondents of all backgrounds expressed similar opinions of disagreement with this proposition, ranging from the strongest disagreement among Independents (mean = 2.16) to the weakest disagreement among Republicans (mean = 2.49).

Respondents were also asked the same question about the typical adult citizen in the United States. Almost 65 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with this proposition, while 20 percent agreed or strongly agreed, yielding a mean of 2.4 and an entropy score of 0.86. Regardless of background characteristic, respondents expressed an opinion of disagreement similar to the previous proposition.

When asked if elected officials rely on the rational ignorance of voters to formulate public policy, 68 percent agreed or strongly agreed while only 10 percent expressed disagreement with that statement, yielding a mean of 3.8 and a 0.82 entropy score. A majority of respondents expressed relatively strong affirmative opinions on this proposition regardless of their background.

Because elected officials frequently employ various media to communicate with their constituents, respondents were asked if they believe most media outlets in the United States communicate economic issues accurately and truthfully to their viewers and readers. Only 32 percent agreed or strongly agreed with that statement and 63 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, yielding a mean of only 2.32 and a 0.86 entropy score. A majority of respondents expressed relatively strong opinions of disagreement on this proposition regardless of their background.

Table 3: Perceptions of Competence and Discourse

Proposition and Proposition #	Response	% Responding	Mean	Entropy
1. The typical elected official in the United States is competent understanding those economic issues for which they formulate public policy.	SD 1	20.3	2.298	0.830
	D 2	44.1		
	N 3	22.7		
	A 4	11.2		
	SA 5	1.7		
19. In the United States the typical adult citizen is competent in understanding those economic issues which most affect their lives.	SD 1	23.0	2.358	0.860
	D 2	41.5		
	N 3	14.5		
	D 4	18.6		
	SA 5	2.4		
10. Elected officials typically rely on the rational ignorance of voters to formulate public policy.	SD 1	2.2	3.81	0.823
	D 2	7.6		
	N 3	22.3		
	A 4	42.4		
	SA 5	25.5		
18. Typically, most media outlets in the United States communicate economic issues accurately and truthfully to their viewers and readers.	SD 1	23.0	2.358	0.860
	D 2	40.0		
	N 3	20.3		
	A 4	14.9		
	SA 5	16.9		
9. Elected officials typically use media outlets to “spin” a political viewpoint rather than to communicate the issue in an unbiased manner.	SD 1	1.0	4.45	0.570
	D 2	1.3		
	N 3	3.3		
	A 4	40.9		
	SA 5	53.5		
16. Elected officials in the United States typically construe issues to create a “feel good” mentality among their constituents.	SD 1	0.7	3.87	0.730
	D 2	8.1		
	N 3	14.9		
	A 4	55.7		
	SA 5	20.6		

Note: The proposition number represents the order of its appearance in the survey.

In column 2, R = Response, 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

Table 3A: Perceptions of Political Competence and Discourse by Sex

Proposition and Proposition #	Response	% Responding	
		Male	Female
(1) The typical elected official in the United States is competent understanding those economic issues for which they formulate public policy.	1 SD	20.4	21.1
	2 D	43.3	47.4
	3 N	23.6	18.4
	4 A	11.0	10.5
	5 SA	1.6	2.6
	Mean	2.26	2.30
(19) In the United States the typical adult citizen is competent in understanding those economic issues which most affect their lives.	1 SD	21.7	31.5
	2 D	43.0	31.5
	3 N	14.3	15.7
	4 A	18.6	18.4
	5 SA	2.3	2.6
	Mean	2.35	2.29
(10) Elected officials typically rely on the rational ignorance of voters to formulate public policy.	1 SD	1.7	5.6
	2 D	6.7	13.9
	3 N	22.5	19.4
	4 A	42.3	44.4
	5 SA	26.8	16.7
	Mean	3.86	3.52
(18) Typically, most media outlets in the United States communicate economic issues accurately and truthfully to their viewers and readers.	1 SD	23.3	21.1
	2 D	41.2	31.6
	3 N	17.5	39.4
	4 A	15.9	7.9
	5 SA	1.9	0.0
	Mean	2.30	2.34
(9) Elected officials typically use media outlets to “spin” a political viewpoint rather than to communicate the issue in an unbiased manner.	1 SD	1.1	0.0
	2 D	1.0	5.1
	3 N	2.7	7.7
	4 A	40.0	46.1
	5 SA	55.6	41.0
	Mean	4.47	4.23
(16) Elected officials in the United States typically construe issues to create a “feel good” mentality among their constituents.	1 SD	0.5	2.9
	2 D	7.3	11.7
	3 N	15.0	14.7
	4 A	56.1	52.9
	5 SA	21.1	17.6
	Mean	3.88	3.70

