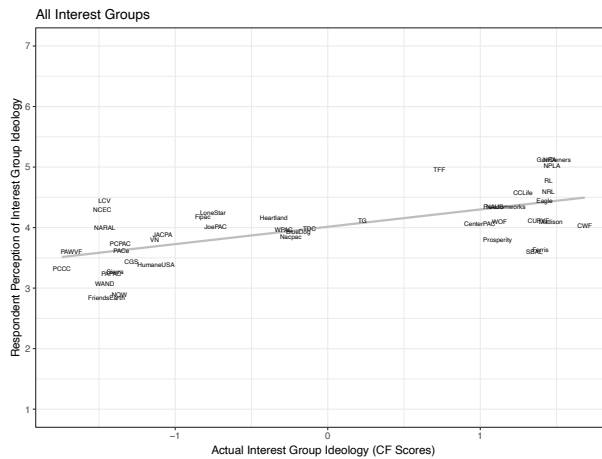


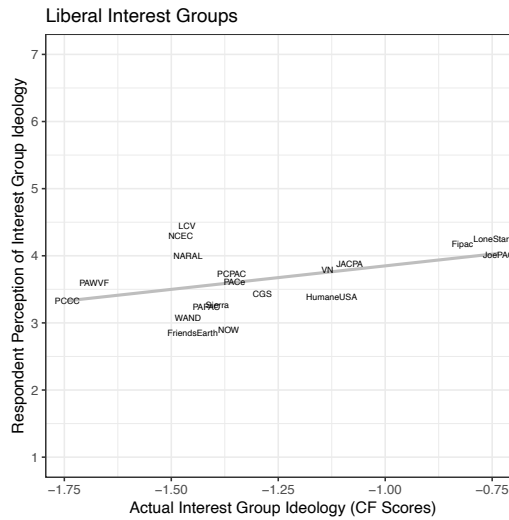
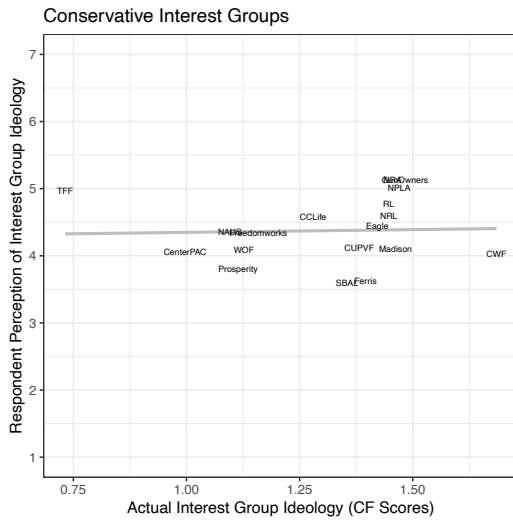
A Appendix Figures and Tables

Figure OA1: Respondent Perceptions of SIGs in Study 1 by SIG CFscore
(a) All SIGs



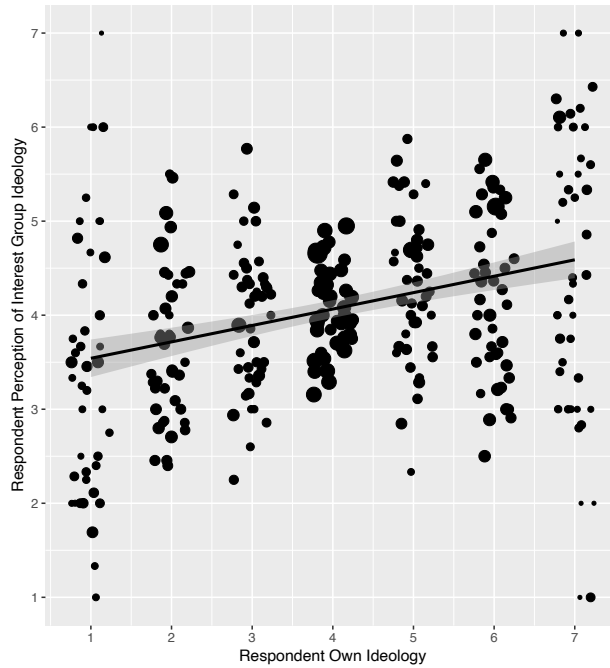
(b) Conservative SIGs Only

(c) Liberal SIGs Only



Note: CCLife (Citizens Concerned for Life), CGS (Citizens for Global Solutions), CUPVF (Citizens United Political Victory Fund), CWF (Campaign for Working Families), CenterPAC (Center for Coastal Conservation Political Action Committee), Ferris (Friends of Ferris), Fipac (Friends of Israel Political Action Committee Fipac), FriendsEarth (Friends of the Earth), GunOwners (Gun Owners of America), HumaneUSA (Humane USA Political Action Committee), JACPA (Joint Action Committee for Political Affairs), JoePAC (Jobs, Opportunities and Education PAC (Joe PAC)), LCV (League of Conservation Voters), NAUS (National Association for Uniformed Services), NCEC (National Committee for an Effective Congress), NOW (National Organization for Women), NPLA (National Pro Life Alliance), NRA (National Rifle Association), NRL (National Right to Life), Nacpac (National Action Committee), PACe (National Association of Social Workers Incorporated Political Action for Candidate Election), PAPAC (Peace Action PAC), PAWVF (Peace Action West Voter Fund), PCCC (Progressive Change Campaign Committee), PCPAC (Progressive Choices PAC), RL (Right to Life), SBAL (Susan B Anthony List), TDC (The Desert Caucus), TFF (Texas Freedom Fund), TG (Tuesday Group), VN (Victory Now), WAND (Womens Action for New Directions Incorporated), WOF (Winning Our Future), WPAC (Washington Political Action Committee). Forward Together and Environment America Action Fund are not shown because they are extreme outliers on the left.

Figure OA2: Study 1–Respondent Perceptions of SIG Ideology, by Respondent Own Ideology



Notes: Each point corresponds with how respondents of a given ideology rated a given interest group. Points are scaled by the number of respondents with each ideology rating each SIG. Respondents' own ideology is jittered to improve readability.

Figure OA3: Design of Survey Used for Studies 2a(i), 2b(i), and 3(i). Only Study 2a(i) and 2b(i) included the control arm.

