

**Public Attitudes about Majority Rule and
Minority Rights in Legislatures: A Survey Experiment**

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Abstract

The balance between majority rule and minority rights is a central issue in the design and operation of democratic institutions and remains a contested issue in debates of policy-making processes. Remarkably, public attitudes about this balance are not subjected to scholarly investigation. In this paper, we report the findings of the first survey experiment in which the American public's attitudes about majority rule and minority rights in legislative bodies are explored. We find robust support for both majority rule and minority rights, discover that only a few Americans distinguish between the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate in the application of these principles, and demonstrate that views of majority rule and minority rights can be moved once we introduce respondents to the partisan implications of procedural rules. Moreover, we find that higher levels of political sophistication are associated with stronger partisan effects on attitudes about the balance between majority rule and minority rights in Congress.

The balance between majority rule and minority rights is a central issue in the design and operation of democratic institutions and remains a contested issue in debates of policy-making processes. Remarkably, public attitudes about this balance are not subjected to scholarly investigation. Only one study (Smith and Park 2013) examines these attitudes and its focus is limited to a field test of change in attitudes toward the Senate filibuster. In this paper, we report the results of the first survey experiment in which the American public's attitudes about majority rule and minority rights in legislative bodies are explored. We find robust support for both majority rule and minority rights, discover that only a few Americans distinguish between the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate in the application of these principles, and demonstrate that views of majority rule and minority rights can be moved once we introduce respondents to the partisan implications of procedural rules. Moreover, we find that higher levels of political sophistication are associated with stronger partisan effects on attitudes about the balance between majority rule and minority rights in Congress.

**THE REMARKABLY LIMITED SCHOLARSHIP ON
PUBLIC ATTITUDES ABOUT MAJORITY RULE AND MINORITY RIGHTS**

Social science has long been concerned about citizens' willingness to support basic democratic institutions and processes, but it has not addressed public attitudes about the tradeoffs between majority rule and minority rights. In the research on Americans' democratic values, which dates at least to Stouffer's 1955 study of political tolerance during the McCarthy era and has generated a large literature in recent decades

(Stouffer 1955; Gibson 2007), scholars have given support for majority rule little attention, perhaps because they assumed wide support for majority rule as the least difficult democratic value. Even in the broad literature on Americans' "core" beliefs or values, attitudes about majority rule and minority rights are not considered (Devine 1972; Feldman 1988; Hurwitz and Peffley 1987; Lipset 1979; McClosky and Zaller 1984; Rokeach 1973). There are several other places we might look for guidance, but we find little foundation for predicting American public attitudes.

2009 Senate Study

There is only one study that has asked a national sample directly about majority rule, minority rights, and congressional procedure (Smith and Park 2013). In that study, attitudes about the filibuster were asked to a panel before and after Senate action on healthcare reform legislation in late 2009. A surprising number of Americans, over a majority, correctly identified the definition of the filibuster and its supermajority threshold, but approval of the filibuster practice was quite pliable. Republicans started with a somewhat stronger pro-filibuster attitude and exhibited a significant pro-filibuster shift during the episode, both consistent with the minority status of Republicans in the Senate at the time. Democrats showed a somewhat smaller anti-filibuster shift during the episode. The study also finds that a weak relationship between general procedural attitudes (about majority rule and minority rights) and filibuster attitudes existed before Senate action, but weakened further as pro-majority rule Republicans became more likely to approve of the filibuster during the episode.

The panel design of the Senate filibuster study is certainly an improvement over the few cross-sectional surveys of attitudes about the filibuster conducted by Gallup and

others. The panel allowed the analysts to measure individual-level change in attitudes about the filibuster and estimate the influence of a variety of potential sources of change and stability in those attitudes. Moreover, the study focused on a highly salient Senate debate that gave the analyst a rare opportunity to observe public attitudes about congressional procedure that had a reasonable chance of being influenced by events.

The limitation of the study is that the 2009 healthcare episode necessarily involved partisan directionality—Republicans were in the minority and exploiting the opportunity to filibuster—and other issue-specific features that may have influenced respondents' views of majority rule and minority rights. An experimental design in which all respondents are randomly assigned to treatments will avoid the potential problems of causal inference. We report such a study here.

The 2009 Senate study also does not explore the relationship between attitudes about majority rule and those about minority rights. While every legislature establishes rules and practices that represent some tradeoff between these competing values, it is reasonable to suppose that American civic values require that both values be preserved to some degree. When people are asked separately about them in a generic or applied context, we might expect responses to be two-dimensional in a way that reflects the possibility that respondents can favor (or oppose) both majority rule and minority rights.

Political Culture, Civic Education, and Institutional Learning

American political culture and civic education emphasize both majority rule and minority rights. The distinction is closely related to other pairs of competing values, such as liberty and equality. Thomassen notes that “Dahl argued that ‘Madisonian democracy’ as originally developed by the American founding fathers was at best a one-

sided compromise between two principles, majority rule or ‘the republican principle’ and the protection of the liberties of minorities.” Thomassen then observes that “as much as these two principles together constitute the modern conception of democracy, there is no fixed balance between them. The relative weight of the two principles can be different in different stages, it can be different within one state at different periods of time, and different people can give different weights to these two principles” (Thomassen 2007, 423). Indeed, a leading modern organization that advocates for American civic education, the Center for Civic Education, states the standard view (“although ‘the majority rules,’ the fundamental rights of individuals in the minority are protected”) without any discussion of how the balance is to be achieved (Center for Civic Education, n.d.). Remarkably, however commonplace this kind of observation is, American political culture gives no clear guidance about how majority rule and minority rights are to be balanced. It is not too surprising that students of public beliefs give that balance little attention.

