



**HARVARD Kennedy School**  
JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

# **Can Inaccurate Beliefs About Incumbents be Changed? And Can Reframing Change Votes?**

## Faculty Research Working Paper Series

---

Todd Rogers

Harvard Kennedy School

David W. Nickerson

University of Notre Dame

**May 2013**  
**RWP13-018**

Visit the **HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series** at:

<http://web.hks.harvard.edu/publications>

The views expressed in the **HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series** are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the John F. Kennedy School of Government or of Harvard University. Faculty Research Working Papers have not undergone formal review and approval. Such papers are included in this series to elicit feedback and to encourage debate on important public policy challenges. Copyright belongs to the author(s). Papers may be downloaded for personal use only.

Can Inaccurate Beliefs About Incumbents be Changed? And Can Reframing Change Votes?

Todd Rogers and David W. Nickerson

Harvard Kennedy School and University of Notre Dame

Abstract:

Can independent groups change voters' beliefs about an incumbent's positions? And, does reframing how candidates' are perceived by changing beliefs about their positions influence actual vote choices? Past laboratory and observational research suggests that candidate reframing is difficult and of little consequence because the messages must be believed despite competing messages, counter-framing and misinformation. We report the results of a field experiment conducted during a highly competitive 2008 US Senate election showing that independent organizations can meaningfully reframe candidates, and that reframing can affect vote choice. Two pro-choice organizations administered an inexpensive mail and phone intervention correcting a prevalent false belief that the incumbent was pro-choice. This modest reframing intervention enduringly corrected the beliefs of one-third of misinformed participants, and induced a sizable proportion to align their vote choices with their policy priorities.

“I think you hit a reset button for the fall campaign. Everything changes. It’s almost like an Etch-a-Sketch; you can kind of shake it up, and we start all over again.”

– Eric Fehrstrom, Senior Advisor to Mitt Romney, March 21, 2012.

How malleable is candidate positioning? To appeal to voters, political candidates often deflect attention away from unpopular policy votes they have cast or unpopular positions they have taken in primaries. This rebranding can occur by emphasizing other facets of the candidates’ platforms, obfuscating the unpopular positions, or simply ignoring the topics. Simultaneously, opponents and independent issue organizations try to ensure that voters are aware of these unpopular positions, and increase their importance to voters. This manuscript reports the results of a field experiment designed to test the efficacy of an independent organization’s effort to change voters’ perceptions of an incumbent candidate by correcting their misinformed beliefs about the candidate’s policy positions (i.e., reframe the candidate).

There are several good reasons to be skeptical that independent organizations can successfully reframe candidates, especially incumbents. Efforts to reframe incumbent candidates can be stymied at each step of the communications process. The messages from independent organizations may not be heard. Not only are voters largely inattentive (Erikson et al 2004), messages may be drowned out in the blizzard of competing messages (Fowler and Ridout 2010). Even if messages are received, many voters will choose to reject the information in the messages (Kuklinski et al. 2000). For those voters open to the new the framings of incumbents, the policy positions that are the foci of the reframing efforts must be important enough to voters that it influences their candidate choices (Miller and Krosnick 2000; Lau and Redslawsk 2006; Guisinger 2009). Moreover, the reframing must last long enough to influence the actual vote choice, and not just be a fleeting change in candidate perception (Gerber, Gimpel, Green, and Shaw 2011). Furthermore, candidates who have been in the public eye for years before a given election (i.e., incumbents) can cultivate a moderate image by obfuscating unpopular views and by

emphasizing moderate parts of their positions on a given issue (Grose et al. 2013). After voters form beliefs about the positions and values of politicians, these beliefs can be very sticky and difficult to dislodge (Bullock 2007; Nyhan and Reifler 2010). Thus, independent organizations face an uphill struggle to reframe incumbent candidates – especially when the elections are high profile and involve many competing messages.

Our experiment measures the effectiveness of efforts to reframe a candidate by independent organizations in a high-profile political context in which detecting a treatment effect is particularly unlikely. The campaign was for a popular and well known incumbent in one of the most expensive US Senate races in the country. Despite these contextual hurdles, an inexpensive campaign conducted by two pro-choice organizations successfully caused voters in the randomly selected treatment group to correctly identify the incumbent candidate as opposing abortion rights, and to shift their votes towards the pro-choice challenger. Specifically, we find that the treatment corrected the misperception among one-third of those who mistakenly believed that the incumbent was pro-choice, while two-thirds of those voters maintained their false beliefs after the treatment was administered. The treatment also shifted the vote choice in our experiment universe by considerably more than the 3 point margin of victory achieved by the challenger. These results demonstrate that when elections are close, shifting voters' perceptions of incumbent legislators' positions can pay considerable electoral dividends.

### *Theory*

Politicians want to be viewed by voters as positively as possible, which is why holding unpopular policy positions creates strategic challenges for them. To the extent that voters' candidate preferences are motivated by policy substance, staking out a position that is out of synch with voters' opinions could be costly. Politicians have three basic strategy options for navigating this situation. The first option is to explain their unpopular policy positions their constituents in order to either move voters' preferences so

they better align with the candidates', or to at least minimize the unpopularity of the policy positions (Fenno 1978; Lenz 2012). This option is the most normatively appealing because it provides voters with accurate information on which to base their candidate choices.

A second option is to ignore or downplay unpopular positions by either sidestepping the issues altogether (Franklin 1991) or only addressing them when communicating with voters whose preferences on the issues already align with the candidates' (Hillygus and Shields 2008). Ignoring the issues avoids priming them in voters' minds. One incidental consequence of this can be that voters come to (mistakenly) assume that their preferred positions on the issues are shared by the candidates (Ross, Greene, and House 1977). If the unpopular positions would be unimportant to voters, the issue may not affect voters' candidate choices, in which case voters' ignorance would be of no consequence to election outcomes. However, if candidates' unpopular positions would be important to voters, then failing to directly address them hinders the ability of voters to make informed decisions (Lau and Redlawsk 2006; Bullock 2011).

The final option available to candidates is to intentionally obfuscate their true position on an issue by referencing related but distinctly different popular policy positions so as to appear more aligned with voters' preferences. Grose, Malhotra, and Van Houweling (2013) show that not only do US Senators craft letters to constituents who disagree with their positions on immigration by emphasizing agreement on topics related to immigration, but that voters exposed to these letters mistakenly believe the Senators legislative votes are in line with voters' preference on immigration. Rogers and Norton (2011) demonstrate experimentally that even in the context of political debates in which candidates are asked explicit policy questions, voters often fail to notice this obfuscation. While not explicitly misrepresenting policy positions, these experiments illustrate how such obfuscation tactics are not only

effective in muting opposition but also in creating the conditions for misinformation to arise and take hold among voters about candidates' true positions.

However, candidates do not operate in a vacuum and organizations opposing them often employ strategies to hold candidates accountable for their unpopular positions. In one sense, merely alerting voters to the unpopular positions taken by candidates should be easy messages to convey, but the messages need to be heard, accepted, and about issues that are sufficiently important to voters to change vote choice. That causal chain could be short-circuited at each step in the process, preventing organizations from successfully reframing voters' perceptions of candidates – even when their current perceptions are based on false information). This may help to explain why policy attacks by challengers often create confusion (Franklin 1991).

The first challenge is for organizations to expose voters to their messages. While researchers testing messages in the laboratory or a survey can be reasonably confident that participants will receive the intended messages, organizations operating in real electorate environments have no such guarantee. Getting the attention of voters is not easy and messages may be missed or diluted amid a blizzard of competing messages on a diverse range of issues from other campaigns and organizations. Furthermore, information sources that are universally recognized as impartial and objective rarely, if ever, exist in the political realm. This leads to voters selectively choosing to consume trusted media and to avoid media outlets deemed untrustworthy (Kull et al. 2003; Iyengar and Hahn 2009; Baum and Groeling 2008). If the only voters who are effectively exposed to organizations' candidate reframing messages are those who are disposed to agree with the messages, then such efforts will be unlikely to change vote choices.