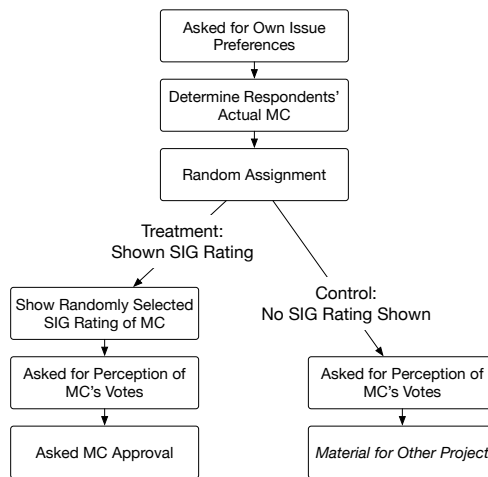


Figure OA4: SIG ratings used in Studies 2 and 3

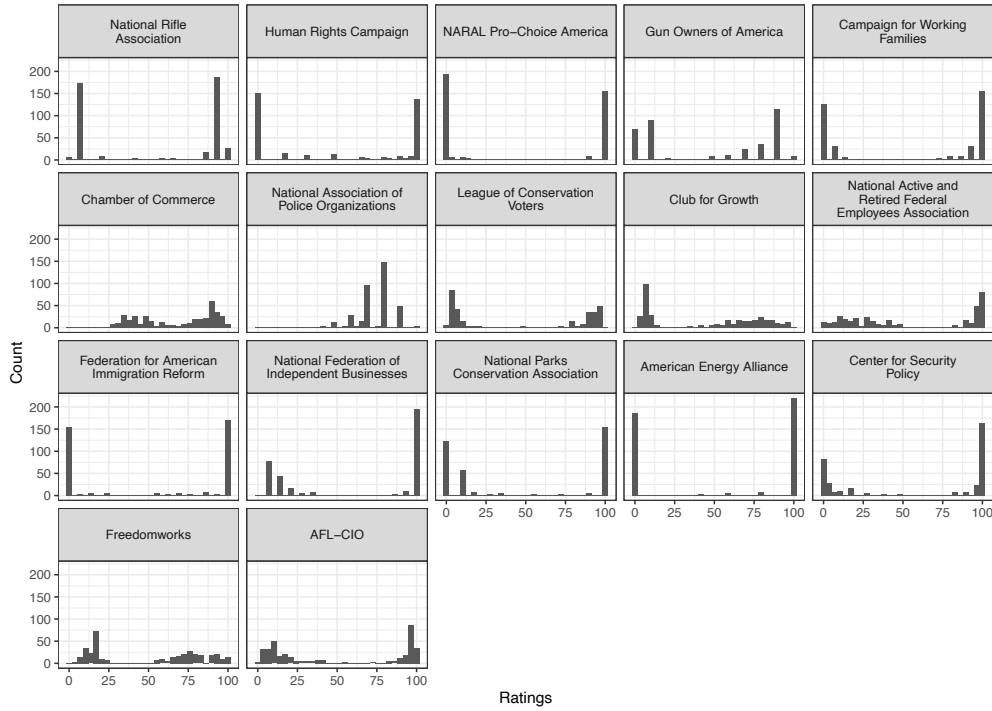
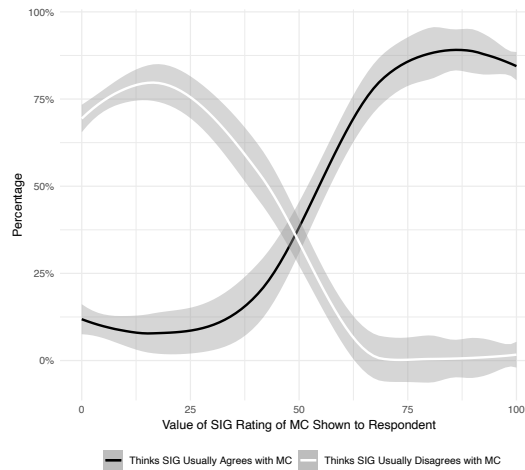


Figure OA5: Studies 2 and 3—Do Respondents Understand High Ratings Indicate MC Usually Votes In Ways SIG Usually Agrees With?



Notes: After showing the SIG ratings for Studies 2 and 3, we asked respondents “To make sure you understand what this rating means, do you think it means that [SIG Name] usually agrees or disagrees with how [name of respondent’s MC] has voted in Congress?” Respondents had three response options: usually agrees, neither, and usually disagrees. This Figure plots the proportion that selected the “usually agrees” and “usually disagrees” options as a function of the value of the rating they were just shown. Note that Figure [OA4](#) shows that the vast majority of SIG ratings fall from 0 to 10 or 90 to 100.

Figure OA6: Study 2b—Number of Votes on which Respondents Perceive that Member of Congress Cast Votes That Match Their Own Pre-Treatment Issue Preference, by Study, Group Alignment, and Respondent Party

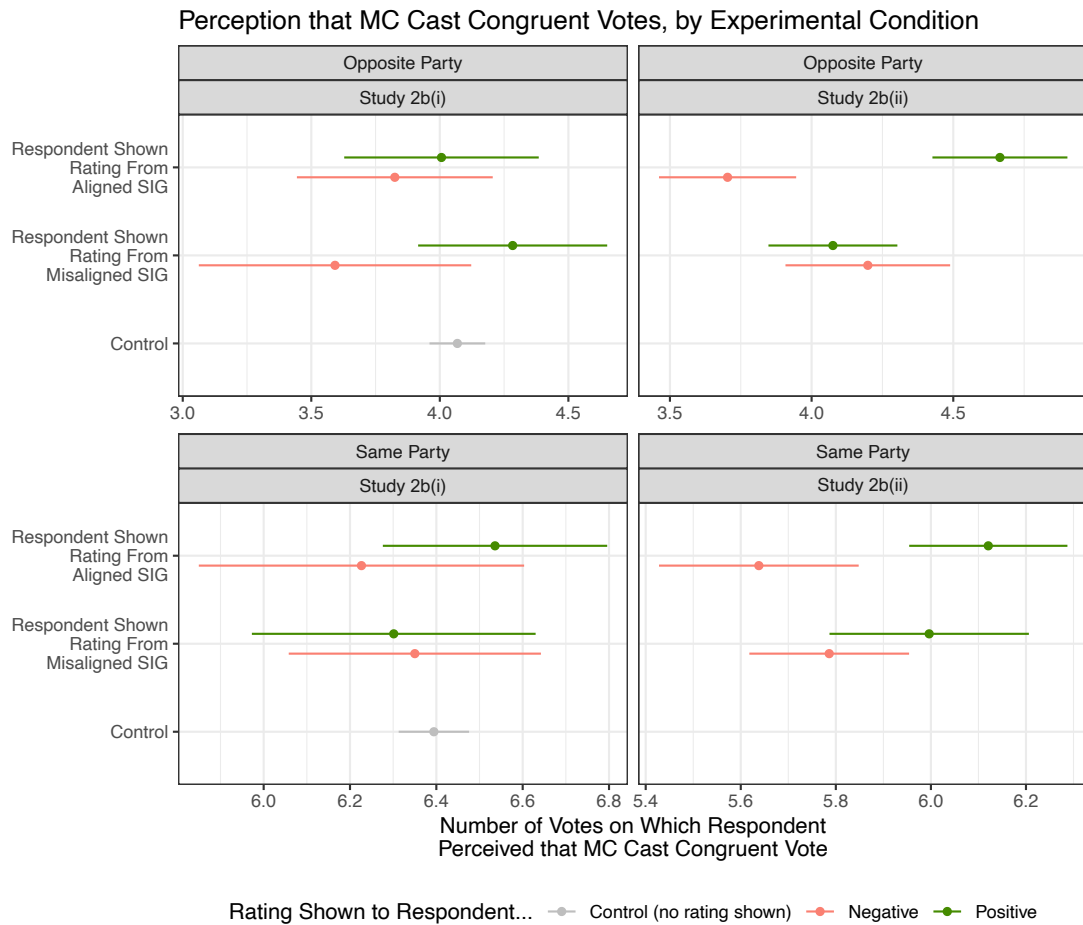
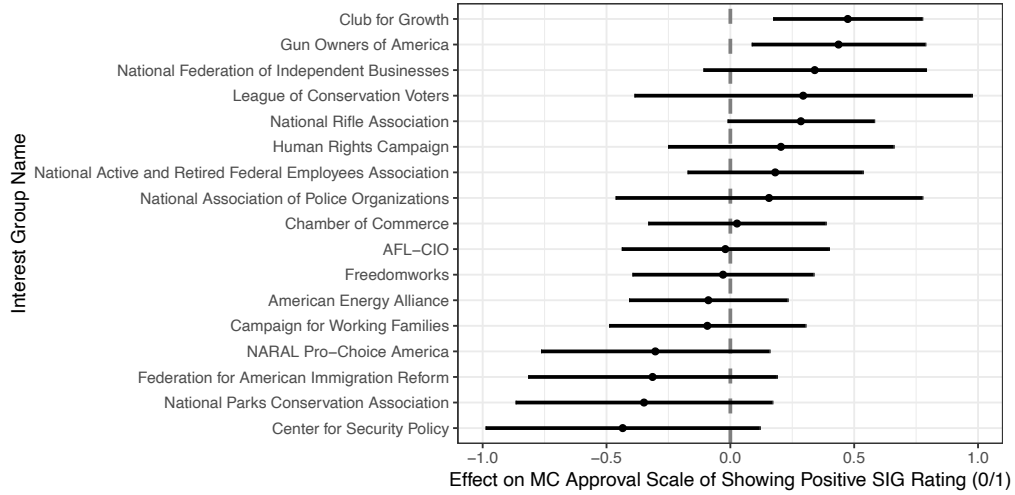
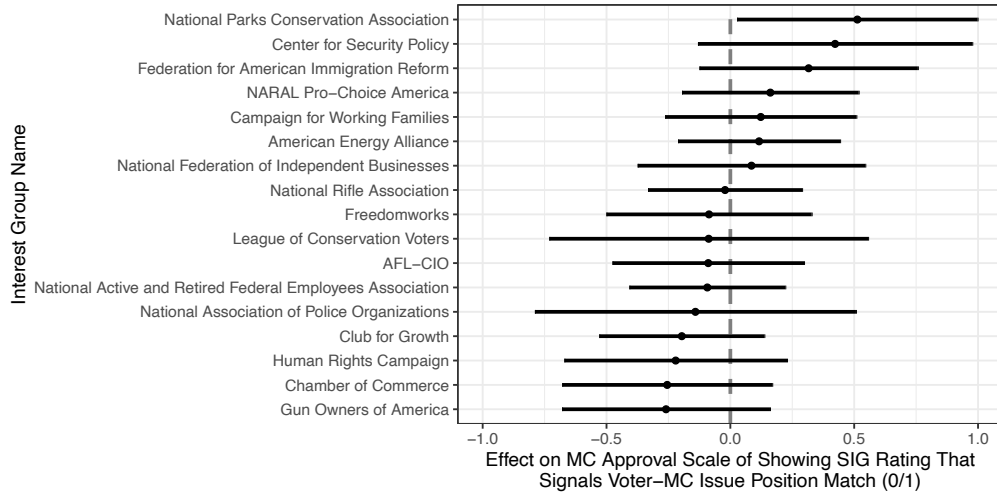