The *Civic Culture* (Almond and Verba 1963) literature on the foundations of liberal democracy also skirts the issue of balancing majority rule and minority rights. In a more recent treatment of the issues in his study of modern Germany, Rohrschneider (1999) argued that citizens are influenced by exposure to elite discussion of the values and norms that underlie a nation’s configuration of political institutions. Rohrschneider gave no attention to the balance of majority rule and minority rights, focusing instead on egalitarian, plebiscitarian, and republican preferences, their relationship to political ideology, and their consequences for institutional support and trust. Nevertheless, the central theme—that elite discussion of procedural principles can influence public attitudes--comports with the study of the 2009 Senate episode. “Institutional learning”

takes place in the short-term and appears to be moderately related to the ideological values of citizens.

Procedural Attitudes

Similarly, in the expansive set of studies about Americans' procedural attitudes (Durr, Gilmour, and Wolbrecht 1997; Gangl 2003; Gibson and Caldeira 1995; Gibson, Caldeira, and Spence 2003; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2001; Hurwitz and Peffley 2005; Tyler 1990, 1994), no study inquires into public support for the tradeoffs between majority rule and minority rights that are an essential feature of American constitutions and the rules of legislative bodies. We know that political processes are valued by the mass public, that certain procedural features affect the perceived legitimacy of institutions, and that preferences for abstract decision-making processes are to some degree separable from policy preferences (Gangl 2003, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2001). Nevertheless, we simply do not know how Americans balance the competing demands of majority rule and minority rights and what effect that balance has on attitudes toward an old and prominent procedural features of real legislative institutions.

PUBLIC ATTITUDES ABOUT MAJORITY RULE AND MINORITY RIGHTS: POSSIBLE DETERMINANTS

The scarcity of descriptive studies of public attitudes toward majority rule and minority rights is accompanied by a paucity of theoretical development on the forces that might shape those attitudes. The 2009 Senate study suggested that short-term policy and partisan advantages influence such attitudes, but there is little additional commentary in social science. Here, we note relevant theoretical perspectives that may

account for the presence and direction of such attitudes.

Social Class, Social Status, and Social Identity

A reasonable hypothesis is that preferences about the balance of majority rule and minority rights reflect the forces of social identity and social circumstance (for a review of the identity processes, see Monroe, Hankin, and Van Vechten 2000). Income, race, and gender may shape individuals' identification, influence their disposition toward majority and minority interests in American society, and prime opinion about general principles about how those interests should be balanced in a democracy. Unfortunately, these worthy hypotheses have not been tested in previous studies.

Partisan and Ideological Identity

Perhaps the longest standing hypothesis about the formation of attitudes about politics is that it is influenced by partisan identities. The central argument, as for other social identities, is that partisan identity shapes the interpretations that mediate between facts and opinions about political matters. Recent studies find that the strength of party identification biases the way in which new information updates opinions about political or policy affairs (Gaines, *et al.*, 2007; Taber and Lodge 2006). While these studies did not account for ideological identities (liberals, conservatives), it is reasonable to hypothesize that similar and reinforcing processes are at work.

Sophistication

As reasonably complex concepts, majority rule and minority rights may resonate only with more sophisticated Americans who either appreciate the tradeoffs or can recognize the partisan implication of legislative procedures. Indeed, political

sophistication is regularly found to condition political attitudes and behavior (for example, see Bartel 1996; Benoit 2004; Gilens 2001; Koch 2008; Lau, Anderson, and Redlawsk 2008; Zaller 1991, 1992). Sophistication and knowledge provide a context in which new information is processed and interpreted (Popkin and Dimock; Price and Zaller 1993; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991).

Among the findings on sophistication are that more knowledgeable or sophisticated individuals are

- more accepting of democratic norms such as political tolerance (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996),
- more likely to have opinions and more stable opinions (Krosnick and Milburn 1990; Sniderman and Bullock 2004),
- more likely to hold ideologically-constrained opinions (Converse 1964; McCloskey and Zaller 1984), and
- more likely to connect their policy views to evaluations of public officials and parties (Alvarez 1997, Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996).

The likely effect of sophistication on attitudes about the balance of majority rule and minority rights is not straightforward. Sophisticated people may be more likely to have an attitude about the issue and even may be more likely to realize the necessity of balancing competing but important values in a democracy. They also may recognize and respond to the partisan or ideological implications of the trade-off and so have a more biased view of the options. The balance of majority rule, minority rights, and the procedures used in Congress may be “hard” issues that can be understood only if framed by (partisan) elites and intermediaries (Carmines and Stimson 1980; Pollock, Lilie, and Vittes 1993).

The Senate Filibuster

In American public discourse, the legislative procedure related to majority rule and minority rights that is mentioned most frequently surely is the Senate filibuster. Under the Senate's rules, a large minority may prevent a vote on a motion, bill, or nomination even when it is supported by a majority of the Senate (Binder and Smith 1997). On a few occasions since the 1930s, pollsters have quizzed national samples about the filibuster. As Smith and Park (2013) note, the general pattern in polls conducted by the American Institute of Public Opinion and Gallup is that when a majority of respondents favors a measure (say, civil rights legislation) that is being filibustered, a majority opposes the filibuster practice, and vice versa (AIPO 1963). Rules and practices in the U.S. House of Representatives certainly are controversial, particularly with respect to the ability of the majority to limit minority amendments, but public opinion polling has never included questions about the practice, as far as we can determine.