Even if a sizable fraction of voters do not filter out the messages and are therefore effectively exposed to the reframing information, they may not be receptive to the messages and might therefore

reject their veracity. If the messenger organizations are not viewed as credible, voters may be motivated to spontaneously argue against the messages (Kuklinski et al. 2000; Taber and Lodge 2006; Nyhan and Riefler 2010). Even if the information about the unpopular positions are viewed as factually accurate, voters may correctly update their beliefs but re-interpret the meaning of policy positions (Gaines et al. 2007). Motivated reasoning can cause messages to be actively resisted by partisans – especially in competitive messaging environments in which multiple facts and frames can cancel each other out (Chong and Druckman 2007a,b).

Voters are not empty vessels, however. They often hold incorrect beliefs about candidates' policy positions, and experimental research in laboratories has found that dislodging such misinformation is extremely difficult. Nyhan and Reifler (2010) conducted a series of experiments in which they exposed participants to news stories containing misinformation which was subsequently corrected. They found that the corrections not only failed to correct the misinformation but actually caused the mistaken beliefs to become more entrenched. Similarly, Bullock (2007) found that even when the authoritative source of misinformation corrects the record, people are still more likely to believe the misinformation than before they heard it. At the very least, exposing voters to new information that contradicts their pre-existing beliefs about candidates can create confusion and uncertainty. Since voters do not cast votes based on uncertain policy positions (Alvarez 1998), organizations trying to reframe candidates in voters' minds may cause the target to discount the pre-existing mistaken information but not create any new votes.

Even if opposition groups successfully convince voters that the incumbent holds an unpopular policy position, the policy position must be sufficiently important to be pivotal in voters' decision calculus to change their vote. Party loyalty is the most important determinant of how people vote (Campbell et al. 1960; Green et al. 2002), but deeply held issue attitudes that are important to people

are capable of overwhelming partisanship (Converse 1964; Bullock 2011). For issues that are unimportant to voters, the popularity of the candidates' positions on the issues are inconsequential to election outcomes. In fact, if voters like and trust a candidate, they may change their policy preferences (rather than their candidate preference) to be in alignment with their preferred candidate (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Lenz 2009, 2012). Thus, reframing candidates will only affect election outcomes when the candidate policy positions about which they are communicating are important to voters.

Despite these hurdles to having an impact on voters' candidate choice, organizations do attempt to hold candidates accountable and make voters aware of unpopular positions. The experiment described in the next section measures the efficacy of an information campaign by independent organizations in a high-profile race. More specifically, it examines the extent to which misinformation about an incumbent Senator can be corrected through a low-cost campaign, and whether correcting this information can affect voters' candidate choices.

### *Election context*

The 2008 election for United States Senate in Oregon was between the incumbent Republican, Gordon Smith, and the challenger Democrat, Jeff Merkley. 2008 was a bad year for Republicans across the country and Oregon was not friendly ground for an incumbent Republican (e.g., Barack Obama defeated John McCain by 16 percentage points in Oregon). However, Smith was broadly popular and widely viewed as a moderate, so it is not surprising that the Senate race was among the closest and most expensive in the country that year. Ultimately, Merkley defeated Smith by a win margin of slightly more than 3 percentage points.

While the candidates differed on many issues, abortion was a point of emphasis for the Merkley campaign. Oregon is a state where a majority of the electorate supports abortion rights<sup>1</sup>, so Merkley prominently announced his pro-choice credentials during both the primary and general elections in speeches, advertisements, and a petition drive on his website. During his five terms in the Oregon Legislative Assembly, Merkley received a 100% score from NARAL (Project Vote Smart 2012) and was one of seven candidates for United States Senate that NARAL endorsed that year (NARAL Pro-Choice America 2008).

For his part, the incumbent Senator Smith did his best to downplay abortion as an issue and said very little about the topic throughout the campaign. Smith was pro-life, but supported stem cell research and international family planning (Mapes 2008), which earned him a 40% score from NARAL (Sandman 2008) and a 50% score from the National Right to Life Coalition (On the Issues 2006). Smith's strategy was to emphasize his centrist credentials, Democratic endorsements (Taniel 2008), and respect for Barack Obama (Chisholm 2008).

*Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon* and *NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon* conducted a large scale survey and discovered that a majority of the Oregon electorate was unaware that Smith was pro-life and mistakenly believed that he was pro-choice. The two organizations conducted a collaborative campaign to communicate to targeted citizens the information that Gordon Smith was pro-life. Compared to the overall spending in Oregon in 2008, any intervention from these organizations was going to be extremely small. FEC reports indicate that \$20 million was spent directly by the Senate campaigns (\$11 million by Gordon Smith alone). Oregon voters were deluged with communication for other offices as well, with the FEC reporting \$10 million spent by US House campaigns and \$11 million by registered PAC's in Oregon, in addition to the \$54 million spent by state-level candidates (Evilsizer 2009). Amid this

---

<sup>1</sup> American National Election Study cumulative file 1948 – 2002, questions VCF0838, VCF0837, and VCF0230.

backdrop of intense electoral activity, the experimental treatment described in the next section consisted of three simple mailers and a phone call.

### *Experimental Design*

The experiment was conducted on two distinct samples. The first sample was defined earlier in the 2008 election cycle when *Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon* and *NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon* conducted a large-scale survey in Oregon to identify pro-choice voters using the following question:

“On the issue of reproductive health care, which ONE of the following statements best characterizes your position toward abortion: (A) Abortion should be legal and generally available; (B) Restrictions on abortion are necessary, although it should remain legal in many circumstances; (C) Abortion should be legal only in most extreme cases, such as to save the life of the woman or in cases of rape and incest; (D) All abortions should be made illegal.”

The 2008 survey targeted citizens predicted to be likely voters with low likelihood of supporting Democratic candidates based on pre-existing microtargeting models.

This second sample of experimental subjects came from a very similar identification survey conducted in 2006.<sup>2</sup> The 2006 survey was aimed at identifying pro-choice voters and mobilizing them to vote against Ballot Measure 43, which would notify parents in the event of teenage abortions. The goal of the subsequent calling campaign was to encourage opponents of the measure who were already likely to vote to be sure to vote down the measure. For this reason the campaign targeted people who were nearly certain to vote in 2006.

Our experiment contains only the people who responded with options “A” or “B” in either the 2006 (N=15,206) or 2008 (N = 7,952) survey. The resulting universe targeted in 2008 was 67% female, 21% Democrat, 53% Independent, and had relatively high rates of turnout (72% in 2004 and 64% in

---

<sup>2</sup> Targeting information for the 2006 scores is unavailable.

2006) (see Table A1, Panel A). The sample that comes from the survey conducted in 2006 contained more women (86%), more Democrats (62%), fewer Independents (21%), and had higher rates of turnout (94% turnout in 2004 and 84% in 2006) (see Table A1, Panel B).

The individuals in the experiment universe were randomly assigned to either treatment or control conditions. Those in the treatment condition received three mailings (see Appendix B) and one phone call (see Appendix C). Both the mailings and the phone call highlighted pro-life votes Senator Gordon Smith made in the Senate and promoting Jeff Merkley's endorsement by *Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon* and *NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon*. Since the target audience for the mailings and phone calls was previously identified as being pro-choice, the emphasis was on conveying Smith's pro-life stances rather than persuading people to be pro-choice. The mailings were delivered between October 19, 2008, and Election Day. The phone calls were delivered between Thursday, October 2 and Monday, November 3, 2008.