Figure OA7: Study 3(i)—Effects of SIG Rating Information on Support for Member of Congress, by SIG

(a) Effect on MC Approval Scale of Showing Positive SIG Rating (0/1)



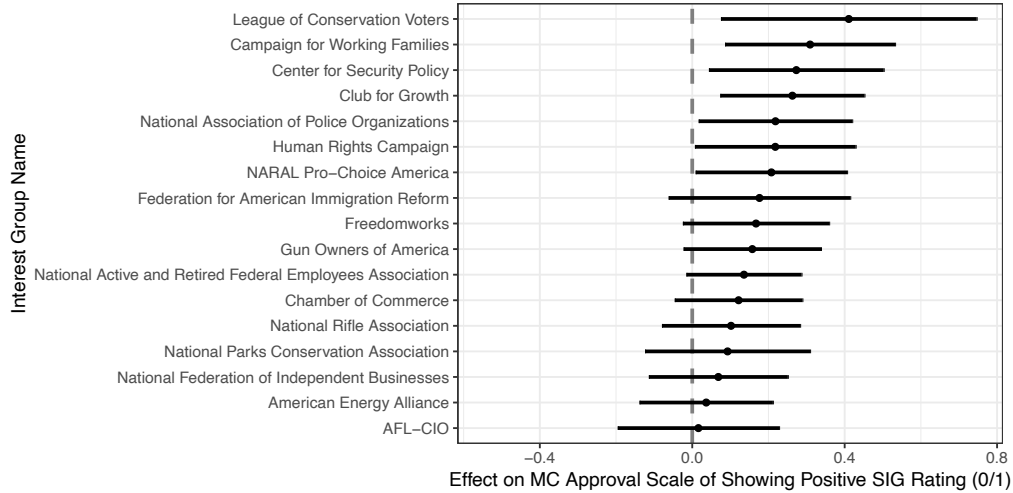
(b) Effect on MC Approval Scale of Showing SIG Rating that Signals Voter–MC Issue Position Match (0/1)



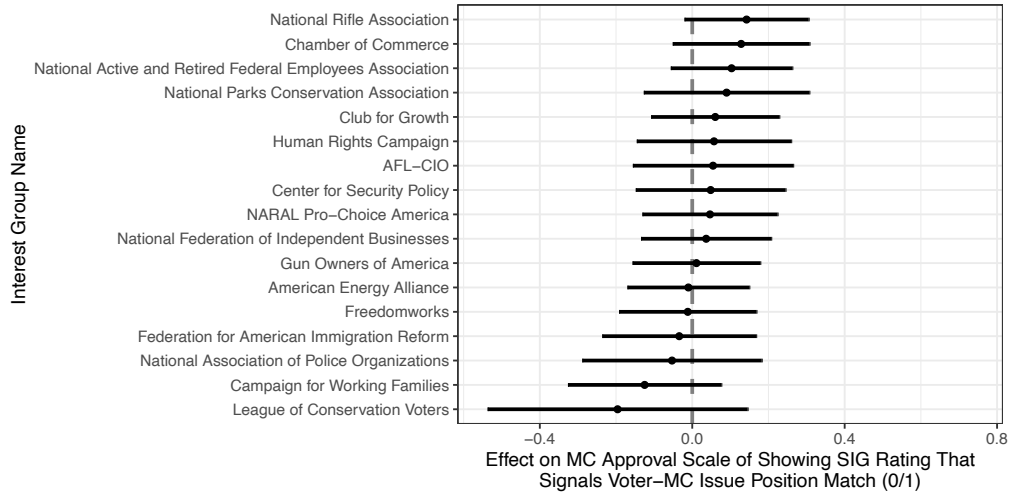
Notes: This Figure shows the results of Model 5 in Table 4 when this regression is run with interactions between the treatment and the SIG which the respondent was shown a rating for. Note that for Figure OA7a this implicitly pools all respondents who saw a negative rating from any SIG into a comparison group for the respondents who saw positive ratings from each SIG, and likewise pools all respondents who saw any rating that signaled a position mismatch into the comparison group in Figure OA7b. This is necessary due to the lack of a pure control group in Study 3(i). The MC Approval Scale is rescaled to mean zero standard deviation one.

Figure OA8: Study 3(ii)—Effects of SIG Rating Information on Support for Member of Congress, by SIG

(a) Effect on MC Approval Scale of Showing Positive SIG Rating (0/1)



(b) Effect on MC Approval Scale of Showing SIG Rating that Signals Voter–MC Issue Position Match (0/1)



Notes: This Figure shows the results of Model 5 in Table 4 when this regression is run with interactions between the treatment and the SIG which the respondent was shown a rating for. Note that for Figure OA8a this implicitly pools all respondents who saw a negative rating from any SIG into a comparison group for the respondents who saw positive ratings from each SIG, and likewise pools all respondents who saw any rating that signaled a position mismatch into the comparison group in Figure OA8b. This is necessary due to the lack of a pure control group in Study 3(ii). The MC Approval Scale is rescaled to mean zero standard deviation one.