Of special interest to us is whether elite arguments that distinguish the House from the Senate inform and shape public attitudes about the appropriate balance between majority rule and minority rights in Congress. American public has long been told that the two houses of Congress were designed with two distinct principles in mind: majority rules in the House but minority is protected in the Senate (see Binder and Smith (1997) for the related debate). Moreover, usually in the context of debate about Senate procedures, many politicians and pundits have argued that the two chambers should function differently (for example, see Arenberg and Dove 2012). The 2009 Senate study suggests that these elite arguments may register with the public, although

that study did not explicitly contrast the House and Senate.

HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH DESIGN

In light of the limited previous work on the subject, we specify the following hypotheses:

1. The public favors both majority rule and minority rights in general.
2. Attitudes about majority rule and attitudes about minority rights constitute different attitudinal dimensions.
3. The public does not distinguish between the House and the Senate when applying the principles of majority rule and minority rights.
4. Attitudes about majority rule and minority rights correctly reflect the partisan biases and variation in sophistication about politics.

The first two hypotheses concern the structure of public attitudes on majority rule and minority rights. The next two hypotheses concern the distinction between the House and Senate, partisan bias, and political sophistication. The possible effects of several forms of social identity are controlled in the multivariate analysis.

We measure the effects of acquired attitudes about the two houses of Congress, partisanship, and political sophistication on opinions about the way the principles of majority rule and minority rights is applied. We do this with a survey experiment in which we manipulate the referent legislative body and a stimulus for partisan identity. The party identification and political sophistication of the respondents are measured independently of the experiment, which allows for an analysis of the conditions under which partisanship and sophistication influence attitudes about majority rule and minority rights.

Data for our analysis are drawn from the May 2012 survey of *The American Panel Survey* (TAPS). TAPS is a monthly online survey of about 2000 people. Panelists were recruited as a national probability sample with an addressed-based sampling frame in the fall of 2011 by Knowledge Networks for the Weidenbaum Center at Washington University. Individuals without internet access were provided a laptop and internet service at the expense of the Weidenbaum Center. In a typical month, over 1700 of the panelists complete the online survey, which yields three groups of about 500 subjects. More technical information about the survey is available at the TAPS website (taps.wustl.edu).

Each respondent was randomly assigned to one of three treatment groups, as outlined in Table 1. Three treatments were applied, one to each group. Group 1 was asked about a generic legislature with no reference to parties. Group 2 was asked about the U.S. Congress and asked separately about the House of Representatives and the Senate. Like Group 2, Group 3 was asked about the U.S. Congress and asked separately about the House of Representatives and the Senate, but Group 3's treatment emphasized the identity of the majority and minority parties in each house.

(Table 1 about here)

Each respondent was asked to indicate his or her degree of agreement or disagreement with four statements: (1) The majority party should be able to pass legislation that is supported by a majority of legislators, (2) the majority party should be able to limit or prohibit amendments to its legislation, (3) the minority party should be able to delay or block action on legislation supported by a majority of legislators, and (4) the minority party should be able to get a vote on its amendment to legislation. The first

two questions emphasize the majority party and were asked early in the survey; the second two questions emphasize the minority party and were asked late in the survey. The specific text varies to emphasize the identity of the legislative body and party, as is shown in Table 1.

This design allows us to draw inferences about the effects of several factors that influence attitudes about the principles of majority rules and minority rights. From the experimental manipulation we can evaluate the effect of the identity of the legislative body (generic, U.S. House, U.S. Senate). From the match of the respondent's party identification with the manipulation of party stimuli in Groups 2 and 3, we can evaluate the effect of partisanship. And from our independent measure of political sophistication for all respondents, we can evaluate the direct and conditioning effects of sophistication on institutional and partisan factors.

We operationalize attitudes about majority rule and minority rights, ideology, party identifications, and political sophistication from the May 2012 TAPS survey. We list the variables and their measurement in Table 2, and place question wording in Appendix A.

(Table 2 about here)

FINDINGS

The American public supports both majority rule and the minority right in general. The mean responses on a five-point scale (where 5 is strongly agree and 1 is strongly disagree) are shown in Table 3. A mean score above 3.0 represents net agreement with the statement and below 3.0 represents net disagreement. Net

agreement is registered for both the majority party's right to pass legislation and the minority party's right to offer amendments. Net disagreement is registered for the minority party's ability to block a vote on a legislation supported by a majority. These outcomes hold for a generic legislature, and, when they are mentioned, they hold for both the House and the Senate.

(Table 3 about here)

A puzzle is that a slim majority against allowing a minority to block a vote in legislatures in general is not matched by similar pattern when the House and Senate are mentioned. At least some Americans are more tolerant of minority blocking power in the context of Congress specifically than they are about a generic legislature. Sources of this pattern are explored below.

The Structure of Attitudes about Majority Rule and Minority Rights

Responses to the four statements exhibit the same dimensional structure across treatment groups and legislative bodies. Two dimensions with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 and similar strength emerge from a principal component analysis for all treatments (Table 4). Remarkably, the responses are not structured by the substance of rule at stake (ability to gain or block a vote, ability to offer or prohibit amendments), but rather are structured by the majority or minority stimulus that was presented in the question. Emphasizing the majority party at one point in the survey yields correlated support for the majority's ability to pass legislation supported and to prohibit amendments, while emphasizing the minority party later in the survey yields correlated support for the minority's ability to block votes on legislation and its right to offer amendments.