The random assignment to treatment and control conditions assures that the only difference between the two groups is the application of the treatment. As expected, observed covariates are balanced across treatment and control conditions for both the 2006 and 2008 samples (see Table A1). This comparability across treatment and control groups allows us to attribute systematic differences between the treatment and control groups to the treatment itself. Voter attitudes were measured after Election Day using live phone interviews for all individuals in the experiment universe between Thursday, November 6 and Sunday, November 9 (see Appendix D for the text of the survey). We received valid responses for 1,805 citizens in the 2008 sample and 3,214 in the 2006 sample for a healthy total response rate of 22%. So while we are unable to know how non-respondents were affected by the treatment, our sample is fairly representative of the entire sample targeted by the campaign. A nice feature of this design is that the measure of candidate choice was collected by a

completely separate organization with no knowledge of the treatment assignment. Thus, the treatment effects we detect are only those that endured from when the treatments were administered to when the post-election surveys were collected; that is, the treatment effects we detect already reflect any decay that might have occurred over the intervening weeks (Gerber, Green, and Gimpel 2012).

The joint *NARAL* and *Planned Parenthood* campaign that we report here should be understood as being two entirely separate experiments since there are two distinct samples. The campaign originally considered targeting only the voters identified as being pro-choice in 2008 and ignoring those voters identified as being pro-choice in 2006. The campaign's two concerns were that voters' views may have shifted over the intervening years and that the mailing address information would be less reliable for those who had been contacted several years previously. So, while the campaign ultimately decided to target both populations with their treatment to correct misinformation, their concern was not misplaced and leads us to expect smaller treatment effects for those identified as pro-choice in the 2006 sample than for those identified as pro-choice in the 2008 sample.

### *Expectations*

Two parameters are of interest in this study: first, the percentage of misinformed voters that can be corrected through a straightforward field intervention; second, the percentage of voters persuaded to switch votes from Smith to Merkley because of this misinformation correction treatment. Since the bulk of the extant laboratory experiments on this topic have focused on detecting and measuring resistance to messages and the persistence of misinformation, it is unclear how they should inform our priors. One very similar field experiment was conducted by Arceneaux and Kolodny (2009a, b) in two Pennsylvania state legislative races. They found the informational campaign was resisted by people of the same party as the candidate and actually served as a negative cue by voters who disagreed with the independent organization.

The biggest difference between that study and the current one is that voters in the Arceneaux and Kolodny (2009 a, b) study had essentially no information about targeted candidates in the Pennsylvania statehouse races. Thus, there was no misinformation to dislodge, no strong affections for particular candidates, and much less information competing for voters' attention than was present in the Oregon Senate race we study. In contrast, Senators are highly salient for most voters. For instance, Franklin (1993) finds that Senators enjoy 94% name recognition and that 90% of voters can rate the Senator on a Feeling Thermometer and 60% can list specific likes/dislikes about the Senator. Similarly, Krasno (1997) finds that voters know far more about candidates for the US Senate than the US House, which he largely attributes to the much more intense campaigning in Senate elections. Given the more intense electoral environment with competing messages and the stronger priors and attachments to the Senate candidates by voters, all things being equal we would expect smaller treatment effects in Senate elections than those found by Arceneaux and Kolodny in statehouse races.

The major countervailing force is the fact that *NARAL* and *Planned Parenthood* targeted their intervention to people who support abortion rights (in contrast to the Arceneaux and Kolodny study where a large number of Republicans were targeted). To the extent that our target population engages in motivated reasoning, it is likely to be sympathetic to the sponsoring organizations and move away from the Republican Gordon Smith. Since abortion is a simple party-defining issue, the effect of the treatment on vote choice is likely to be larger for this campaign than campaigns focused on complex or cross-cutting policies (Hurley and Hill 2003). That said, Alvarez and Franklin (1994) find that voters are most certain in identifying incumbent positions regarding abortion, so it is possible that the treatment is incapable of correcting voter misinformation in the first place.

## *Results*

The first question we address is the degree to which the pro-choice voters targeted by the campaign were misinformed about Smith's position in the absence of the treatment. Among those identified as being pro-choice in 2008, only 52% could correctly identify the incumbent, Smith, as being pro-life (see Table 1, Panel A, row "Control"). The percentage of respondents able to identify Smith's position as pro-life was higher in the sample identified in 2006 (69%, see Table 1, Panel B, row "Control"), but still nowhere near 100%. While one might expect people with more extreme views on abortion (i.e., those who believe abortion should be "generally available" as opposed to those who think it should be available "with restrictions") to be more informed on the incumbent's position, no systematic difference is observed in the accuracy of those two groups of voters' in the control group in the experiment. Thus, we find that a large proportion of pro-choice voters in Oregon were misinformed about their incumbent candidate's position on abortion.

The second question we address is whether the informational campaign conducted by *NARAL* and *Planned Parenthood* managed to cut through the din of other electoral information and was accepted by voters in the treatment group. Among the citizens identified in 2008 as being pro-choice (see Table 1, Panel A, row "Treatment"), 68% in the treatment group were able to correctly identify Smith as pro-life. That is, the treatment improved factual knowledge about the policy position of the incumbent by 16 percentage points relative to the comparable control group. This difference is not only statistically significant, but also represents a full third of the 48% of citizens who were misinformed. No statistically relevant difference was observed between citizens who think abortion should be "generally available" and those who think "restrictions on abortion are necessary," which suggests that the treatment was received and accepted by both groups. Examining the sample of citizens identified as pro-choice in 2006 (see Table 1, Panel B, row "Treatment"), the picture is remarkably similar. The treatment group was 10 percentage points more likely to correctly identify Smith as pro-life, meaning that the treatment offered a successful corrective for one-third of the 31% of the 2006 sample that was

initially misinformed – an identical percentage as was found in the 2008 sample. It is clear in both samples that the treatment successfully corrected a large proportion of the misinformed voters about a policy position held by the incumbent candidate (see Figure 1).

On the flip side, the experiment provides evidence in support of the laboratory experiments demonstrating the persistence of misinformation. If the campaign’s treatment could correct one-third of the voters holding mistaken information about Smith’s policy position, there remained two-thirds of the subjects who were impervious to the treatment and continued to hold mistaken views. Thus, our experiment provides a parameter estimate for the percentage of the population that can be moved away from mistaken beliefs about a candidate to the truth in a competitive electoral context.

Since the campaign’s treatment informed citizens about the fact of an imminent election (in addition to conveying specific information about the candidates’ abortion policy positions), the third question to ask is whether the treatment also increased rates of participation in the election. Given that *NARAL* and *Planned Parenthood* targeted likely voters in a US Senate and Presidential battleground, a mobilization effect seems unlikely. In fact, no mobilization effect was detected for either the 2006 or the 2008 sample, or for any subset of individuals (see Table A2). While the treatment definitely affected the information levels of voters, it did not inspire voter turnout.

Since the campaign’s treatment conveyed specific information about the candidates’ abortion policy positions, the fourth question to address is whether the treatment increased the pro-choice challenger Merkley’s vote share relative to the pro-life incumbent Smith. The campaign did increase Merkley vote share for both samples (see Table 2, column “Overall”). Among citizens identified as pro-choice in 2008, the treatment group (45.3%) was 4.5 percentage points more supportive of Merkley (i.e., opposing the pro-life incumbent, Smith) than the control group (40.7%). That is, the campaign shifted the two-party vote share a full 9 percentage points (Control: 40.7% vs. 59.3% = -18.6%; Treatment:

45.3% vs. 54.7% = -9.4%). The effect size in the 2006 sample was similar where the treatment raised support for Merkley from 71.5% to 74.8% for a 3.4 percentage point increase in Merkley vote share, which is a 6.6 increase in two party vote-share (Control: 71.5% vs. 28.5% = 43%; Treatment: 74.8% vs. 25.2% = 49.6%). These effects in both 2008 and 2006 cross traditional thresholds for statistical significance and are larger than Merkley's ultimate margin of victory. Recall that the macro issue that dominated this election was the economy. In that context, a treatment that corrected widespread policy misinformation about a well-liked incumbent was received, believed, corrective, and effective at changing vote choice.