Table OA1: The SIG and corresponding bill for the seventeen issues used in Studies 2-3

SIG Used	Corresponding Bill Title	Corresponding Bill Description as Shown to Respondent
National Rifle Association	Sportsmen’s Heritage and Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) Act of 2015	Allows individuals to fish and hunt on federal lands without a license, unless the lands are closed for conservation, public safety, or national security.
Human Rights Campaign	Prohibits Use of Funds for Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity	Prohibits the government from doing business with companies that discriminate against individuals based on sexual orientation or gender identity.
NARAL Pro-Choice America	No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion and Abortion Insurance Full Disclosure Act of 2017	Prohibits the use of any federal funds for health insurance that provides abortion services.
Gun Owners of America	Veterans 2nd Amendment Protection Act	Allows any veteran deemed mentally incompetent to buy and own firearms and ammunition, unless a judge deems them dangerous.
Campaign for Working Families	Working Families Flexibility Act of 2017	Allows employers to give employees who worked overtime paid time off instead of only overtime pay.
Chamber of Commerce	American Health Care Act of 2017	Repeals “Obamacare”: 1) Allows states to allow insurance companies to charge individuals more for insurance if they have a pre-existing condition. 2) Removes the requirement that Americans must carry health insurance. 3) Reduces amount given to low-income Americans to help them purchase health insurance.
National Association of Police Organizations	Thin Blue Line Act	Allows the death penalty in the case of a murder or attempted murder of police officers, correctional officers, firefighters, or other first responders.
League of Conservation Voters	Reducing Regulatory Burdens Act of 2017	Allows pesticides to be sprayed near water sources without obtaining a permit.
Club for Growth	Financial CHOICE Act of 2017	Allows banks of sufficient size to take additional risk, and limits the power of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to investigate banks.
National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association	Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017	Authorizes the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to demote, suspend, or fire senior Veterans Affairs employees for performance or misconduct, but forbids retaliation against whistleblowers.
Federation for American Immigration Reform	Kate’s Law	Increases criminal penalties for unauthorized immigrants who re-enter the United States after having been deported.
National Federation of Independent Businesses	No Sanctuary for Criminals Act	Prohibits giving federal grants to cities with “sanctuary” policies, policies cities enact to limit their cooperation with federal immigration law enforcement.
National Parks Conservation Association	Ozone Standards Implementation Act of 2017	Delays the implementation of a rule that would have reduced ozone pollution, allowing previous levels of pollution until 2026.
American Energy Alliance	Promoting Cross Border Energy Infrastructure Act	Allows oil and natural gas pipelines that cross into Canada or Mexico to be built without the President’s permission.
Center for Security Policy	Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act	Places additional sanctions on Iran, Russia, and North Korea, as well as individuals who conduct business with these countries.
Freedomworks	Tax Cuts and Jobs Act	Reduces corporate taxes from 35% to 20% permanently. Temporarily reduces individual income taxes, with larger reductions for wealthier individuals. Increases the federal budget deficit by \$1 trillion.
AFL-CIO	Save Local Businesses Act	If an employee working for a company through a ‘temp’ agency is injured, only the temp agency is responsible and not the company directing the worker day-to-day.

B Prior Literature

B.1 Prior Research on Special Interest Group Ratings as Heuristics for Making Inferences about Politicians

Table [OA2](#) reviews the prior empirical studies on how SIG cues affect voter perceptions of and decision-making about politicians. Despite the near-consensus in the literature that voters use SIG cues as a helpful heuristic to make more accurate inferences about politicians (see Appendix [B.2](#)), there is in fact very little empirical evidence supporting this widespread view.

However, as Table [OA2](#) shows, there are important exceptions to this paucity of studies. As the Table shows, our work builds on this prior research in several important ways. To be clear, the differences between our work and this prior research is not a criticism of this prior research; much of this prior research was primarily interested in other hypotheses.

- Our paper measures perceptions of SIGs' positions. Only one other study to our knowledge measures perceptions of SIGs' positions, an unpublished working paper by [Leeper \(2013\)](#). [Leeper \(2013\)](#), in studying how SIGs affect issue attitudes on immigration, also documents (see Table 2 in [Leeper \(2013\)](#)) many instances of clear misperceptions of SIG ideology (e.g., the National Council of La Raza as conservative and the Minuteman Project as liberal) and, in general, relatively low levels of familiarity with interest groups even among a relatively high knowledge sample.
- Our paper measures effects of providing SIG cues on voter's perceptions of representatives' positions. Our paper is the only paper we are aware of to do this.
- Our paper experimentally estimates the effects of providing real SIG cues on voter's evaluations of their real representatives. No other research does so to our knowledge. There are, however, several related papers of note that do not fully meet this criteria. First, we

are aware of only one study that experimentally manipulates cues from a real SIG about a politician: McDermott (2006)'s important study of the effects of AFL-CIO endorsements on vote intentions for hypothetical politicians. We build on this work by examining effects on how citizens evaluate real as opposed to hypothetical politicians and by examining effects of cues from more than one interest group. Second, Arceneaux and Kolodny (2009) and Neddenriep and Nownes (2014) study the effects of experimental manipulations that contain other elements (e.g., a canvasser at the door, or explicit information about a candidate's position), making the effect of the SIG cue difficult to determine.²⁰ Finally, Weber, Dunaway and Johnson (2012) do not measure baseline issue attitudes, making it difficult to test whether respondents use the NRA cue in their study "correctly" (this is not a criticism, the authors have other primary hypotheses).

- To our knowledge, no previous studies have argued that citizens engage in heuristic projection when using SIG cues to make inferences about politicians, and testing for it persuasively is not possible in almost any studies (McDermott (2006) is an exception).

There are also other studies, such as Dancy and Sheagley (2013)'s study of party heuristics and Boudreau, Elmendorf and MacKenzie (2015)'s study of newspaper and party endorsements that we do not review here, as these are not about the use of SIG cues as heuristics; they are about the use of cues of other kinds.

Our work is also related to but distinct from research on how citizens use SIG cues as heuristics to help them form preferences about *issues*, such as in referendums (e.g., Brady and Sniderman 1985; Lupia 1994). A challenge with generalizing from this body of work to our research question

²⁰For example, Arceneaux and Kolodny (2009) present a field experiment on a compound treatment consisting of both a SIG cue and contextual information about how to interpret the cue (that the SIG is pro-abortion). This study, although influential and important, therefore does not test our argument about how citizens react to SIG cues in the common circumstance when no such information is available (e.g., on candidate websites, in campaign ads, etc.). Other interpretations of the results are also possible; for example, other experiments on door-to-door canvassing in candidate campaigns without SIG cues have also found backfire effects, potentially because voters use other attributes of the interaction, such as the canvassers' demographics or physical appearance, as a cue (Bailey, Hopkins and Rogers 2016).

is that there is usually not a clear benchmark for what a “more accurate” perception or decision is on issues or in referendums.²¹ By contrast, in our studies of candidate perception and choice, we can measure whether citizens’ perceptions of the votes their MCs actually cast are in fact more accurate.

²¹For example, a voter who opposes abortion may be able to infer that a candidate who is endorsed by the pro-choice SIG NARAL (the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League) is likely to support policies at odds with that voter’s own policy preferences. Such a voter might therefore use NARAL’s endorsement as a negative voting cue and be less likely to vote for the politician NARAL endorsed, consistent with the notion that “signals from opposition groups can also be informative by indicating whom the voter should not support” (Arceneaux and Kolodny 2009).