Note: The proposition number represents the order of its appearance in the survey. 1= Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). Percentages may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding

Table 3B: Perceptions of Competence and Discourse by Employment Class

Proposition and Proposition #	Response	% Responding	
		College Prof.	Bus. or Govt.
(1) The typical elected official in the United States is competent understanding those economic issues for which they formulate public policy.	1 SD	19.3	23.3
	2 D	46.0	40.8
	3 N	21.4	26.2
	4 A	13.4	4.8
	5 SA	0.0	4.9
	Mean	2.28	2.27
(19) In the United States the typical adult citizen is competent in understanding those economic issues which most affect their lives.	1 SD	23.0	23.3
	2 D	40.3	43.7
	3 N	14.7	14.6
	4 A	20.4	14.6
	5 SA	1.6	3.9
	Mean	2.37	2.32
(10) Elected officials typically rely on the rational ignorance of voters to formulate public policy.	1 SD	2.2	2.1
	2 D	7.9	7.4
	3 N	20.2	25.3
	4 A	41.0	46.3
	5 SA	28.7	18.9
	Mean	3.85	3.72
(18) Typically, most media outlets in the United States communicate economic issues accurately and truthfully to their viewers and readers.	1 SD	23.8	22.1
	2 D	40.2	39.4
	3 N	21.7	18.3
	4 A	12.7	19.2
	5 SA	1.6	1.0
	Mean	2.28	2.37
(9) Elected officials typically use media outlets to “spin” a political viewpoint rather than to communicate the issue in an unbiased manner.	1 SD	1.0	1.0
	2 D	2.1	0.0
	3 N	2.1	5.8
	4 A	45.6	37.5
	5 SA	51.6	55.8
	Mean	4.42	4.47
(16) Elected officials in the United States typically construe issues to create a “feel good” mentality among their constituents.	1 SD	1.0	0.0
	2 D	10.2	3.9
	3 N	14.1	16.7
	4 A	52.5	60.8
	5 SA	22.0	18.6
	Mean	3.84	3.94

Note: The proposition number represents the order of its appearance in the survey. 1= Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). Percentages may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Table 3C
Perceptions of Competence and Discourse by Political Affiliation

Proposition and Proposition #	Response	% Responding				
		Dem.	Rep.	Ind.	Lib.	Other
(1) The typical elected official in the United States is competent understanding those economic issues for which they formulate public policy.	1 SD	17.2	14.2	27.0	30.7	5.9
	2 D	49.1	42.9	39.0	38.5	52.9
	3 N	20.7	25.7	25.0	15.3	35.2
	4 A	11.2	14.3	9.0	7.7	5.9
	5 SA	1.7	2.9	0.0	7.7	0.0
	Mean	2.31	2.49	2.16	2.23	2.41
(19) In the United States the typical adult citizen is competent in understanding those economic issues which most affect their lives.	1 SD	22.4	38.9	17.8	26.7	29.4
	2 D	45.7	22.2	45.5	20.0	47.1
	3 N	12.9	5.6	18.8	20.0	11.8
	4 A	18.1	30.6	15.8	26.7	5.9
	5 SA	1.0	2.8	2.0	6.7	5.9
	Mean	2.29	2.36	2.39	2.67	2.12
(10) Elected officials typically rely on the rational ignorance of voters to formulate public policy.	1 SD	3.8	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0
	2 D	7.7	8.8	8.3	6.7	0.0
	3 N	23.1	11.8	24.0	20.0	12.5
	4 A	41.3	52.9	39.6	40.0	62.5
	5 SA	24.0	26.4	27.0	33.3	25.0
	Mean	3.74	3.97	3.83	4.00	4.13
(18) Typically, most media outlets in the United States communicate economic issues accurately and truthfully to their viewers and readers.	1 SD	15.6	41.7	22.8	33.3	29.4
	2 D	41.7	36.1	39.6	26.7	47.1
	3 N	23.4	8.3	18.8	26.7	23.5
	4 A	18.2	13.9	16.8	6.7	0.0
	5 SA	1.0	0.0	1.9	6.7	0.0
	Mean	2.47	1.94	2.36	2.27	1.94
(9) Elected officials typically use media outlets to “spin” a political viewpoint rather than to communicate the issue in an unbiased manner.	1 SD	1.7	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0
	2 D	1.7	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0
	3 N	3.4	2.8	2.9	0.0	5.9
	4 A	37.9	38.9	41.1	46.7	47.1
	5 SA	55.1	58.3	52.9	53.3	47.1
	Mean	4.43	4.56	4.43	4.53	4.41
(16) Elected officials in the United States typically construe issues to create a “feel good” mentality among their constituents.	1 SD	1.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	2 D	10.2	8.8	7.0	0.0	5.9
	3 N	17.7	17.6	13.1	7.1	11.8
	4 A	52.4	32.3	62.6	71.4	64.7
	5 SA	17.7	41.1	17.1	21.4	17.6
	Mean	3.74	4.05	3.89	4.14	3.94