This change in voter behavior occurred almost entirely among citizens who believe abortion should be "generally available" (see Table 2, column "Available"). Citizens believing abortion should be generally available exhibited treatment effects of 8.5 percentage points among the citizens identified in 2008 and 4.4 percentage points among those identified in 2006. In contrast, citizens identified in 2008 as believing restrictions should be placed on abortion (see Table 2, column "Restrict") did not change their votes in response to the treatment. The pattern was similar for citizens identified in 2006 as supporting more restricted abortion rights, where the effect of the treatment was a statistically insignificant 1.9 percentage points. These heterogeneous treatment effects suggest that correcting voters' misinformation mattered only when the voters had an extreme position on the issue of abortion (see Figure 2).

Our samples are large by the standards of laboratory and survey based work (1,805 citizens in the 2008 sample and 3,214 in the 2006 sample completed the post-survey), so our ability to detect heterogeneous treatment effects is not trivial. That said, we find no systematic evidence of heterogeneity beyond our primary hypothesis about a citizen's opinion regarding abortion. Citizens varying in age, gender, and median household income show more or less constant response to the

treatment. Those who reported in a previous survey that they supported Smith are 5 percentage points more responsive to treatment than all other respondents who had previously expressed a candidates preference, but this effect is not remotely close to statistical significance and could be due to the sampling variance ( $p = .41$ ). Thus, our data suggests that attitudes about abortion are the principal moderating variable and otherwise the effect is relatively constant across a broad change of subject characteristics.

### *Discussion*

The experiment reported in this manuscript provides proof that low-cost information campaigns can affect voters' beliefs and candidate choices in high-profile, high-budget elections. While field experiments are increasingly common in political science, nearly all of them have been focused on turnout rather than persuasion (for exceptions see: Arceneaux and Nickerson 2010; Gerber, Green and Gimpel 2011; Rogers and Middleton 2013) and the vast majority have been conducted in low salience elections where it is easier for treatments to be noticed. In contrast, our experiment studied an effort conducted during a Senate election decided by a win margin of 3 percentage points in a state where \$95 million was spent across all-levels of electoral campaigns. Despite all this electoral spending and activity, the 3 pieces of mail (at \$0.75 apiece) and a volunteer phone call (\$1 apiece) aimed at clearing up ambiguity about an incumbent US Senator's position on abortion shifted two-party vote share by nearly 9 percentage points in one sample and 6.6 points in the other. Our experiment demonstrates that organizations interested in reframing candidates can do so effectively, even in the face competing messages benefiting from much larger budgets.

Our findings speak to the debate on whether campaigns matter (e.g., Gelman and King 1993; Holbrook 1996; Gerber 2004), and highlight a limitation of analyses of election outcomes that rely principally on economic performance (or whatever the plurality of voters say is the "most important issue" at that time). In 2008, the economy was the most important issue in the election, trumping even

the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. While cultural issues are never completely divorced from voting decisions, survey research did not deem abortion to be a critical issue on voters' minds in Oregon during this election. Yet, we find that correcting voters' misinformed beliefs about the incumbent's policy position on this issue shifted vote choice by 3.4 to 4.5 percentage points, and margin by 6.6 and 9.0 percentage points. Since this election was close – with a win margin of less than three percentage points – micro-targeted, single-issue focused communication strategies like the one we studied could affect election outcomes (Hillygus and Shields, 2008). Thus, our experiment provides evidence that campaign tactics can matter when macro-level forces create close elections. We find that these tactics can affect vote choice when the targeted policy positions link to positions that are deeply held by voters.

Our experiment also helps clarify how to interpret results from studies using respondent policy preferences to predict vote choice. We found that half of our control group was unaware of the incumbent's position on a policy that is a core part of the "Culture War" and at times used as a litmus test for both political parties. When presented with accurate information on the incumbent's position, one-third of misinformed voters updated their beliefs, and some voters with unambiguously pro-choice views altered their vote choice. This finding suggests that studies of representation that link the votes of legislators to constituent opinion capture the broad ideological fit between legislators and voters rather than reflecting direct policy feedback in which constituent opinions of legislators are causally connected to legislators' policy votes. To the extent that voters attempt to maximize weighted policy congruence, misinformation constitutes noise and models of vote choice using policy preference would perform better if citizens were provided accurate information on candidate positions.

The source of information on policy positions is an interesting direction for future research. *Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon* and *NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon* both have strong name recognition and are likely to be deemed credible sources on candidate positions regarding abortion

rights – even by voters who oppose abortion. This research is silent on whether voters’ misinformed beliefs could be corrected by information from sources deemed credible on topics unrelated to the target issue (e.g., League of Women Voters, Sierra Club, or Chamber of Commerce) or by sources of unknown credibility. Similarly, future research might explore whether voters’ misinformed beliefs about a candidate could be corrected by information from an opposing candidate who may benefit from the correction of that misinformation, and thus whose motives might be especially suspicious. The present experiment corrected widespread voter misinformation about an incumbent candidate’s abortion position by providing information from sources that are credible when speaking about abortion; there are many promising avenues to explore which types of sources can effectively correct misinformation.

Research designs with more detailed pre- and post- surveys would allow for future experiments to gain more precision on the dynamics of who changed their vote, and why. For example, the results suggest that voters who believed abortion should be “generally available” were the only ones to change their vote when they were disabused of misinformation regarding the incumbents’ position on abortion. One explanation for why this might have been is that pro-choice voters who prefer abortions to be “generally available” rather than “available with restrictions” also believe abortion to be a more important issue to them personally, and therefore likely weight the issue more heavily in their vote choice – consistent with research showing that strong attitudes affect preferences and behaviors whereas weak attitudes do not (Krosnick and Petty 1995). Another possible explanation is that the “generally available” voters realize that a pro-life candidate can effectively prevent abortion from being “generally available,” whereas the “available with restrictions” voters realize that contemporary political reality is such that even a pro-life candidate likely cannot prevent some abortions from being available with restrictions. Other research questions could be addressed through more detailed pre- and post- designs as well. For example, did the treatment have an effect on voters who already knew Smith was pro-life by making the topic of abortion more salient? Or what other characteristics predicted whether

misinformed voters would update their beliefs about the incumbent, and what characteristics predicted whether misinformed voters would change their candidate preferences? While our experiment can answer many first order questions and demonstrate important facts about election dynamics, it raises many more questions about how misinformation can be corrected and to what effect.

## References

- Althaus, Scott L. 1998. "Information Effects in Collective Preferences." *The American Political Science Review* 92 (3) (Sep.): pp. 545-558.
- Alvarez, R. Michael. 1998. *Information and Elections*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Alvarez, R. Michael and Charles H. Franklin. 1994. "Uncertainty and Political Perceptions." *Journal of Politics* 56(3):671-688.
- Arceneaux, Kevin and Robin Kolodny. 2009a. "Educating the Least Informed: Group Endorsements in a Grassroots Campaign." *American Journal of Political Science* 53(4):755–770.
- Arceneaux, Kevin and Robin Kolodny. 2009b. "The Effect of Grassroots Campaigning on Issue Preferences and Issue Salience." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion, and Parties* 19(3):235-249.
- Arceneaux, Kevin and David W. Nickerson. 2010. "Negative and Positive Campaign Messages: Evidence from Two Field Experiments." *American Politics Research* 38(1): 54-83.
- Bartels, Larry M. 1996. "Uninformed Votes: Information Effects in Presidential Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 40 (1) (Feb.): pp. 194-230.
- Berelson, Bernard. 1954. *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bullock, John G. 2007. "Experiments on Partisanship and Public Opinion: Party Cues, False Beliefs, and Bayesian Updating." Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University.
- Bullock, John G. 2011. "Elite Influence on Public Opinion in an Informed Electorate." *American Political Science Review* 105(August):496-515.
- Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. New York: John Wiley & Son
- Chisholm, Kari. 2008. "Telling the truth about Gordon Smith's position on a woman's right to choose." Blue Oregon, October 15, 2008. <http://www.blueoregon.com/2008/10/telling-the-tru/>
- Chong, Dennis and James N. Druckman. 2007a. "A Theory of Framing and Opinion Formation in Competitive Environments." *Journal of Communication* 57(1):99-118.
- Chong, Dennis and James N. Druckman. 2007b. "Framing Public Opinion in Competitive Democracies." *American Political Science Review* 101(4):637-655.
- Cohen, Geoffrey L. 2003. "Party over Policy: The Dominating Impact of Group Influence on Political Beliefs." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 85(5): 807-822.
- Converse, Philip E. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. DE Apter, pp. 206–61. New York: Free
- Delli Carpini, Michael X. and Scott Keeter. 1996. *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Downs, Anthony. 1957. "An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy." *Journal of Political Economy* 65 (2) (Apr.): pp. 135-150.
- Erikson, Robert S., Costas Panagopoulos, and Christopher Wlezian. 2004. "Likely (and Unlikely) Voters and the Assessment of Campaign Dynamics." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 68(4):588-601.