Table OA2: Prior Empirical Studies on SIG Cues and Voter Decision-making About Politicians

Citation	Whether research design isolates effects of SIG cues		DVs			Factors contributing to realism					Theoretical Argument and Hypothesis Tests	
	Treatment	Treatment allows isolating effects of SIG cue?	Measures perceptions of SIGs' positions?	Measures effects of SIG cues on perceptions of representatives' positions?	Measures effects of SIG cues on evaluations of representative or vote intention?	Number of SIGs	SIGs real?	SIG cues real?	Politicians real?	Politician party provided?	Argues for heuristic projection?	Tests for heuristic projection?
This paper	SIG Cues	Yes	Yes (Study 1 and Appendix Studies)	Yes (Study 2)	Yes (Study 3)	45 (Study 1); 17 (Studies 2 and 3); 6 (Appendix Study F)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
McDermott (2006)	SIG Cue (AFL-CIO endorsement)	Yes	No	No	Yes	1	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Arceneaux and Kolodny (2009)	Door-to-door canvass conversation containing persuasion, SIG cues, and information on SIG stance	No (treatment contains other elements, e.g., volunteer at door)	No	No	Yes (although cannot isolate effect of SIG cue)	1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Weber, Dunaway and Johnson (2012)	Campaign ads	Yes	No	No	Yes	2	One real group (NRA) one fake group	No	No	No	No	No
Neddenriep and Nownes (2014)	Biographical sketches of candidates	No (treatment also explicitly names candidate position)	No	No	Yes (although cannot isolate effect of SIG cue)	2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Leeper (2013)	n/a	n/a	Yes (see Table 2)	No	No	9	Yes	n/a	n/a	n/a	No	No
Lau and Redlawsk (2001; 2006)	Mock election including SIG cues and many other sources of information	No (SIG cues not randomly assigned)	No	No	No	14	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
Sances (2013)	Ad discloses labor, corporate, or no funding	Yes	No	No	Yes	Two groups of 5	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Brooks and Murov (2012)	Ad has no candidate, unspecified SIG or no sponsor	Yes	No	No	Yes	1	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Ridout, Franz and Fowler (2015)	Ad sponsor, donor base, and disclosure format	Yes	No	No	Yes	1	No	No	No	No	No	No
Dowling and Wichowsky (2015)	Ad sponsor	Yes	No	No	Yes	2	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Kuklinski and Quirk (2000)	This is an influential theoretical paper that points out many limitations of heuristics theories. However, it does not argue for heuristic projection.										No	No

B.2 Documenting The Literature’s Conventional Wisdom: SIG Cues Help Voters Hold Politicians Accountable

In Table [OA3](#) we review over two dozen quotes from existing literature that either claim that information about SIG cues can help citizens cast more informed votes or review the literature as often making this claim. This table is intended to show that there is a conventional wisdom in the literature that SIG cues help citizens make accurate inferences about their representatives and use these inferences to help hold their representatives accountable. In the paper we refer to this perspective as the “traditional view” of how voters use special interest group cues about politicians as a heuristic.

Note that the literature we quote below is diverse in its primary focus. Some of it mainly focuses on advancing claims about the use of SIG cues as heuristics either theoretically or empirically (such as [McKelvey and Ordeshook \(1985\)](#)). However, other literature we quote below (such as [Achen and Bartels \(2016\)](#)) focuses on other topics but reviews the literature on SIG heuristics, therefore capturing the conventional wisdom in the field about the main claims made by the SIG heuristics literature. Some literature below even offers a different perspective than the traditional SIG heuristics literature. What unites this literature is that it all speaks to an understanding of the consensus position in the literature about SIG heuristics.

There is also additional literature we quote in the main text; neither the main text nor Table [OA3](#) is meant to be exhaustive.

Table OA3: Reviews of Conventional Wisdom in Prior Literature (Alphabetical Order by Citation)

Citation	Quote
Achen and Bartels (2016)	<p>“In the early 1990s, a spate of books with such reassuring titles as <i>The Reasoning Voter</i> (Popkin 1991), <i>Reasoning and Choice</i> (Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991), and <i>The Rational Public</i> (Page and Shapiro 1992) argued that citizens could use ‘information shortcuts’ or ‘heuristics’ to make rational electoral choices even though they lacked detailed knowledge about candidates and policies. These shortcuts could take a variety of forms, including ‘cues’ from trusted political figures or groups, inferences derived from political or social stereotypes, or generalizations from personal experience or folk wisdom.”</p>
Arceneaux and Kolodny (2009)	<p>“Rather than undermining their ability to make good decisions, low-information citizens need only look to someone who has an incentive to possess accurate information about the candidate (Lupia and McCubbins 1998). Issue advocacy groups are well suited to fill this role because they have a strong incentive to know how the candidate votes on the issues important to their group. In fact, the group need not even be aligned with the citizens’ interests, because signals from opposition groups can also be informative by indicating whom the voter should not support (Lupia 1994; Lupia and McCubbins 1998). Thus, by using an endorsement as a heuristic for whether the candidate would be a good representative for their interests, politically unaware citizens can make decisions as if they possessed full information about the candidates.”</p>
Delli-Carpini and Keeter (1997)	<p>“Though the use of ‘heuristics,’ or informational shortcuts, citizens can reach decisions about where they stand on certain issues or whom they will vote for in a given election. These shortcuts usually consist of following the lead of a group or an individual that citizens believe have their interests at heart or that have interests similar to their own” (p. 44-45)</p>
Dalton (2013)	<p>“Many citizens decide between competing parties based on cues that social groups provide—the endorsements of labor unions, business associations, religious groups, and the like—as well as the parties’ appeals to these groups. In most cases, this process produces reasonable voting choices, even if the voter is not fully informed on all the relevant issues.”</p>
De Ferrari (2017)	<p>“In judging either policies or candidates, citizens can use the statements of politicians that they trust as cues (Mondak, 1993a). Alternatively, “they can consider the positions of interest groups whose policy preferences they are generally inclined to support or oppose” (Kuklinski and Quirk, 2000, p. 155). In short, they can use endorsements to make reasoned choices without having to acquire deep knowledge of the issue at hand.”</p>
Dowling and Wichowsky (2013)	<p>“several studies have shown that citizens can use heuristics, such as group cues, party labels, and endorsements, to make more informed political decisions despite their lack of political sophistication”</p>
Druckman (2005)	<p>“citizens can compensate for a lack of political information by using shortcuts to make the same decisions they would have made if they had that information” through “elite endorsements (e.g., from interest groups)”</p>
Druckman and Lupia (2016)	<p>“A common theme in research on this topic is that people seek information that is easy to use, and many political scientists have examined how commonly available types of easy-to-use information such as party labels and interest group endorsements affect preferences.”</p>
Fjałkowski et al. (2014)	<p>“Facing uncertainty about Politicians citizens turn to Social Leaders as information short-cuts. Leaders include NGOs, the media and religious organizations.”</p>