Framing, or perhaps tendency to approve statements, may create a bias that shapes these patterns.

(Table 4 about here)

Key correlations among the responses to the four questions are shown in Table 5 for the three experimental groups. Consistent with the factor analysis, “within” factor correlations are moderately strong and statistically significant, but “across” factor correlations generally are not. There are important patterns across the experimental groups. First, party matters. When the identity of the majority and minority parties is mentioned, the correlation between responses to the two questions increases significantly for the within-factor questions. Partisanship appears to stimulate at least some respondents to interpret majority and minority rights in a common partisan frame of reference. Second, chamber does not matter. Despite the emphasis given to majority rule in the House and minority rights in the Senate by legislators and political elites, the correlations are similar for the two houses.

(Table 5 about here)

Hypothesis Tests

Majority Rule Versus Minority Rights. The public favors both the right of the majority to gain a vote on its legislation and the right of the minority to have its amendments considered. The results of paired samples t-tests are shown in Table 6, which shows mean responses for two pairs of questions. The first pair is (a) the majority party should be able to pass legislation that is supported by a majority of legislators and (b) the minority party should be able to delay or block action on legislation supported by

a majority of legislators. The second pair is (a) the majority party should be able to limit or prohibit amendments to its legislation and (b) the minority party should be able to get a vote on its amendment to legislation. For each experimental group and institutions, the right of the majority party to get a vote and the right of the minority to offer amendments is favored.

(Table 6 about here)

House Versus Senate. In general, the public makes little distinction between the House and Senate when expressing a view about majority rule and minority rights. The results of paired samples t-tests are shown in Table 7, which shows mean responses for the House and Senate, with and without parties mentioned. None of the differences between the houses is significant and none straddles the mid-point of the scale. Thus, we find no public endorsement of the common argument that minority rights should be the special emphasis of the Senate and majority rule the emphasis of the House.

(Table 7 about here)

Partisanship and Sophistication. The partisanship influences the attitudes about majority rule and minority rights, but only when parties are explicitly mentioned in Group 3. Mean responses for the three experimental groups, with paired sample t-tests for respondents' party identification and level of sophistication, are shown in Table 8. The party effects are weak in general but strongest when party and chamber are mentioned.

The pattern in responses comports with the party that controlled the House (Republicans) and Senate (Democrats) at the time of the survey. For a generic

legislature and for the House, there is a tendency for Republicans to have a higher score than Democrats for majority passing legislation and a lower score than Democrats for minority offering amendment, whatever the experimental group. The difference is sometimes (weakly) statistically significant and sometimes not. In contrast, for the Senate, Republicans tend to have a lower score for the majority passing legislation and a higher score for minority amendments. This is statistically significant only when party and chamber are mentioned in Group 3. Overall, Republicans favor the majority in the House and a generic legislature and the minority in the Senate, while Democrats favor the majority in the Senate and the minority in the House and a generic legislature.

(Table 8 about here)

Political sophistication is more strongly related to attitudes about majority rule and minority rights than party identification. Those who are highly sophisticated support the right of the majority to get a vote, as compared to those who are not. However, highly sophisticated respondents support minority rights in the Senate only when party and chamber are mentioned in Group 3.

The results of multivariate analysis are shown in Table 9 in order to examine net effects of partisanship and sophistication. Partisanship matters only for majority rule questions, but this pattern correctly reflects the partisan advantage in Congress at the time of the 2012 survey: Republicans are more likely to support majority rule in the House but are less likely to support majority rule in the Senate. Sophistication is important for both majority rule and minority rights questions. Highly sophisticated respondents are more likely to support the two procedural attitudes in both the House and the Senate.

(Table 9 about here)

The Conditioning Effect of Sophistication. In order to investigate a somewhat asymmetric nature of partisanship effects on majority rule and minority rights, we employ the three-way interaction models – partisanship, sophistication and treatment groups. Table 10 reports the effects of party identification for various levels of sophistication in different treatment groups.¹ Only highly sophisticated respondents show the partisanship effect for the majority rule in the House, and then only when parties are mentioned. In other words, Republicans are more likely to support the right of the majority to pass legislation in the House, once they are aware of partisan control of the chamber and only for more sophisticated respondents. A similar pattern is observed for minority rights in the Senate: Republicans are more likely to support the right of the minority to offer amendments in the Senate, once they know that their party is in minority and only for more sophisticated respondents. A reasonable inference is that attitudes about majority rule and minority rights correctly reflect the partisan implications of procedural rules, but only for respondents who are aware of which party controls the two chambers and then only for more sophisticated respondents.

(Table 10 about here)

CONCLUSION

¹ We report the results of full three-way interaction models in Appendix B. They are used to construct Table 10. A three-way interaction model is difficult to understand in most cases, thus, following the recommendations of Brambor, Clark, and Golder (2006), we calculate the coefficient for one independent variable, holding the other two independent variables at certain levels. Five different levels of sophistication are chosen, and the new sets of coefficients and standard errors for the party identification variable are calculated for the three treatment groups.