Note: The proposition number represents the order of its appearance in the survey. 1= Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). Percentages may not round to 100 percent due to rounding.

Following observations that elected officials may use creative public discourse with their constituents, respondents were asked if elected officials typically use media outlets to “spin” a political viewpoint rather than to communicate the issue in an unbiased manner. Almost 95 percent agreed or strongly agreed, yielding a mean of 4.5 and an entropy score of 0.57. Respondents expressed a very strong affirmative opinion on this proposition regardless of their background, with means ranging from 4.23 for females to 4.56 for Republicans.

In a related question, respondents were asked if elected officials in the United States typically construe issues to create a “feel good” mentality among their constituents. Over 76 percent agreed or strongly agreed; only 9 percent disagreed, yielding a mean of 3.9 and a 0.73 entropy score. Respondents expressed a strong affirmative opinion on this proposition also, regardless of their background. Libertarians registered the strongest opinion with a mean of 4.14

Table 4 contains three propositions related to elected officials' voting conduct and one related to a possible underlying motive for that conduct. When asked if elected officials' decisions are typically based more on political expedience than on scientific evidence, almost 88 percent agreed or strongly agreed, while only 6 percent disagreed, yielding a 4.3 mean and 0.68 entropy score. Respondents expressed a very strong affirmative opinion on this proposition regardless of their background. Libertarians expressed the strongest opinion with a mean of 4.5 and women expressed the weakest opinion with a mean of 4.13.

Respondents expressed similar agreement (mean = 4.05) with similar consensus ($E = 0.77$) that elected officials in the United States knowingly make campaign promises that they are unable and/or unwilling to honor. Respondents express a strong affirmative opinion regardless of background. However, women express a significantly weaker affirmative opinion than men do on this proposition.

Not surprisingly, economists expressed the strongest opinion (mean = 1.48) with the greatest consensus ($E = 0.53$) on the statement that elected officials typically formulate public policy in an unbiased manner without showing favoritism to any particular group of constituents. Ninety six percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement, while less than three percent agreed. A majority of respondents expressed a very strong affirmative opinion on this proposition regardless of their background.

Interestingly, only 45 percent agreed or strongly agreed that elected officials in the United States typically vote on issues out of concern for their own interest more than those of their constituents. Almost 31 percent had a neutral opinion on this statement and 24 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, yielding a mean of 3.31 and .89 entropy score. Women actually express a mild opinion of disagreement on this proposition (mean = 2.86) while respondents of all other backgrounds express a moderate affirmative opinion.

Large majority of respondents agreed that in the United States the typical elected official's top priority is to be reelected. Over 89 percent agreed or strongly agreed while only four percent disagreed, yielding a mean of 4.4 and a 0.64 entropy score. Respondents express a very strong affirmative opinion on this proposition regardless of their background. Independents and Libertarians register the strongest opinions with means of 4.54 and 4.53 respectively.