Continued on next page

Table OA3 – *Continued from previous page*

Citation	Quote
Garrett (2002)	“Another effective voter shortcut is provided by information that reveals which groups support a candidate and the intensity of their support. Citizens often use group affiliation as a heuristic, relying either on information about a candidate’s membership in groups or on knowledge about interest group endorsements. ... Ordinary citizens can free-ride on the information about groups, financial support, and endorsements in campaigns, using it to determine what programs candidates are likely to implement.”
Gilens (2012)	“A somewhat more complex understanding of cue taking as a basis for political preference formation allows citizens to adapt cues to their own purposes by adopting the position of like-minded cue-givers and adopting the opposite position of those espoused by the non-like-minded.”
Graber (2004)	“monitorial citizens need not stay fully informed about political developments at all times. [...] monitorial citizens should consult news stories, party and interest group pronouncements ... Reliance on information shortcuts yields acceptable results”
Grofman and Norrander (1990)	“If there are groups whose endorsements citizens can use as positive (or negative) cues, we [theoretically] demonstrate that citizens do not need to know anything directly about candidate positions to be able to identify the candidate whose issue positions and performance is likely to be closest to the voter’s own preferences”
Grossman and Helpman (1999)	“individuals may look for readily available cues to guide them in the polling booth. In this context, endorsements by group leaders may convey useful information to like-minded citizens. ... If groups of citizens use endorsements as cues—as the evidence suggests—then candidates and parties may well have incentives to compete for these endorsements.”
Kelley (2018)	“Endorsements are the focus of much attention in studies of voter information processing ”
Kinder (1998)	“Granted tha encyclopedic knowledge is out of reach—and perhaps even irrational—the public may nevertheless muddle through. How? By relying on a variety of sensible and mostly adaptive shortcuts ... The vital piece of information here was the position taken by special interest groups.”
Krishnakumar (2006)	“if there exists another, related, set of facts that leads her to make the same choice she would have made with knowledge of Candidate X’s position on 100 political issues — e.g., the related fact that Candidate X is endorsed by the NRA — then knowledge of the full set of facts is not necessary to cast a competent vote. In other words, citizens need not possess all available information about a candidate in order to vote competently; they can instead rely on “particular pieces of information, connected non-accidentally to accurate conclusions about the consequences of [their] vote[s],” and still make competent electoral decisions. Smaller, digestible, “particular pieces of information” thus serve as cues, or heuristics, that enable citizens to vote competently with limited information. As the use of the NRA in the above example suggests, an incumbent’s or challenger’s (if the challenger has held prior elective office) connection to a particular interest group can serve as one important heuristic for citizens.”
Kuklinski and Quirk (2000)	“In judging either candidates or policies, people can use statements by...interest-group leaders...as cues. ... They can consider the positions of interest groups whose policy preferences they are generally inclined to support or oppose. Such cues arguably eliminate the need for substantive information about an issue.”
Kuklinski and Quirk (2001)	“researchers have proposed a wide range of potential cues—including but not limited to...interest groups [...] The heuristics literature is characterized by a focus on clear, well-defined tasks. ... for the most part, the citizen’s task in this work is to make decisions about policies and candidates, that is, to express preferences”

Continued on next page

Table OA3 – *Continued from previous page*

Citation	Quote
Kuklinski et al. (2001)	“Some of the influence of the political-heuristics literature arises from its normatively appealing claim that citizens can perform reasonably well by taking cues from parties, politicians, and interest groups.”
Larcinese (2006)	“In the context of heuristic decision-making, parties, pressure groups, opinion leaders etc. transmit simple and effective information to citizens.”
McKelvey and Ordeshook (1985a)	“We develop models of policy formation in two candidate elections where most citizens have little or no information about the policies or platforms adopted by the candidates. ... When citizens do not possess the perfect information assumed in earlier models, and when it is costly to obtain this information relative to the presumed expected benefits, we assume that citizens take cues from other sources, endogenous in the system, that are easily observable and which they believe may convey useful information. Such sources may [include]...interest groups. ... The model developed in this paper assumes the information source for uninformed citizens is poll data and interest group endorsements.”
McKelvey and Ordeshook (1985)	“...the voter is aware of the endorsement of some specific interest group in society. Recognizing the policy preference of that group, he may use the endorsement to form a belief about the candidate most likely to yield him the greatest benefit.”
McKelvey and Ordeshook (1986)	“Citizens possess highly imperfect information about candidates and public issues, and in deciding how to vote, they rely on a variety of indirect and possibly irrelevant cues, such as...group endorsements...” “Knowledge of...which candidate is to the left, and which is to the right...can come from a variety of sources, such as the endorsements of interest groups”
Neddenriep and Nownes (2014)	“interest-group endorsements may act as cues that simplify the electoral process and help potential citizens formulate judgments about candidates, especially in low information settings ... Group endorsements...serve as ‘sign posts’ that tell potential citizens whether or not a given candidate shares their views. ... potential citizens will form a favourable opinion of candidates endorsed by groups they support and a negative opinion of candidates endorsed by groups they oppose.”
Renno (2004)	“This is why endorsements are so important in elections. The reasoning is that citizens who like specific groups or personalities will also like the candidates these groups and personalities endorse.”
Staszewski (2009)	“if citizens can accurately decide which candidates they prefer based on party labels, endorsements, or other simple cues, elected officials could be held politically accountable”
Tolbert and Hero (2001)	“Research suggests that citizens use endorsements by political candidates and interest groups as cues in deciding how to vote in issue elections (Bowler and Donovan 1998; Lupia 1994). Through endorsements of ballot initiatives, candidates for elected office link their political campaign to prominent issue elections. Political party and interest group endorsements allow citizens to make decisions in ballot measure contests consistent with their policy preferences (Bowler and Donovan 1998).”

References for Online Appendix Literature Review

- Achen, Christopher H. and Larry M. Bartels. 2016. *Democracy for realists: Why elections do not produce responsive government*. Princeton University Press.
- Arceneaux, Kevin and Robin Kolodny. 2009. "Educating the least informed: Group endorsements in a grassroots campaign." *American Journal of Political Science* 53(4):755–770.
- Bailey, Michael A, Daniel J Hopkins and Todd Rogers. 2016. "Unresponsive and unpersuaded: The unintended consequences of a voter persuasion effort." *Political Behavior* 38(3):713–746.
- Boudreau, Cheryl, Christopher S. Elmendorf and Scott A. MacKenzie. 2015. "Lost in space? Information shortcuts, spatial voting, and local government representation." *Political Research Quarterly* 68(4):843–855.
- Brady, Henry E. and Paul M. Sniderman. 1985. "Attitude attribution: A group basis for political reasoning." *American Political Science Review* 79(4):1061–1078.
- Brooks, Deborah Jordan and Michael Murov. 2012. "Assessing accountability in a post-Citizens United era: The effects of attack ad sponsorship by unknown independent groups." *American Politics Research* 40(3):383–418.
- Dalton, Russell J. 2013. *Citizen politics: Public opinion and political parties in advanced industrial democracies*. CQ Press.
- Dancey, Logan and Geoffrey Sheagley. 2013. "Heuristics behaving badly: Party cues and voter knowledge." *American Journal of Political Science* 57(2):312–325.
- De Ferrari, Ignazio. 2017. "The accountability effect of endorsements: A survey experiment." *Electoral Studies* 45:1–13.

- Delli-Carpini, Michael X. and Scott Keeter. 1997. *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters*. Yale University Press.
- Dowling, Conor M. and Amber Wichowsky. 2013. "Does it matter who's behind the curtain? Anonymity in political advertising and the effects of campaign finance disclosure." *American Politics Research* 41(6):965–996.
- Dowling, Conor M and Amber Wichowsky. 2015. "Attacks without consequence? Candidates, parties, groups, and the changing face of negative advertising." *American Journal of Political Science* 59(1):19–36.
- Druckman, James N. 2005. "Does political information matter?" *Political Communication* 22(4):515–519.
- Druckman, James N. and Arthur Lupia. 2016. "Preference change in competitive political environments." *Annual Review of Political Science* 19:13–31.
- Fjałkowski, Karol et al. 2014. "Politicians and social leaders. Introducing a model of mutual relations and shaping beliefs of voters." *Ekonomia i Prawo. Economics and Law* 13(3):359–375.
- Garrett, Elizabeth. 2002. "The Future of Campaign Finance Reform Laws in the Courts and in Congress." *Oklahoma City University Law Review* 27:665–692.
- Gilens, Martin. 2012. *Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America*. Princeton University Press.
- Graber, Doris. 2004. "Mediated politics and citizenship in the twenty-first century." *Annual Review of Psychology* 55:545–571.
- Grofman, Bernard and Barbara Norrande. 1990. "Efficient use of reference group cues in a single dimension." *Public Choice* 64(3):213–227.