- Evilsizer, Tyler. 2009. "The Money Behind Oregon's 2008 Elections." Report for National Institute on Money in State Politics, June 15, 2009.  
<http://www.followthemoney.org/press/Reports/Oregon08CloserLook.pdf>
- Fenno, Richard F. 1978. *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Fowler, Erika Franklin and Travis N. Ridout. 2010. "Advertising Trends in 2010." *The Forum, A Journal of Applied Research in Contemporary Politics* 8(4): Article 4.
- Franklin, Charles H. 1993. "Senate Incumbent Visibility over the Election Cycle." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 18(2):271-290.
- Frank, Thomas. 2004. *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*. New York: Henry Holt & Co.
- Gaines, Brian J, James H. Kuklinski, Paul J. Quirk, Buddy Peyton, and Jay Verkuilen. 2007. "Same Facts, Different Interpretations: Partisan Motivation and Opinion on Iraq." *Journal of Politics* 69(4):957-974.
- Gerber, Alan s., James G. Gimpel, Donald P. Green, and Daron R. Shaw. 2011. "How Large and Long-lasting Are the Persuasive Effects of Televised Campaign Ads? Results from a Randomized Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 105(1):135-150.
- Green, Donald P., Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Schickler. 2002. *Partisan Hearts and Minds*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Greene, Joshua and Jonathan Haidt. 2002. "How (and Where) Does Moral Judgment Work?" *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 6 (12) (12/1): 517-23.
- Grose, Christian R., Neil Malhotra, and Robert P. Van Houweling. 2013. "Explaining Explanations: How Legislators Explain Their Policy Positions and How Citizens React." Working paper.
- Hill, Seth J., James Lo, Lynn Vavreck, and John Zaller. 2007. "How Quickly We Forget: Late Campaign Advertising and Electoral Advantage." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association.
- Hillygus, Sunshine and Todd G. Shields. 2008. *The Persuadable Voter: Wedge Issues in Presidential Campaigns*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Howell, William G. and Martin R. West. 2009. "Educating the Public." *Education Next* 9(3): 41-47.
- Hurley, Patricia A. and Kim Quaille Hill. 2003. "Beyond the Demand-Input Model: A Theory of Representational Linkages" *Journal of Politics* 65(2):304-326.
- Iyengar, Shanto and Kyu S Hahn. 2009. "Red Media, Blue Media: Evidence of Ideological Selectivity in Media Use." *Journal of Communication* 59(1):19-39.
- Jacobs, Lawrence R. and Robert Y Shapiro. 2000. *Politicians Don't Pander: Political Manipulation and the Loss of Democratic Responsiveness*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Krasno, Jonathan. 1997. *Challengers, Competition, and Reelection: Comparing Senate and House Elections*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Kuklinski, James H., Paul J. Quirk, Jennifer Jerit, David Schwieder, and Robert F. Rich. 2000. "Misinformation and the currency of democratic citizenship." *Journal of Politics* 62 (3): 790-816.
- Kull, Steven, Clay Ramsay and Evan Lewis. 2003. "Misperceptions, the Media, and the Iraq War." *Political Science Quarterly* 118(4):569-598.

- Lau, Richard R., and David P. Redlawsk. 2006. "How Voters Decide: Information Processing During Election Campaigns." Cambridge studies in public opinion and political psychology. Cambridge ;New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lenz, Gabriel S. 2009. "Learning and Opinion Change, Not Priming: Reconsidering the Evidence for the Priming Hypothesis." *American Journal of Political Science* 53(4):821-837.
- Lenz, Gabriel S. 2012. *Follow the Leader? How Voters Respond to Politicians' Policies and Performance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lupia, Arthur. 1994. "Shortcuts Versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections." *The American Political Science Review* 88 (1) (Mar.): pp. 63-76.
- Mapes, Jeff. 2008. "Smith doesn't want to argue over abortion." Monday, September 29, 2008. [http://blog.oregonlive.com/mapesonpolitics/2008/09/smith\\_doesnt\\_want\\_to\\_argue\\_over.html](http://blog.oregonlive.com/mapesonpolitics/2008/09/smith_doesnt_want_to_argue_over.html)
- Miller, Joanne M. and Jon A. Krosnick. 2000. "News Media Impact on the Ingredients of Presidential Evaluations: Politically Knowledgeable Citizens Are Guided by a Trusted Source." *American Journal of Political Science* 44(2):301-315.
- NARAL Pro-Choice America. 2008. "NARAL Pro-Choice America PAC Endorses Candidates in Top US Senate and House Contests." [http://www.prochoiceamerica.org/elections/elections-press-releases/2008/pr07302008\\_endorsements.html](http://www.prochoiceamerica.org/elections/elections-press-releases/2008/pr07302008_endorsements.html). [Accessed May 21, 2012.]
- Nyhan Brendan and Jason Reifler. 2010. "When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions." *Political Behavior* doi:10.1007/s11109-010-9112-2.
- On the Issues. 2006. "06n-NRLC on Dec 31, 2006." [http://www.issues2000.org/Notebook/Note\\_06n-NRLC.htm](http://www.issues2000.org/Notebook/Note_06n-NRLC.htm)
- Page, Benjamin I., and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Popkin, Samuel L. 1991. *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Project Vote Smart 2012. <http://votesmart.org/candidate/23644/jeff-merkley?categoryId=2> [Last accessed May 5, 2012.]
- Rogers, Todd and Joel Middleton. 2013. "Are Ballot Initiative Outcomes Influenced by the Campaigns of Independent Groups? A Precinct-Randomized Field Experiment." Working paper.
- Rogers, Todd and Michael I. Norton. 2011. "The artful dodger: Answering the wrong question the right way." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 17(2):139-147.
- Ross, Lee, David Greene, and Pamela House. 1977. "The False Consensus Effect: An Egocentric Bias in Social Perception and Attribution Processes." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 13 (3) (5): 279-301.
- Sandman, The. 2008. "OR-Sen: Which of These Things is Not Like the Others?" My DD, Monday, August 25, 2008. <http://mydd.com/users/the-sandman/posts/or-sen-which-of-these-things-is-not-like-the-others>
- Sides, John, and Jack Citrin. 2007. "European Opinion About Immigration: The Role of Identities, Interests and Information." *British Journal of Political Science* 37 (03): 477.

- Sniderman, Paul M. 1993. "The New Look in Public Opinion Research." In *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*, ed. Ada W. Finifter. Washington, DC: American Political Science Association
- Sniderman, Paul M., Richard A. Brody, and Philip E. Tetlock. 1991. *Reasoning and Choice: Explorations in Political Psychology*. Cambridge England ;New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Taber, Charles S. and Milton Lodge. 2006. "Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs." *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (3) (Jul.): pp. 755-769.
- Taniel. 2008. "OR-heavy down-ballot thread: Sen. Smith touts Dem endorsements and GOP House candidate hit by abortion scandal." Campaign Diaries, June 23, 2008.  
<http://campaigndiaries.com/2008/06/23/or-heavy-down-ballot-thread-sen-smith-touts-dem-endorsements-and-gop-house-candidate-hit-by-abortion-scandal/>
- Todorov, Alexander, Anesu N. Mandisodza, Amir Goren, and Crystal C. Hall. 2005. "Inferences of Competence from Faces Predict Election Outcomes." *Science* 308 (5728, Women's Health) (Jun. 10): pp. 1623-1626.