Table 4: Perceptions of Elected Officials Voting Conduct

Proposition and Proposition #	Response	% Responding	Mean	Entropy
2. In the United States elected officials' decisions are typically based more on political expedience than on scientific evidence.	SD 1	2.0	4.278	0.684
	D 2	3.7		
	N 3	6.7		
	A 4	39.6		
	SA 5	48.0		
11. Elected officials in the United States knowingly make campaign promises that they are unable and/or unwilling to honor.	SD 1	1.4	4.05	0.772
	D 2	5.4		
	N 3	16.0		
	A 4	41.5		
	SA 5	35.7		
6. In the United States elected officials typically formulate public policy in an unbiased manner without showing favoritism to any particular groups of constituents.	SD 1	60.1	1.48	0.526
	D 2	35.9		
	N 3	1.3		
	A 4	1.7		
	SA 5	1.0		
15. Elected officials in the United States typically vote on issues out of concern for their own interest more than those of their constituents.	SD 1	3.4	3.31	0.897
	D 2	20.9		
	N 3	30.8		
	A 4	30.8		
	SA 5	14.1		

12. In the United States, the typical elected official's top priority is to be re-elected.	SD 1	1.0	4.4	0.641
	D 2	3.3		
	N 3	6.3		
	A 4	34.7		
	SA 5	54.7		

Note: The proposition number represents the order of its appearance in the survey.

In column 2, R = Response, 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

Table 4A: Perceptions of Elected Officials' Voting Conduct by Sex

Proposition and Proposition #	Response	% Responding	
		Male	Female
(2) In the United States elected officials' decisions are typically based more on political expedience than on scientific inquiry	1 SD	2.3	0.0
	2 D	3.8	2.6
	3 N	5.1	18.4
	4 A	38.9	42.1
	5 SA	49.8	36.8
	Mean	4.30	4.13
(11) Elected officials in the United States knowingly make campaign promises that they are unable and/or unwilling to honor.	1 SD	0.5	5.5
	2 D	5.0	8.3
	3 N	14.5	25.0
	4 A	40.8	47.2
	5 SA	38.8	13.8
	Mean	4.12	3.55
(6) In the United States elected officials typically formulate public policy in an unbiased manner without showing favoritism to any particular groups of constituents.	1 SD	59.9	60.5
	2 D	36.1	34.2
	3 N	1.6	0.0
	4 A	1.6	2.6
	5 SA	1.0	2.6
	Mean	1.47	1.52
(15) Elected officials in the United States typically vote on issues out of concern for their own interest more than those of their constituents.	1 SD	2.3	5.4
	2 D	20.2	10.8
	3 N	30.6	27.0
	4 A	31.3	32.4
	5 SA	15.4	24.3
	Mean	3.35	2.86
(12) In the United States the typical elected official's top priority is to be re-elected.	1 SD	1.0	2.6
	2 D	3.5	2.6
	3 N	5.0	13.1
	4 A	34.3	39.4
	5 SA	56.3	42.1
	Mean	4.42	4.15

Note: The proposition number represents the order of its appearance in the survey. 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). Percentages may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding

Table 4B: Perceptions of Elected Officials' Voting Conduct by Employment Class

Proposition and Proposition #	Response	% Responding	
		College Prof.	Bus. or Govt.
(2) In the United States elected officials' decisions are typically based more on political expedience than on scientific inquiry	1 SD	2.6	1.0
	2 D	3.7	4.0
	3 N	7.4	4.8
	4 A	37.0	43.2
	5 SA	49.2	47.1
	Mean	4.26	4.31
(11) Elected officials in the United States knowingly make campaign promises that they are unable and/or unwilling to honor.	1 SD	0.5	2.9
	2 D	8.0	1.0
	3 N	15.0	17.5
	4 A	34.8	40.8
	5 SA	34.8	37.9
	Mean	4.02	4.09
(6) In the United States elected officials typically formulate public policy in an unbiased manner without showing favoritism to any particular groups of constituents.	1 SD	56.8	67.0
	2 D	38.4	31.0
	3 N	1.8	1.0
	4 A	2.1	1.0
	5 SA	1.1	0.0
	Mean	1.52	1.35
(15) Elected officials in the United States typically vote on issues out of concern for their own interest more than those of their constituents.	1 SD	4.0	1.9
	2 D	19.0	24.3
	3 N	29.3	34.0
	4 A	31.0	30.1
	5 SA	16.8	9.7
	Mean	3.38	3.21
(12) In the United States the typical elected official's top priority is to be re-elected.	1 SD	1.0	1.0
	2 D	3.7	2.9
	3 N	5.8	6.7
	4 A	35.1	33.7
	5 SA	54.5	55.8
	Mean	4.38	4.40