- Grossman, Gene M. and Elhanan Helpman. 1999. "Competing for endorsements." *American Economic Review* 89(3):501–524.
- Kelley, James B. 2018. *Reputational Effects in Legislative Elections: Measuring The Impact of Repeat Candidacy and Interest Group Endorsements* PhD thesis Temple University.
- Kinder, Donald R. 1998. "Communication and opinion." *Annual review of political science* 1(1):167–197.
- Krishnakumar, Anita S. 2006. "Towards a Madisonian, Interest-Group-Based Approach to Lobbying Regulation." *bePress Legal Series* pp. 513–573.
- Kuklinski, James H. and Paul J. Quirk. 2000. "Reconsidering the rational public: Cognition, heuristics, and mass opinion." *Elements of reason: Cognition, choice, and the bounds of rationality* pp. 153–82.
- Kuklinski, James H. and Paul J. Quirk. 2001. "Conceptual foundations of citizen competence." *Political Behavior* 23(3):285–311.
- Kuklinski, James H., Paul J. Quirk, Jennifer Jerit and Robert F. Rich. 2001. "The political environment and citizen competence." *American Journal of Political Science* 45(2):410–424.
- Larcinese, Valentino. 2006. "Information, Elections and Public Policy in a Rational Choice Perspective." Available at http://personal.lse.ac.uk/LARCINES/Summer_School_08/SurveyPSR.pdf.
- Lau, Richard R. and David P. Redlawsk. 2001. "Advantages and disadvantages of cognitive heuristics in political decision making." *American Journal of Political Science* pp. 951–971.
- Lau, Richard R. and David P. Redlawsk. 2006. *How voters decide: Information processing in election campaigns*. Cambridge University Press.

- Leeper, Thomas J. 2013. "Interest Groups and Political Attitudes." Working paper, Available at <http://dpsa.dk/papers/ImmigrationGroupsFraming2013-10-21.pdf>.
- Lupia, Arthur. 1994. "Shortcuts Versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections." *American Political Science Review* 88(1):63–76.
- McDermott, Monika L. 2006. "Not for members only: Group endorsements as electoral information cues." *Political Research Quarterly* 59(2):249–257.
- McKelvey, Richard D. and Peter C. Ordeshook. 1985a. "Elections with limited information: A fulfilled expectations model using contemporaneous poll and endorsement data as information sources." *Journal of Economic Theory* 36(1):55–85.
- McKelvey, Richard D. and Peter C. Ordeshook. 1985b. "Sequential elections with limited information." *American Journal of Political Science* pp. 480–512.
- McKelvey, Richard D. and Peter C. Ordeshook. 1986. "Information, electoral equilibria, and the democratic ideal." *The Journal of Politics* 48(4):909–937.
- Neddenriep, Gregory and Anthony J. Nownes. 2014. "An experimental investigation of the effects of interest-group endorsements on poorly aligned partisans in the 2008 presidential election." *Party Politics* 20(4):617–631.
- Renno, Lucio R. 2004. Information and Voting: Microfoundations of Accountability in Complex Electoral Environments PhD thesis University of Pittsburgh.
- Ridout, Travis N., Michael M. Franz and Erika Franklin Fowler. 2015. "Sponsorship, Disclosure, and Donors: Limiting the Impact of Outside Group Ads." *Political Research Quarterly* 68(1):154–166.
- Sances, Michael W. 2013. "Is money in politics harming trust in government? Evidence from two survey experiments." *Election Law Journal* 12(1):53–73.

Staszewski, Glen. 2009. "Reason-Giving and Accountability." *Minnesota Law Review* 93:1253–1326.

Tolbert, Caroline J. and Rodney E. Hero. 2001. "Dealing with diversity: Racial/ethnic context and social policy change." *Political Research Quarterly* 54(3):571–604.

Weber, Christopher, Johanna Dunaway and Tyler Johnson. 2012. "It's all in the name: Source cue ambiguity and the persuasive appeal of campaign ads." *Political Behavior* 34(3):561–584.

C Special Interest Group Prominence: Evidence from Oregon

Voter Pamphlets

Assessing the prominence of special interest groups—how often SIGs appear in communication voters receive at all, and *which* SIGs voters might hear about—is difficult. One source of data is how often candidates mention them. There is no readily available data set that codes all candidate mentions in ads, speeches, etc., but we have found one useful data set from Oregon. Oregon adopted all mail voting almost two decades ago, and, when it made that shift, began sending all registered voters a pamphlet that contains candidate profiles. We constructed a data set of Oregon state legislative candidate profiles from the general election voter guides for 2004-2020 (pamphlets are only available starting in 2004 and 2004 is partial). It contains the profiles of 1832 major-party candidate pairs in general elections. This is an advantageous data source as it contains machine-readable candidate self-descriptions in a well-defined sampling frame of candidates. Since we analyze state legislative candidates, some of the SIGs that focus on national issues, such as international relations, are understandably absent.

To assess how frequently candidates mention groups, we had a research assistant read a randomly selected 200 candidate profiles (from the 1832) and code whether the profile mentioned a SIG. The research assistant found that 50% of the profiles mentioned at least one SIG. Given that the profile allows for an average of only 260 words, candidates are devoting scarce space to these endorsements.

We also had a research assistant enter the names of interest groups from these profiles so that we could count their frequency. The 1832 candidates mention SIGs 4361 times by our coding (which is undoubtedly an undercount, since we are likely missing some less frequently occurring SIGs). Table [OA4](#) shows the frequency of groups we coded, excluding SIGs with fewer than 10 mentions. The League of Conservation Voters tops the list with 343 mentions. Some of the other

Table OA4: Special Interest Group Mentions in State Legislative Candidate Profiles in the Oregon Voter Pamphlets 2004-2020

Special Interest Group	Frequency in Candidate Profiles
League of Conservation Voters/LCV/OLCV	343
Nurses Association	297
Oregon Education Association	281
Chamber of Commerce	237
National Federation of Independent Business/NFIB	205
SEIU	201
American Federation of Labor/AFL/AFL-CIO	187
Planned Parenthood	178
AFSCME	168
Fire Fighters Council	166
Basic Rights Oregon	158
American Federation of Teachers/AFT	154
NARAL	138
Pro-Choice Oregon	128
Oregon Business Association	121
School Employees Association	100
Farm Bureau Federation	97
Ag-PAC	95
Right to Life	81
Oregon Chiefs of Police	71
Sierra Club	68
United Food and Commercial Workers/UFCW	65
The Mother PAC	59
Building Trades Council	58
Oregon Nurseries	58
Anti-Crime Alliance	56
Council for Retired Citizens	48
Oregon Small Business Association	48
Oregonians for Food and Shelter	48
National Rifle Association/NRA	42
Stand for Children Oregon	42
Taxpayers Association	41
Portland Association of Teachers	31
OPEU	30
Coalition of Police and Sheriffs/ORCOPS	28
Firearms Federation	18
Trooper PAC	17
International Association of Fire Fighters/IAFF	17
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers/IBEW	15
National Association of Social Workers/NASW	15
Dairy Farmers Association	15
United Transportation Union	15
Working Families Party	11
Humane Voters	10
Federation for American Immigration Reform/Oregonians for Immigration Reform	10
Oregonians for Immigration Reform	10
Salvation Army	10

Note: The frequency counts are for general election candidate profiles in races with major party candidates and shows groups with 10 mentions or more.

groups we analyze in this paper that also top this list are the Chamber of Commerce, AFL-CIO, Planned Parenthood, NARAL, Right to Life, and the Sierra Club.