**Table 1: Treatment Increased Knowledge of Smith's Position***Panel A: Citizens ID'ed in 2008*

	Overall	Available	Restrict
Control	51.6%	52.5%	50.8%
	494	238	256
Treatment	68.0%	69.9%	66.1%
	566	289	277
Difference	16.4%	17.4%	15.3%
standard error	(0.030)	(0.042)	(0.042)
p-value	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01

*Panel B: Citizens ID'ed in 2006*

	Overall	Available	Restrict
Control	68.6%	69.6%	66.8%
	1018	638	380
Treatment	78.9%	82.4%	73.1%
	1161	722	439
Difference	10.3%	12.8%	6.3%
standard error	(0.019)	(0.023)	(0.032)
p-value	<0.01	<0.01	0.05

Percentages report the percent of citizens knowing that Smith was pro-life.

Numbers represent cell sizes.

Numbers in parentheses report standard errors.

**Table 2: Treatment Changed Vote Choice of Citizens Who Think Abortion Should be Legal and Available**

*Panel A: Citizens ID'ed in 2008*

	Overall	Available	Restrict
Control	40.7%	44.2%	37.5%
	891	430	461
Treatment	45.3%	52.7%	37.9%
	859	431	428
Difference	4.5%	8.5%	0.3%
	(0.024)	(0.034)	(0.033)
p-value	0.05	0.01	0.92

*Panel B: Citizens ID'ed in 2006*

	Overall	Available	Restrict
Control	71.5%	76.7%	63.0%
	1615	999	616
Treatment	74.8%	81.1%	64.9%
	1574	964	610
Difference	3.4%	4.4%	1.9%
standard error	(0.016)	(0.018)	(0.027)
p-value	0.03	0.02	0.48

Percentages report the percent of citizens supporting the Democratic challenger, Merkley.

Numbers report cell sizes.

Numbers in parentheses report standard errors.

Figure 1 Effect of Treatment on Knowledge of Incumbent's Position by Abortion View

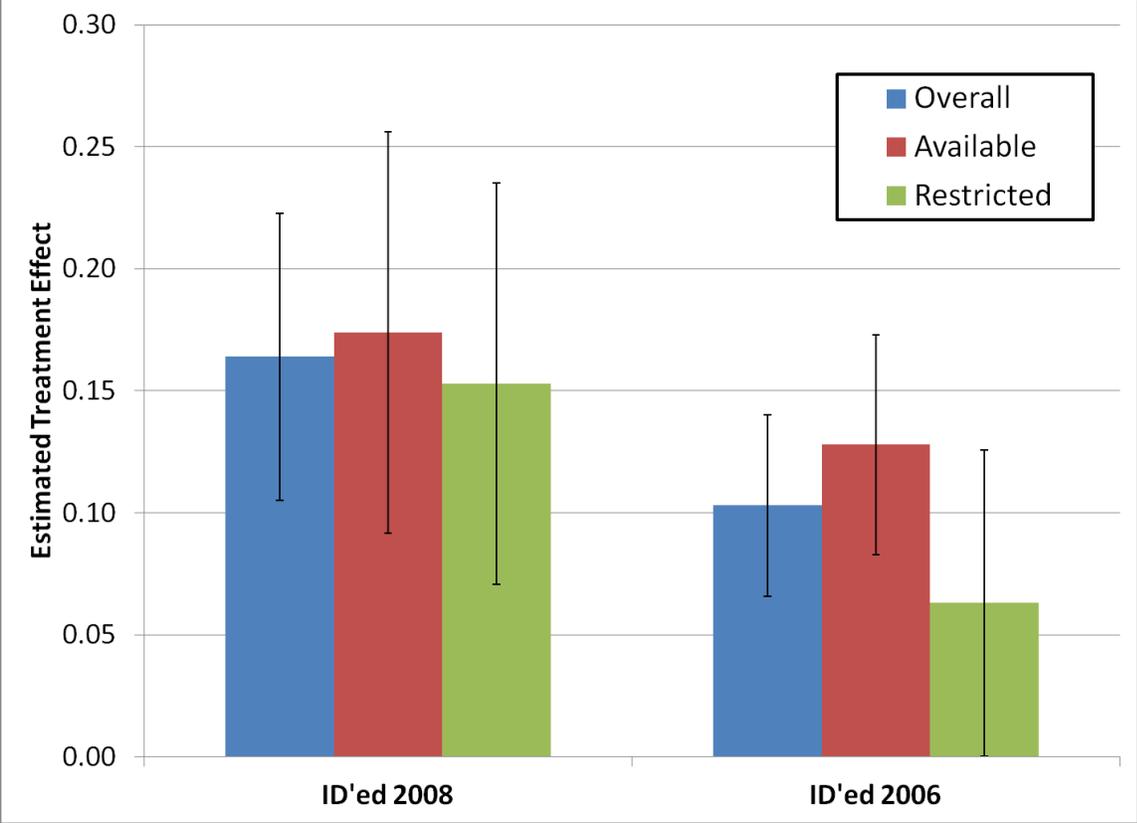
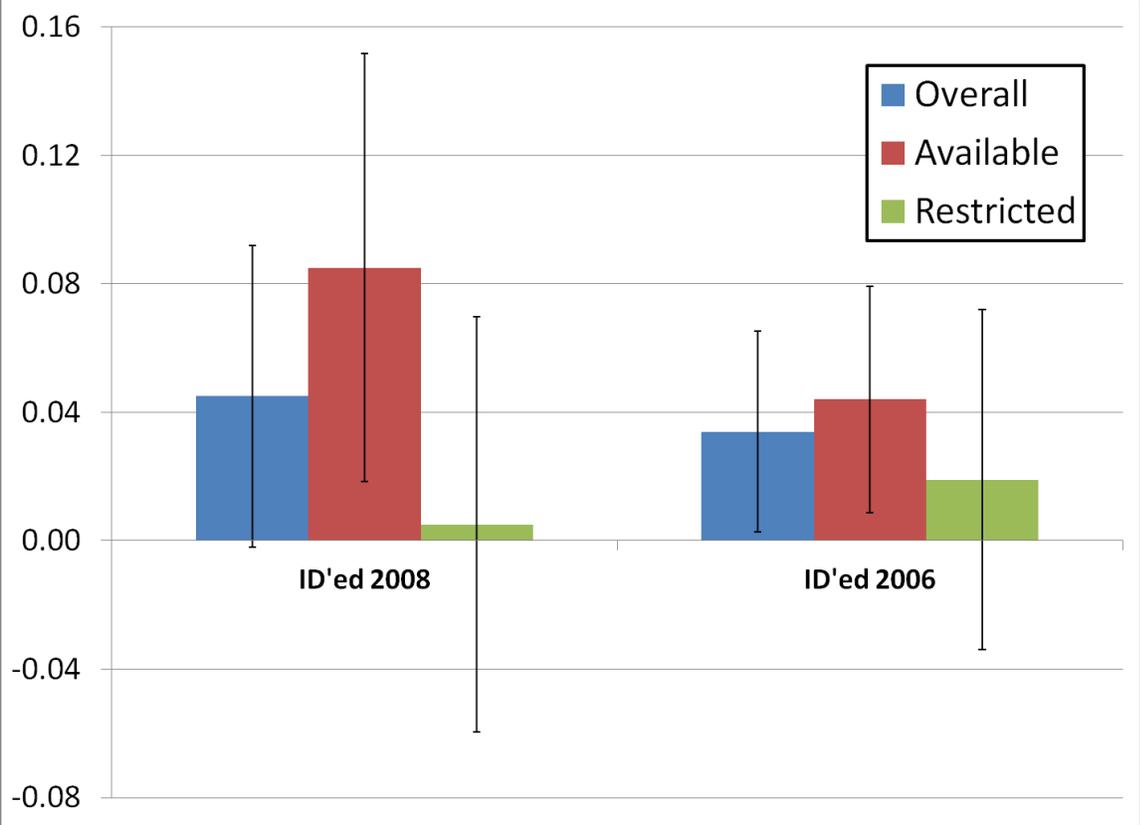