Note: The proposition number represents the order of its appearance in the survey. 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). Percentages may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Table 4C
Perceptions of Elected Officials' Voting Conduct by Political Affiliation

Proposition and Proposition #	Response	% Responding				
		Dem.	Rep.	Ind.	Lib.	Other
(2) In the United States elected officials' decisions are typically based more on political expedience than on scientific inquiry	1 SD	1.0	2.7	4.0	0.0	0.0
	2 D	4.3	2.7	3.0	7.1	5.9
	3 N	8.6	11.1	4.0	0.0	5.9
	4 A	38.8	30.6	40.0	28.6	52.9
	5 SA	47.4	52.8	49.5	64.2	35.3
	Mean	4.23	4.27	4.27	4.50	4.18
(11) Elected officials in the United States knowingly make campaign promises that they are unable and/or unwilling to honor.	1 SD	1.0	0.0	1.0	6.7	0.0
	2 D	8.8	5.6	1.0	13.3	0.0
	3 N	20.1	8.3	13.0	0.0	17.6
	4 A	39.4	52.8	42.0	26.7	52.9
	5 SA	30.7	33.3	43.0	53.3	29.4
	Mean	3.90	4.13	4.25	4.07	4.12
(6) In the United States elected officials typically formulate public policy in an unbiased manner without showing favoritism to any particular groups of constituents.	1 SD	60.0	55.5	62.0	60.0	52.9
	2 D	36.5	33.3	36.0	40.0	41.1
	3 N	1.7	5.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
	4 A	1.7	5.6	0.0	0.0	5.9
	5 SA	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0
	Mean	1.43	1.61	1.44	1.40	1.59
(15) Elected officials in the United States typically vote on issues out of concern for their own interest more than those of their constituents.	1 SD	3.5	0.0	2.0	6.7	5.9
	2 D	26.3	27.8	14.2	13.3	23.5
	3 N	29.8	19.4	35.7	33.3	35.3
	4 A	29.8	36.1	32.6	13.3	17.6
	5 SA	10.0	16.7	15.3	33.3	17.6
	Mean	3.18	3.41	3.44	3.53	3.18
(12) In the United States the typical elected official's top priority is to be re-elected.	1 SD	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	5.9
	2 D	4.3	5.6	1.0	6.7	5.9
	3 N	8.7	5.6	4.9	0.0	5.9
	4 A	37.4	22.2	29.4	26.7	58.8
	5 SA	48.7	66.7	63.7	66.7	23.5
	Mean	4.29	4.50	4.54	4.53	3.88

Note: The proposition number represents the order of its appearance in the survey. 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). Percentages may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Table 5: Perceptions of the Efficacy of Voting Conduct

Proposition and Proposition #	Response	% Responding	Mean	Entropy
14. The typical bill passed by the U. S. Congress and signed into law generates a positive net social benefit for society.	SD 1	13.8	2.56	0.789
	D 2	28.6		
	N 3	46.6		
	A 4	9.6		
	SA 5	1.4		
4. Decision-making based on the politics of an issue is typically less beneficial to society than decision-making based on the economics of an issue.	SD 1	1.7	3.905	0.822
	D 2	6.4		
	N 3	24.7		
	A 4	34.1		
	SA 5	33.1		

Note: The proposition number represents the order of its appearance in the survey.

In column 2, R = Response, 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

Table 5A: Perceptions of Efficacy of Voting Conduct

Proposition and Proposition #	Response	% Responding	
		Male	Female
(14) The typical bill passed by the U.S. Congress and signed into law generates a positive net social benefit for society.	1 SD	14.6	8.8
	2 D	28.4	32.3
	3 N	45.9	50.0
	4 A	9.3	8.8
	5 SA	1.6	0.0
	Mean	2.54	2.59
(4) Decision-making based on the politics of an issue is typically less beneficial to society than decision-making based on the economics of an issue.	1 SD	1.9	0.0
	2 D	6.7	5.1
	3 N	22.8	35.9
	4 A	34.3	35.9
	5 SA	34.3	23.1
	Mean	3.92	3.76

Note: The proposition number represents its order of appearance in the survey. 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). Percentages may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding

Table 5B Perceptions of Efficacy of Voting Conduct by Employment Class

Proposition and Proposition #	Response	% Responding	
		College Prof.	Bus. or Govt.
(14) The typical bill passed by the U.S. Congress and signed into law generates a Positive net social benefit for society.	1 SD	13.3	15.4
	2 D	28.3	30.6
	3 N	46.7	45.9
	4 A	10.6	6.0
	5 SA	1.1	2.0
	Mean	2.57	2.48
(4) Decision-making based on the politics of an issue is typically less beneficial to society than decision-making based on the economics of an issue.	1 SD	2.1	1.0
	2 D	5.8	7.8
	3 N	23.3	27.5
	4 A	35.0	31.4
	5 SA	33.3	32.4
	Mean	3.92	3.86

Note: The proposition number represents its order of appearance in the survey. 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). Percentages may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Table 5C
 Perceptions of Efficacy of Voting Conduct by Political Affiliation

Proposition and Proposition #	Response	% Responding				
		Dem.	Rep.	Ind.	Lib.	Other
(14) The typical bill passed by the U.S Congress and signed into law generates a positive net social benefit for society.	1 SD	11.7	11.4	15.7	33.3	6.3
	2 D	26.1	28.5	29.5	26.7	43.8
	3 N	49.5	51.4	47.4	20.0	37.5
	4 A	12.6	2.8	6.3	13.3	12.5
	5 SA	0.0	5.7	1.0	6.7	0.0
	Mean	2.63	2.62	2.47	2.33	2.56
(4) Decision-making based on the politics of an issue is typically less beneficial to society than decision-making based on the economics of an issue.	1 SD	1.8	2.7	1.0	0.0	5.9
	2 D	7.9	0.0	4.0	7.1	17.6
	3 N	28.1	16.7	22.0	0.0	47.1
	4 A	29.8	41.7	41.0	42.9	5.9
	5 SA	32.4	38.9	32.0	50.0	23.5
	Mean	3.77	4.13	3.99	4.35	3.24

Note: The proposition number represents its order of appearance in the survey. 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). Percentages may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

In order to determine economists' views on the efficacy of elected officials' voting behavior, respondents were asked to respond to a pair of statements contained in Table 5. Respondents were also asked if the typical bill passed by the United States Congress and signed into law generates a positive net social benefit for society. Almost 47 percent expressed a neutral opinion while 42 percent expressed an affirmative opinion, yielding a mean of 2.6 and a 0.79 entropy score. Respondents expressed a mild degree of disagreement with this proposition regardless of their background. Libertarians expressed the strongest disagreement with a mean of 2.33.

When asked if decision-making based on the politics of an issue is typically less beneficial to society than that based on the economics of an issue, 67 percent agreed or strongly agreed and only eight percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. This yielded a mean of 3.9 and an entropy score of 0.82 for that statement. Respondents expressed moderate to strong affirmative opinions depending on their background. Libertarians express the strongest opinion with a mean of 4.35. Women expressed a weaker opinion of agreement with a mean of 3.76 and those who identified themselves as affiliated with other politically expressed the weakest opinion with a mean of 3.24.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

To summarize the survey results, respondents express a moderate weighted opinion of agreement ($4.0 > \text{mean} \geq 3.6$) or of disagreement ($2.0 < \text{mean} \leq 2.4$) with moderate degrees of consensus ($1.0 < E \leq 0.86$) on the following:

- Disagreeing that the typical elected official in the United States is competent in understanding those economic issues for which they formulate public policy.
- Disagreeing that the typical adult citizen in the United States is competent in understanding those economic issues which most affect their lives.
- Disagreeing that most media outlets in the United States communicate economic issues accurately and truthfully to their viewers and readers.
- Agreeing that elected officials in the United States typically construe issues to create a "feel good" mentality among their constituents.
- Agreeing that decision-making based on the politics of an issue is typically less beneficial to society than decision-making based on the economics of an issue.

Respondents expressed a much stronger weighted opinion of agreement ($4 < \text{mean}$) or of disagreement ($\text{mean} < 2$) with a much greater degree of consensus ($E < 0.8$) on the following:

- Agreeing that special interest groups typically have more than a negligible impact on public policy formulation in the United States.

- Agreeing that corporations typically have more influence on public policy formulation in the United States than individuals do.
- Agreeing that larger corporations typically have more influence on public policy than smaller ones do.
- Agreeing that elected officials typically use media outlets to “spin” a political viewpoint rather than to communicate the issue in an unbiased manner.
- Agreeing that in the United States elected officials’ decisions are typically based more on political expedience than on scientific evidence.
- Agreeing that elected officials in the United States knowingly make campaign promises that they are unable and/or unwilling to honor.
- Disagreeing that elected officials in the United States typically formulate public policy in an unbiased manner without showing favoritism to any particular group of constituents.
- Agreeing that in the United States, the typical elected official’s top priority is to be re-elected.