In this paper, we have reported the first survey experiment in which the American public's attitudes about majority rule and minority rights in legislative bodies are explored. We find robust support for both majority rule and minority rights, discover that only a few Americans distinguish between the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate in the application of these principles, and demonstrate that views of majority rule and minority rights can be moved once we introduce respondents to the partisan implications of procedural rules. Moreover, we find powerful effects of political sophistication on the strength of the partisanship on attitudes about majority rule and minority rights in Congress.

The experimental design allowed us to draw causal inferences about treatment effects, but the experiment was limited to the real-world context of May 2012. With Democrats as the Senate majority party since early 2007 and Republicans as the House majority party since only early 2011, we found party effects in attitudes among the more sophisticated citizens. With no changes in party control, we may see a deepening of partisan bias and less conditioning by level of sophistication over time. With a change in party control, we may be able to explore the interaction between chamber and party effects that cannot be fully evaluated at one point in time.

On balance, Americans favor both majority rule and minority rights for a generic legislature and for both houses of Congress. That is, most Americans want the majority party to be able to acquire a vote on its legislation and the minority party to be able to offer amendments. Most Americans do not favor minority obstruction or "closed rules" for amending activity. Both houses of Congress, each in a different way, violate the balance of values exhibited by Americans.

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Table 1. Experimental Groups and Treatments.

	Preliminary Statement	Statements with Majority Party Emphasis	Statements with Minority Party Emphasis
Group 1	We would like to know your views on how a legislature, such as a city council, state legislature, or Congress, should operate when it is making law. We are not interested in how legislatures actually operate; rather, we want your views about how they <i>should</i> operate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority party should be able to pass legislation that is supported by a majority of legislators. • The majority party should be able to limit or prohibit amendments to its legislation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The minority party should be able to delay or block action on legislation supported by a majority of legislators. • The minority party should be able to get a vote on its amendment to legislation.
Group 2	We would like to know your views on how the U.S. Congress in Washington, D.C., should operate when it is making law. We are not interested in how Congress actually operates; rather, we want your views about how Congress <i>should</i> operate. We will ask you first about the U.S. House of Representatives, and then about the U.S. Senate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the House of Representatives, the majority party should be able to pass legislation that is supported by a majority of representatives. • In the House of Representatives, the majority party should be able to limit or prohibit amendments to its legislation. • In the Senate, the majority party should be able to pass legislation that is supported by a majority of senators. • In the Senate, the majority party should be able to limit or prohibit amendments to its legislation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the House of Representatives, the minority party should be able to delay or block action on legislation supported by a majority of legislators. • In the House of Representatives, the minority party should be able to get a vote on its amendment to legislation. • In the Senate, the minority party should be able to delay or block action on legislation supported by a majority of legislators. • In the Senate, the minority party should be able to get a vote on its amendment to legislation.

	Preliminary Statement	Statements with Majority Party Emphasis	Statements with Minority Party Emphasis
Group 3	<p>We would like to know your views on how the U.S. Congress in Washington, D.C., should operate when it is making law. We are not interested in how Congress actually operates; rather, we want your views about how Congress <i>should</i> operate. We will ask you first about the U.S. House of Representatives, and then about the U.S. Senate.</p> <p>...</p> <p>As you probably know, in today's House of Representatives, the Republicans are the majority party and the Democrats are the minority party.</p> <p>...</p> <p>The next statements are about the U.S. Senate in Washington, D.C. As you probably know, in today's Senate, the Democrats are the majority party and the Republicans are the minority party.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the House of Representatives, with a Republican majority, the majority party should be able to pass legislation that is supported by a majority of representatives. • In the House of Representatives, with a Republican majority, the majority party should be able to limit or prohibit amendments to its legislation. • In the Senate, with a Democratic majority, the majority party should be able to pass legislation that is supported by a majority of senators. • In the Senate, with a Democratic majority, the majority party should be able to limit or prohibit amendments to its legislation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the House of Representatives, with a Democratic minority, the minority party should be able to delay or block action on legislation supported by a majority of legislators. • In the House of Representatives, with a Democratic minority, the minority party should be able to get a vote on its amendment to legislation. • In the Senate, with a Republican minority, the minority party should be able to delay or block action on legislation supported by a majority of legislators. • In the Senate, with a Republican minority, the minority party should be able to get a vote on its amendment to legislation.

Table 2: Variables and Measures

Name	Operationalization
Majority Passing Legislation	5-point response: (1) Strongly disagree ~ (5) Strongly agree
Majority Limiting Amendments	5-point response: (1) Strongly disagree ~ (5) Strongly agree
Minority Blocking Legislation	5-point response: (1) Strongly disagree ~ (5) Strongly agree
Minority Offering Amendments	5-point response: (1) Strongly disagree ~ (5) Strongly agree
Gender	1 = Male 0 = Female
Race	1 = Non-Hispanic white 0 = others
Income	16-point scale: (1) below \$10,000/year ~ (16) \$300,000/year or more
Party Identification	7-point scale: (1) Strong Democrat ~ (7) Strong Republican
Sophistication	Principal component from the four sets of survey questions: a larger value indicates a higher level of sophistication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education: 15-point response - Political knowledge: 11-point scale (the number of correct answers for 10 knowledge questions: 0-10) - Attention to media: 7-point response - Interest in politics: 4-point response
Group	1 = Generic legislature 2 = Only chamber mentioned 3 = Both chamber and party mentioned
<p>Note: The response of “don’t know” is treated as a neutral position, whenever possible. However, the response of “refuse to answer” is treated as missing.</p>	

**Table 3. Means Agreement-Disagreement Scale Score,
by Experimental Group.**

		Group 1: Generic Legislature	Group 2: Only Chamber Mentioned		Group 3: Chamber & Party Mentioned	
			House	Senate	House	Senate
Majority Emphasis Questions	Majority Passing Legislation	3.51	3.77	3.78	3.43	3.50
	Majority Limiting Amendments	2.92	3.28	3.29	3.13	3.17
Minority Emphasis Questions	Minority Blocking Legislation	2.82	2.82	2.86	2.94	2.91
	Minority Offering Amendments	3.59	3.62	3.59	3.53	3.43
(Weighted) N		516.9 (34.21%)	515.7 (34.13%)		478.3 (31.66%)	
Note: Weighted by CPS.						