Figure 2 Effect of Treatment Effect on Vote Choice by Abortion View



## Appendix A: Supporting Tables

**Table A1: Randomization Balanced Observed Characteristics Across Treatment Conditions**

*Panel A: Citizens ID'ed 2008*

	Assignment		Re-Interviewed	
	Control	Treatment	Control	Treatment
Female	67%	67%	74%	70%
Age	51	51	57	57
Democrat	21%	21%	26%	24%
Independent	53%	53%	47%	48%
Legal and Available	47%	49%	48%	50%
Voted 2006	64%	63%	76%	73%
Voted 2004	72%	71%	76%	77%
N	3970	3982	921	884
F-test	0.97		0.24	

*Panel B: Citizens ID'ed 2006*

	Assignment		Re-Interviewed	
	Control	Treatment	Control	Treatment
Female	86%	86%	86%	86%
Age	53	53	57	57
Democrat	62%	63%	71%	71%
Independent	21%	20%	14%	14%
Voted 2006	84%	84%	90%	91%
Voted 2004	94%	94%	95%	95%
N	7607	7599	1632	1582
F-test	0.80		0.99	

**Table A2: Treatment had no Effect on Voter Turnout***Panel A: Citizens ID'ed in 2008*

	Overall	Available	Restrict
Control	83.3%	84.6%	82.2%
	3970	1885	2085
Treatment	81.4%	81.6%	81.3%
	3982	1943	2039
Difference	-1.9%	-3.0%	-0.9%
standard error	(0.009)	(0.012)	(0.012)
p-value	0.03	0.01	0.43

*Panel B: Citizens ID'ed in 2006*

	Overall	Available	Restrict
Control	92.2%	91.6%	93.2%
	7607	4763	2844
Treatment	91.6%	91.2%	92.3%
	7599	4742	2857
Difference	-0.6%	-0.4%	-0.9%
standard error	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.007)
p-value	0.20	0.54	0.18

## Appendix B: Mailings

### Mailing 1



**I had  
no idea.**

**"I nearly voted for Gordon Smith. Then I found out he's working to outlaw abortion."**



**GORDON SMITH** has a lot of people fooled. Smith tries very hard to sound like a moderate. He never talks about a woman's right to choose. **Many people in Oregon even think he is pro-choice.**

**He isn't.**

Gordon Smith has a consistent record of voting against a woman's right to make her own choices on abortion:

- **In the Senate, Smith voted twice against Roe v. Wade.** (Senate vote #337 (12/21/99); Senate vote #48 (3/12/03))
- **He voted to ban abortions, even if the health of the mother was at stake.** (Senate vote #46 (3/12/03))
- **In fact, Gordon Smith is so extreme that he even voted against funding for family planning services for low-income women.** (Senate vote #75 (3/17/05); Senate vote #318 (9/6/07))
- **And Gordon Smith has voted to pack the Supreme Court with anti-choice justices.** (Senate vote #245 (3/28/05); Senate vote #1 (1/30/06); Senate vote #2 (1/31/06); Senate vote #128 (8/25/06); Senate vote #131 (6/6/06); Senate vote #133 (6/9/06); Senate vote #153 (7/6/04))

The next Supreme Court vacancy could tip the balance and result in Roe v. Wade being overturned. Abortion would become instantly illegal in four states. Twenty-one more will immediately move to outlaw abortion. Women and doctors would become criminals if they choose an abortion.

**Gordon Smith has shown by his votes what he will do.**  
**Use your vote to keep him from doing it.**

**Abortion is a personal decision.**  
**Don't let Gordon Smith make that decision for you.**

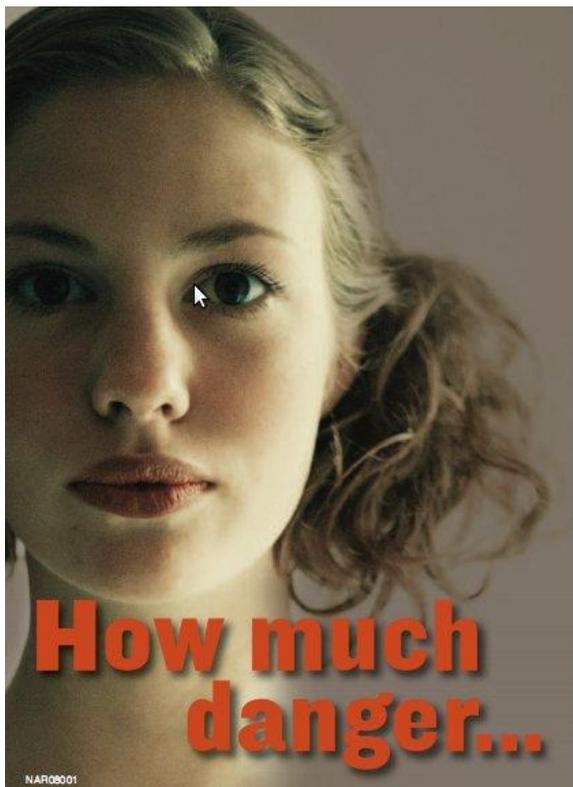
Paid for by NARAL ProChoice Oregon and Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon. This communication not authorized by any candidate or candidate committee.

POSTAGE AND FEES PAID  
Mailing 2008

PO Box 45472  
Portland, OR 97240

A message from:  
  


NAR08002



NAR08001

PO Box 40472  
Portland, OR 97240

PERMIT NO. 570  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Mailing 2008

A message from:



#usa @ 11-11-08

**...should she face if Gordon Smith gets his way and abortion becomes illegal?**

Gordon Smith doesn't talk much about abortion. Why? Because he knows that if most Oregon women knew his extreme anti-choice views, they would never vote for him.

The fact is that throughout his public career, Gordon Smith has had a consistent anti-choice voting record. In the U.S. Senate, he has voted against *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court decision that established a woman's right to choose. Smith also voted to pack the Supreme Court with anti-choice judges. The next Supreme Court Justice vacancy could tip the balance.

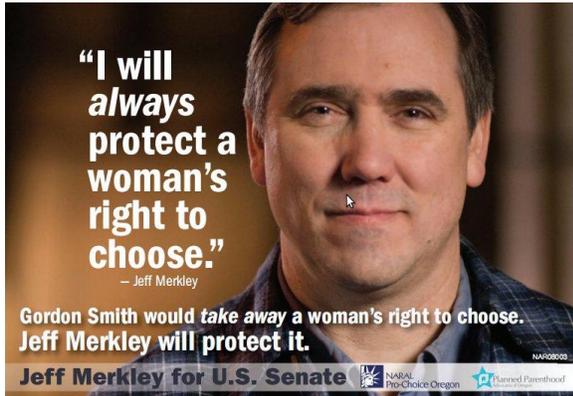
**If Gordon Smith gets his way and *Roe v. Wade* is overturned:**

- Twenty-one states will immediately move to outlaw abortion. (Source: Center for Reproductive Rights, What if Roe Falls, November 2007)
- In four states, abortions would be banned instantaneously.
- Doctors will be prosecuted and women will be treated like criminals.
- Abortions won't stop — they will just become extremely dangerous.

**This isn't hypothetical.** It is a harsh reality that could very well happen if Gordon Smith gets another term. There are women across America who are hoping you don't let that happen.

**Abortion is a personal decision. Don't let Gordon Smith make that decision for you.**

Paid for by NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon and Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon. This communication not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee.



**"I will always protect a woman's right to choose."**  
— Jeff Merkley

Gordon Smith would *take away* a woman's right to choose. Jeff Merkley will protect it.