The survey results are essentially the same regardless of the respondents’ background characteristics, a significant finding of this survey. There are some small differences in the strength of opinion across the respondents’ backgrounds, however. Table 6 shows the strongest opinion for each proposition across the respondents’ background characteristics. With the exception of proposition 15, where males and females reach slightly opposite opinions, respondents express the same opinion of agreement or disagreement, regardless of their background. The strength of opinion varies negligibly across backgrounds on most propositions.

Males express stronger opinions than females on fifteen propositions; business or government employees express stronger opinions than college professors on twelve propositions. Across political affiliation Libertarians express stronger opinions on more propositions than any other group. Overall, the figures in Table 6 indicate that a majority of the respondents have similar and apparently unfavorable opinions, albeit with varying strengths, about America’s political milieu.

Table 6: Strongest Opinions across Respondents’ Backgrounds

Proposition & Number	Sex	Employment Class	Political Affiliation
Perceptions of Influence			
(5) Special Interest Influence	Male (4.60)	*College Prof. (4.55)	Libertarian (4.67)
(7) Corporate Influence	Male (4.14)	College Prof. (4.14)	Other (4.52)
(8) Large Corporate Influence	Male (4.25)	Bus. or Govt. (4.26)	Other (4.47)
(13) Professional Econ. Influence	Male (3.33)	Bus. or Govt. (3.38)	Democrat (3.40)
(17) Economic Science Impact	Male (3.48)	Bus. or Govt. (3.59)	Democrat (3.53)
(3) Economists’ Research	Female (2.22)	College Prof. (2.34)	Libertarian (2.14)
(20) Politicians Affect Economists	Female (2.52)	College Prof. (2.67)	Independent (2.68)
Perceptions of Competence and Discourse			
(1) Politicians Econ. Competence	Male (2.26)	Bus. or Govt. (2.27)	Independent (2.16)
(19) Citizens Econ. Competence	Female (2.39)	Bus. or Govt. (2.32)	Other (2.12)
(10) Rational Ignorance of Voters	Male (3.86)	College Prof. (3.85)	Other (4.13)
(18) Media Communication Truth	Male (2.30)	College Prof. (2.28)	Republican (1.94)
(9) Politicians Spin Viewpoints	Male (4.47)	Bus. or Govt. (4.47)	Republican (4.56)
(16) Politicians use Feel-Good	Male (3.88)	Bus. or Govt. (3.94)	Libertarian (4.14)

Perceptions of Conduct			
(2) Decisions on Political Exped.	Male (4.30)	Bus. or Govt. (4.31)	Libertarian (4.50)
(11) False Campaign Promises	Male (4.12)	Bus. or Govt. (4.09)	Independent (4.15)
(6) No Favoritism to any Group	Male (1.47)	Bus. or Govt. (1.35)	Libertarian (1.40)
(15) Politicians Self-Interested	Male (3.35)	College Prof. (3.38)	Libertarian (3.53)
(12) Top Priority is Re-election	Male (4.42)	Bus. or Govt. (4.40)	Independent (4.54)
Perceptions of Efficacy			
(14) Positive Net Benefits	Female (2.59)	Bus. or Govt. (2.48)	Libertarian (2.33)
(4) Politics Inferior to Economics	Male (3.92)	College Prof. (3.92)	Libertarian (4.35)

*Business or Government mean was also 4.55.

**Females reach a slightly weaker opposite opinion with a mean of 2.86.

Based on these results, one may characterize the respondents' views of the political milieu similar to that discussed earlier—that is, a place where special interest groups exert substantial influence over politicians who use creative public discourse with economically incompetent and/or rationally ignorant voters in an effort to be continually re-elected, and where the eventual economic outcomes are revealed as benefits which largely accrue to those same special interests and politicians. Surely, those who hold this view cannot have much confidence in elected officials to formulate policy in a fair and efficient manner. If the respondents' views from this survey do indeed reflect reality, a high degree of cynicism about the political process in the United States is certainly justified. More survey work is necessary for determining the extent to which it exists across the economics profession.

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