Table 4. Rotated Factor Loadings from Principal Component Analysis

		Group 1 Generic Legislature		Group 2 Only Chamber Mentioned				Group 3 Chamber & Party Mentioned			
				House		Senate		House		Senate	
		factor 1	factor 2	factor 1	factor 2	factor 1	factor 2	factor 1	factor 2	factor 1	factor 2
Majority Emphasis Questions	Majority Passing Legislation	0.85	-0.03	0.87	0.02	0.86	0.12	0.88	-0.02	0.88	0.06
	Majority Limiting Amendments	0.80	-0.11	0.73	-0.01	0.75	-0.20	0.84	-0.12	0.80	-0.16
Minority Emphasis Questions	Minority Blocking Legislation	-0.21	0.73	-0.21	0.76	-0.15	0.59	-0.16	0.76	-0.17	0.75
	Minority Offering Amendments	0.02	0.84	0.23	0.75	0.04	0.88	-0.00	0.84	0.06	0.85

Note: Weighted by CPS.

**Table 5. Correlation Between Different Questions,
by Experimental Group and Factor**

	Group 1: Generic Legislature	Group 2: Only Chamber Mentioned		Group 3: Chamber & Party Mentioned	
		House	Senate	House	Senate
Factor 1: Majority Passing Legislation & Majority Limiting Amendments	0.47*	0.32*	0.37*	0.59*	0.51*
N	434	453	455	458	468
Factor 2: Minority Blocking Legislation & Minority Offering Amendments	0.34*	0.17*	0.17*	0.44*	0.39*
N	429	440	436	442	442
Factor 1 vs. Factor 2: Majority Passing Legislation & Minority Offering Amendments	0.05	0.11	0.08	0.03	0.18*
N	420	430	428	433	436
Note: Weighted by CPS; * p < 0.01.					

Table 6: Preference about Majority Rule and Minority Rights

		Majority Passing Legislation	Minority Blocking Legislation	t	Minority Offering Amendments	Majority Limiting Amendments	t
Group 1: Generic legislature		3.51	2.82	6.48*	3.59	2.92	6.34*
Group 2: Only Chamber Mentioned	House	3.77	2.82	10.05*	3.62	3.28	4.13*
	Senate	3.78	2.86	10.08*	3.59	3.29	3.34*
Group 3: Chamber & Party Mentioned	House	3.43	2.94	3.24*	3.53	3.13	3.40*
	Senate	3.50	2.91	5.03*	3.43	3.17	2.45*

Note: Weighted by CPS; * p < 0.05 for paired samples t-test.

Table 7: Difference between House and Senate Responses

	Group 2: Only Chamber Mentioned			Group 3: Chamber & Party Mentioned		
	House	Senate	t	House	Senate	t
Majority Passing Legislation	3.75	3.70	0.66	3.42	3.48	-0.49
Majority Limiting Amendments	3.30	3.25	0.48	3.14	3.16	-0.20
Minority Blocking Legislation	2.83	2.87	-0.39	2.97	2.91	0.54
Minority Offering Amendments	3.63	3.60	0.35	3.51	3.42	0.94

Note: Weighted by CPS; * $p < 0.05$ for paired samples t-test.

**Table 8: Preferences about Majority Rule and Minority Rights,
by Partisanship and Sophistication**

Group	Group 1: Generic Legislature	Group 2: Only Chamber Mentioned		Group 3: Chamber & Party Mentioned	
		House	Senate	House	Senate
(1) Majority Passing Legislation					
Democrats	3.40	3.70	3.75	3.10	3.75
Republicans	3.69	3.86	3.68	3.75	3.49
t	1.72	1.52	-0.51	2.97*	-1.93
(2) Minority Offering Amendments					
Democrats	3.80	3.81	3.34	3.69	3.24
Republicans	3.40	3.51	3.47	3.49	3.69
t	-2.55*	-2.19*	0.67	-1.07	2.41*
(1) Majority Passing Legislation					
Low sophistication	3.33	3.66	3.47	3.16	3.32
High sophistication	3.68	3.83	3.91	3.75	3.68
t	2.52*	2.00*	4.20*	4.05*	2.91*
(2) Minority Offering Amendments					
Low sophistication	3.55	3.66	3.61	3.51	3.25
High sophistication	3.65	3.61	3.59	3.52	3.63
t	0.83	-0.42	-0.17	0.10	2.94*
Note: Weighted by CPS; * p < 0.05 for paired samples t-test.					