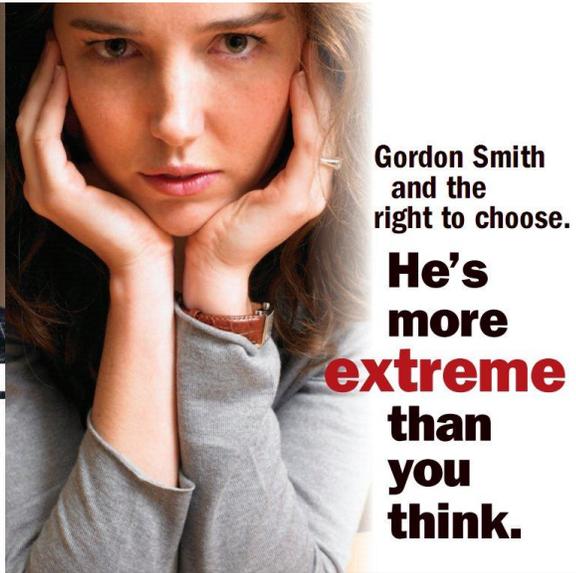
**Jeff Merkley for U.S. Senate**

NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon Planned Parenthood

PO Box 40472  
Portland, OR 97240

PAID BY U.S. SENATOR  
**PAID**  
MAY 2008

Paid for by NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon and Planned Parenthood. Acceptance of legal responsibility for accuracy by any candidate or endorsed committee.



Gordon Smith and the right to choose.

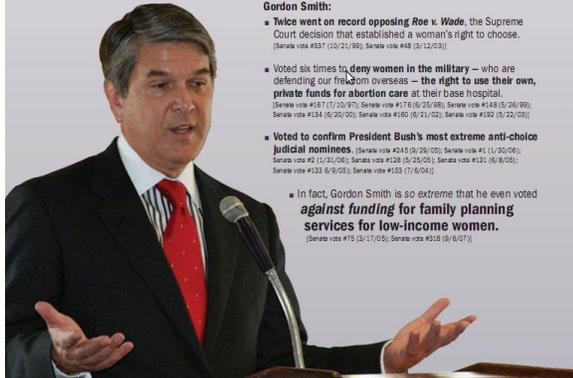
**He's more extreme than you think.**

Gordon Smith works very hard to *appear* moderate. But that's because he knows that if Oregonians knew his true record, **they would never vote for him.**

**Gordon Smith:**

- Twice went on record opposing *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court decision that established a woman's right to choose. (Senate vote #337 (10/21/00); Senate vote #48 (3/12/03))
- Voted six times to deny women in the military — who are defending our freedom overseas — the right to use their own, private funds for abortion care at their base hospital. (Senate vote #187 (7/10/97); Senate vote #176 (6/25/98); Senate vote #148 (5/26/99); Senate vote #134 (8/20/00); Senate vote #160 (8/21/02); Senate vote #102 (8/20/02))
- Voted to confirm President Bush's most extreme anti-choice judicial nominees. (Senate vote #243 (2/29/05); Senate vote #1 (1/30/06); Senate vote #2 (2/1/06); Senate vote #128 (5/26/05); Senate vote #121 (6/8/05); Senate vote #133 (8/9/05); Senate vote #153 (7/6/04))

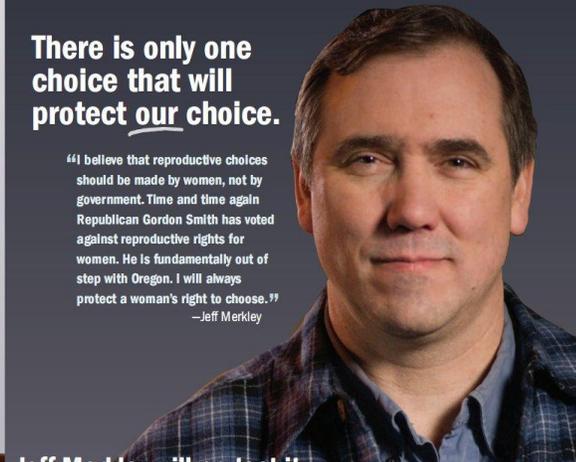
In fact, Gordon Smith is so extreme that he even voted **against funding for family planning services for low-income women.** (Senate vote #75 (3/17/05); Senate vote #118 (8/6/07))



**Gordon Smith would take away a woman's right to choose.**

**There is only one choice that will protect our choice.**

"I believe that reproductive choices should be made by women, not by government. Time and time again Republican Gordon Smith has voted against reproductive rights for women. He is fundamentally out of step with Oregon. I will always protect a woman's right to choose."  
—Jeff Merkley



**Jeff Merkley will protect it.**

**Jeff Merkley for U.S. Senate**

## **Appendix C. Phone Script**

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon, and NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon  
Live Persuasion with Question  
Start Date: Thursday October 23

**[OPENING]** Hi, is **[INSERT NAME FROM VOTER FILE]** there? I'm \_\_\_\_\_ with Planned Parenthood & NARAL (Nay-rawl) of Oregon. Senator Gordon Smith is anti-choice. Smith pretends to be a moderate, but he voted to overturn Roe v. Wade and to ban abortions even if the mother's health is at risk. He even voted against family planning. Jeff Merkley will protect a woman's right to choose. Can we count on your vote for Jeff Merkley (Murk-lee)?

**(IF NO)** Thanks for your time. Good-bye. **[END CALL]**

**(IF YES)** Great. Please get your ballot in as soon as possible. Thanks for your support. Good-bye. **[END CALL]**

### **Answering machine message:**

This message is for **[INSERT NAME FROM VOTER FILE]**. I'm \_\_\_\_\_ with Planned Parenthood and NARAL (Nay-rawl) of Oregon. Senator Gordon Smith is anti-choice. Smith pretends to be a moderate, but he voted to overturn Roe v. Wade and to ban abortions even if the mother's health is at risk. He even voted against family planning. Jeff Merkley will protect a woman's right to choose. Support Jeff Merkley (Murk-lee) for Senate because he will always stand for a woman's right to choose. **[END CALL]**

## APPENDIX D. Post-Election Survey

"Hi may I speak to [name1][name2]?" [indicate to whom we spoke by putting "id" into "spoke to" field]

"Hi, I'm calling from XXXX with a brief, 2 question opinion survey. Your answers will be kept completely confidential and we are not selling anything. [Pause. If they don't object, continue]. First, in the election for senate, did you vote for Democrat Jeff Merkley or Republican Gordon Smith?"

- (01) Merkley: *Thank you.*
- (02) Smith: *Thank you.*
- (03) VOLUNTEER ONLY Other *Thank you.*
- (04) VOLUNTEER ONLY Won't say/Undecided: *Thank you*
- (05) VOLUNTEER ONLY Did not vote for Senate.

### [GO TO Q1]

- (20) REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE: *Thank you and good night.*
- (21) DO NOT CALL: *Thank you and good night.*
- (30) Hung up before reaching voter [please enter id1 into spoketo field]
- (31) Language Barrier [please enter id1 into spoketo field]
- (32) Deceased [please enter id1 into spoketo field]
- (34) Refused (from other than target) [please enter id1 into spoketo field]
- (35) Privacy Manager [please enter id1 into spoketo field]
- (80) Wrong Number [please enter id1 into spoketo field]
- (86) Modem/Fax [please enter id1 into spoketo field]
- (90) Not in Service [please enter id1 into spoketo field]
- (91) Changed [please enter id1 into spoketo field]
- (92) Invalid Number [please enter id1 into spoketo field]

**Q1** "In your opinion, which ONE of the following is Gordon Smith's view of a woman's right to choose?"

- 1 Strongly supports. *Thank You.*
- 2 Somewhat supports. *Thank You.*
- 3 Somewhat opposes. *Thank You.*
- 4 Strongly opposes. *Thank You.*

### [GO TO Q2]

**Q2]** *Lastly, for demographic purposes only, in what year were you born?*

[Collect age]