Table 9: Multivariate Models of Majority Rule and Minority Rights				
	Majority Passing Legislation		Minority Offering Amendments	
	House	Senate	House	Senate
Gender – Male	-0.24 (-1.29)	-0.30 (-1.56)	-0.26 (-1.25)	-0.27 (-1.42)
Race – White	0.20 (0.88)	-0.29 (-1.08)	-0.01 (-0.04)	-0.05 (-0.23)
Income	0.06* (2.32)	-0.03 (-1.04)	0.00 (0.08)	0.04 (1.48)
Party ID	0.12* (2.34)	-0.13* (-2.49)	-0.05 (-0.92)	0.02 (0.32)
Sophistication	0.34* (4.05)	0.33* (2.90)	0.32* (2.97)	0.40* (4.22)
Group 2	0.54* (2.54)	0.10 (0.47)	0.05 (0.23)	0.30 (1.33)
Group 3	-0.29 (-1.27)	-0.23 (-0.95)	-0.48* (-1.97)	-0.22 (-0.93)
(Weighted) N	1196.80	1134.55	1137.18	1214.77
F-statistic	9.96*	4.07*	3.41*	6.20*
<p>Note: Weighted by CPS; All models are estimated via ordered logit; The cut-points (or thresholds) from the model estimation are excluded here and available from the authors; Coefficients are shown and t-values are in parentheses. * p < 0.05.</p>				

**Table 10: Estimated Effects of Party Identification,
by Level of Sophistication**

Level of Sophistication	Majority Passing Legislation In the House			Majority Passing Legislation In the Senate		
	Generic legislature	Only Chamber Mentioned	Chamber & Party Mentioned	Generic legislature	Only Chamber Mentioned	Chamber & Party Mentioned
Very Low	-0.24 (-0.70)	0.09 (0.42)	-0.17 (-0.36)	-0.51 (-1.47)	0.02 (0.07)	0.40 (0.72)
Low	-0.16 (-0.60)	0.07 (0.43)	-0.03 (-0.06)	-0.42 (-1.57)	-0.02 (-0.09)	0.36 (0.69)
Medium	0.08 (0.92)	0.01 (0.17)	0.41 (1.04)	-0.16* (-2.24)	-0.14 (-1.88)	0.23 (0.50)
High	0.32 (1.30)	-0.05 (-0.25)	0.85* (1.97)	0.10 (0.43)	-0.25 (-1.26)	0.10 (0.20)
Very High	0.40 (1.23)	-0.07 (-0.28)	1.00* (2.16)	0.19 (0.60)	-0.29 (-1.11)	0.06 (0.11)
Level of Sophistication	Minority Offering Amendments In the House			Minority Offering Amendments In the Senate		
	Generic legislature	Only Chamber Mentioned	Chamber & Party Mentioned	Generic legislature	Only Chamber Mentioned	Chamber & Party Mentioned
Very Low	-0.62 (-1.66)	0.02 (0.09)	0.74 (1.37)	-0.17 (-0.49)	-0.03 (-0.10)	0.16 (0.32)
Low	-0.51 (-1.78)	-0.02 (-0.09)	0.64 (1.26)	-0.10 (-0.37)	-0.05 (-0.24)	0.27 (0.59)
Medium	-0.20* (-2.57)	-0.14 (-1.85)	0.31 (0.70)	0.11 (1.31)	-0.10 (-1.65)	0.58 (1.34)
High	0.12 (0.46)	-0.25 (-1.32)	-0.01 (-0.03)	0.32 (1.33)	-0.16 (-0.82)	0.89 (1.88)
Very High	0.22 (0.66)	-0.29 (-1.18)	-0.12 (-0.22)	0.39 (1.23)	-0.18 (-0.71)	0.99* (1.97)

Note: Weighted by CPS; Entries are re-calculated by the authors, following Brambor, Clark and Golder (2006) – based on the models in Appendix B; Coefficients for party identification are shown and the corresponding t-values are in parentheses. * p < 0.05.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Attitudes about Majority Rule and Minority Rights. The following question is asked after we provide the respondents with the preliminary statement and the majority/minority emphasis statement – these statements for each treatment group is listed in Table 1.

- Please tell us whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement. (1) Strongly agree; (2) Agree; (3) Neither agree nor disagree; (4) Disagree; and (5) Strongly disagree.

Gender. The following question is asked to create a dummy variable for male:

- Are you female or male? (1) Male; and (2) Female

Race. The two questions that are combined to create a dummy variable for non-Hispanic white include:

- This question is about Hispanic ethnicity. Are you of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino descent? (1) Yes; (2) No
- Please check one or more categories below to indicate what race(s) you consider yourself to be. (1) White; (2) Black or African American; (3) American Indian or Alaska Native; (4) Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander

Income. The following question is asked to create a 16-point scale measure:

- We want to know about the total income in your household. What was your household income in the past year? (1) below \$10,000; (2) \$10,000 ~ \$19,999; (3) \$20,000 ~ \$29,999; (4) \$30,000 ~ \$39,999; (5) \$40,000 ~ \$49,999; (6) \$50,000 ~ \$59,999; (7) \$60,000 ~ \$69,999; (8) \$70,000 ~ \$79,999; (9) \$80,000 ~ \$89,999; (10) \$90,000 ~ \$99,999; (11) \$100,000 ~ \$124,999; (12) \$125,000 ~ \$149,999; (13) \$150,000 ~ \$199,999; (14) \$200,000 ~ \$249,999; (15) \$250,000 ~ \$299,000; (16) \$300,000 or more

Party Identification. The three questions that are combined to create a single 7-point scale measure of party identification include:

- Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent, or what? (1) Democrat; (2) Republican; (3) Other (Specify); and (4) Independent
- [If response = 1 or 2] Would you call yourself a strong Democrat/Republican or not a very strong Democrat/Republican? (1) Strong; and (2) Not a very strong
- [If response = Others] Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or to the Democratic Party? (1) Closer to Republican; (2) Neither; and (3) Closer to Democrat

Sophistication. The four sets of questions that we use to conduct the principal component analysis for creating a single measure include:

- Education (15-point scale): What is the highest grade or year of school you have completed? (1) No formal education; (2) 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th grade; (3) 5th or 6th grade; (4) 7th or 8th grade; (5) 9th grade; (6) 10th grade; (7) 11th grade; (8) 12 grade, NO diploma; (9) High school graduate (high school diploma or the equivalent); (10) Some college, but no degree; (11) Associate degree; (12) Bachelor's degree; (13) Master's degree; (14) Professional degree; and (15) Doctorate degree
- Political knowledge (11-point scale): The number of correct answers for the ten below questions is recorded (0-10).
 1. Which party holds a majority of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives? (1) Democrats; (2) Republicans; and (3) Independents
 2. How many votes are required in Congress to override a presidential veto? (1) A simple majority of one house of Congress; (2) A simple majority of both houses of Congress; (3) a two-thirds majority of one house of Congress; (4) a two-thirds majority of both houses of Congress
 3. How long is one term for a member of the US Senate? (1) 2 years; (2) 4 years; (3) 6 years; and (4) 8 years
 4. The ability of a minority of Senators to prevent a vote on a bill is known as ... (1) Veto; (2) Filibuster; (3) Enrollment; and (4) Suspension of the rules
 5. Who is the Vice President of the United States? (1) Nancy Pelosi; (2) John Boehner; (3) Joseph Biden; and (4) Harry Reid
 6. A President may serve ... (1) One term; (2) Two terms; (3) Three terms; and (4) Any number of terms
 7. Members of the US Supreme Court serve ... (1) Two-year terms; (2) Ten-year terms; (3) Life terms; and (4) Terms determined by the President
 8. Who is Chief of Justice of the United States Supreme Court? (1) John Roberts; (2) Antonin Scalia; (3) Mitt Romney; and (4) Hilary Clinton
 9. Social Security is ... (1) The benefit program for senior citizens; (2) The responsibility of the Department of Defense; (3) Operated by state governments; and (4) Funded by the personal income tax
 10. On which of the following programs is the most money spent each year? (1) Aid to foreign countries; (2) Medicare; (3) Subsidies to farmers; and (4) Education
- Attention to media (7-point scale): How frequently do you pay attention to news about national and international issues? (1) Every day; (2) Several times a week; (3) Once a week; (4) Several times a month; (5) Once a month; (6) Less often; and (7) Never
- Interest in politics (4-point scale): In general, how interested are you in politics and public affairs? (1) Very interested; (2) Somewhat interested; (3) Slightly interested; and (4) Not at all interested

APPENDIX B

**Table 11: Three-way Interaction Models,
for Partisanship, Sophistication, and Treatment Groups**

	Majority Passing Legislation		Minority Offering Amendments	
	House	Senate	House	Senate
Gender – Male	-0.19 (-1.02)	-0.29 (-1.48)	-0.25 (-1.27)	-0.26 (-1.38)
Race – White	0.22 (0.93)	-0.30 (-1.14)	-0.04 (-0.16)	-0.05 (-0.22)
Income	0.07* (2.51)	-0.03 (-0.98)	0.01 (0.19)	0.04 (1.36)
Party ID	0.08 (0.92)	-0.16* (-2.24)	-0.20* (-2.57)	0.11 (1.31)
Sophistication	-0.02 (-0.06)	-0.00 (-0.00)	-0.14 (-0.34)	0.08 (0.26)
Group 2	0.86 (1.85)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.16 (-0.36)	1.22* (2.58)
Group 3	-1.03* (-2.06)	-0.36 (-0.68)	-1.75* (-3.75)	-0.01 (-0.03)
Party ID * Sophistication	0.08 (0.99)	0.09 (1.08)	0.11 (1.22)	0.07 (0.88)
Party ID * Group 2	-0.07 (-0.65)	0.03 (0.26)	0.06 (0.62)	-0.21* (-2.08)
Party ID * Group 3	0.22 (1.94)	0.06 (0.44)	0.38* (3.21)	-0.05 (-0.41)
Sophistication * Group 2	0.33 (0.86)	0.39 (0.84)	0.51 (1.13)	0.47 (1.09)
Sophistication * Group 3	-0.01 (-0.01)	0.59 (1.25)	1.02* (1.99)	-0.03 (-0.06)
Party ID * Sophistication * Group 2	-0.10 (-1.02)	-0.13 (-1.21)	-0.14 (-1.38)	-0.09 (-0.88)
Party ID * Sophistication * Group 3	0.07 (0.66)	-0.13 (-1.19)	-0.21 (-1.84)	0.03 (0.33)
(Weighted) N	1196.80	1134.55	1137.18	1214.77
F-statistic	7.07*	2.45*	2.95*	3.82*

Note: Weighted by CPS; All models are estimated via ordered logit; The cut-points (or thresholds) from the model estimation are excluded here and available from the authors; Coefficients are shown and t-values are in parentheses. * p < 0.05.