Another source of data on interest group activity is interest group spending. OpenSecrets.org

collects data on these groups. This data reveals that some of the groups we analyze top the lists on spending in their respective areas. For example, the League of Conservation Voters is the number one spending environmental group.²²

²²<https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/indus.php?ind=Q11cycle=All>, 2020-21 cycle, retrived 1/13/2022

D Representativeness

Table [OA5](#) provides demographic statistics for the three samples we use in this paper. The last column displays the same statistics in the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) from the US Census Bureau, a benchmark. Our samples are broadly representative, with the main differences with the ACS being that some of our samples are slightly whiter, underrepresent individuals without high school degrees, and underrepresent individuals with incomes over \$80,000 per year. Note that the ‘SSI in CA’ sample would not be expected to match the 2017 ACS exactly, as the SSI in CA sample was conducted only in California whereas the 2017 ACS is nationwide.

Table OA5: Representativeness of the Samples Used in Paper

	Studies 2a(i), 2b(i), 3(i)	Appendix F Study	Study 1	Studies 2a(ii), 2b(ii), 3(ii)	Benchmark: 2017 ACS
Sample					
Provider	Sample Strategies	SSI in CA	Lucid	Lucid	US Census
Year	2018	2013	2017	2020	2017
N	3,958	4,298	3,178	3,891	-
Gender					
Female	55	57	59	51	51
Age					
18-24	3	15	14	12	13
25-34	11	17	24	20	18
35-49	22	20	27	25	25
50-64	31	30	23	26	25
65+	32	18	12	17	19
Race					
Non-Hispanic White	83	59	74	69	61
Black	6	7	10	11	13
Asian + Other	9	17	6	10	7
Hispanic	3	15	9	11	18
Education					
No HS Degree	1	2	6	4	11
HS Degree	19	13	25	23	29
Some College / Associate Degree / 2 year degree	36	37	39	35	28
College Degree	29	30	21	24	21
Graduate Degree	15	17	9	14	12
Income					
<\$19k	11	17	50	22	16
\$20-39k	22	20	19	23	19
\$40-59k	21	16	11	18	16
\$60-79k	17	9	7	11	12
\$80k+	28	24	11	20	36
Unknown	0	13	3	5	0

Notes: All cell entries provide the percentage of each sample present in each demographic category. In rare cases age and income categories were inconsistent across surveys and were either combined or averaged across other categories.

E Appendix for Study 1

Coding Rule

When we trichotomize the groups into conservative, moderate, and liberal, we code the middle 1 unit of the range of CFscores as moderate; i.e., the range from -0.5 to 0.5. This codes six PACs as moderate: the Blue Dog Democrats (a PAC supporting moderate Democrats), the Tuesday Group (a PAC supporting moderate Republicans), and several explicitly bipartisan Israeli PACs. Investigating the particular groups we code as liberal and conservative reliably shows that they are clearly affiliated with one side. The most moderate SIG we code as conservative is the Texas Freedom Fund, which describes itself as “acting in defense of private property, privacy, and the 2nd amendment.” The most moderate SIG we code as liberal is JoePAC, the leadership PAC of former Democratic Member of Congress Joe Crowley.

Respondents Perform Worse than Chance

To address concerns about respondents using ideological scales idiosyncratically, we conduct an analysis within respondent, exploiting the fact that we had each respondent rate two groups. We check whether respondents placed the more liberal group to the left of the more conservative group. If respondents know something about the ideology of these groups, they should do so more often than chance. Given the seven-point scale, we calculate chance here as $(21/(7 * 7) =) 43\%$ —the odds of placing the liberal group anywhere to the left of where they placed the more conservative group excluding those who said “don’t know.” Using CFscores as the benchmark, we find that respondents do *worse* than chance with only 36% answering correctly. If we limit the analysis to those asked about groups on opposite sides of the spectrum (either side of zero on CFscores), this rises to only 39%. If we include respondents who said “don’t know” to either group, this falls to 17%, whereas chance would be $(21/(8 * 8) =) 33\%$.

Correlates of Knowledge

Here we examine the correlates of knowledge about SIGs in Study 1. Since it has a very large sample, we used the survey from Study 1, which asked respondents to place SIGs on a seven-point ideology scale.

We coded respondents as having placement accuracy if they placed the interest groups correctly using the three-point classification of CF scores we use in the paper as the benchmark, i.e., liberal, moderate, or conservative. As we discussed, most groups we analyzed are either liberal or conservative and most are relatively extreme. Although no measure of respondent accuracy will be perfect, we think this one is relatively straightforward.

Overall, we find some relationship between general political knowledge and accuracy. As respondents general political knowledge rises from the bottom to the top quintile, we find that accuracy rises from 20% to 34% ($n = 6,356$).

However, if we look only among respondents who attempted to place interest groups (exclude those who said DK), accuracy increases from 35% to 62% ($n = 3,541$).

The groups the top quintile knew best (when they placed groups) were the National Organization for Women (100% correct), Gun Owners of America (95%), NRA (95%), National Pro-Life Alliance (86%), Right to Life (75%). The groups they knew least were the League of Conservation Voters (43% correct), Susan B Anthony List (36%), Prosperity PAC (56%), Campaign for Working Families (44%), and Blue Dog (0%).

We see no sign that general political knowledge lowers rates of responding “don’t know” to the question, which is unusual. If anything, high general political knowledge individuals were slightly more likely to refuse to answer the question.

Examining demographic correlates, we find that accuracy increases with education (and variables associated with education). We also see signs of learning with age, with accuracy peaking around 65 years.

F Additional Study 1 on Voter Knowledge of Interest Group Policy Positions

To further probe the public’s knowledge of interest groups, we interviewed 1,181 respondents as part of a survey of Californians recruited by Survey Sampling International (see Appendix [D](#) for information on representativeness). We do not include this study in the paper for length but discuss the results here for completeness and transparency. We asked respondents to guess whether interest groups would be likely to support or oppose items of major legislation. We chose seven bills paired with related, highly prominent interest groups,²³ as detailed in Table [OA6a](#). We asked:

- Did NARAL Pro-Choice America support banning federal funding for elective abortions?
- Did the League of Conservation Voters (LCV) support preventing the Environmental Protection Agency from regulating greenhouse gases?
- Did the National Rifle Association (NRA) support allowing individuals to carry concealed firearms in all states if they have a license in one state?
- Did the Club for Growth support a tax increase on individuals with \$400,000 or more in income to avert the fiscal cliff?
- Did the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) support a free trade agreement with South Korea?
- Did the League of Conservation Voters (LCV) support building the Keystone XL oil pipeline?
- Did the Chamber of Commerce support universal healthcare?

Respondents could answer “yes,” “no,” “did not take a position,” or “don’t know.”

²³We selected prominent interest groups as those with significant campaign spending, consistent ratings for all Members of Congress, and frequent mentions by candidates (see Appendix [C](#)).

Table OA6: Study 1 Stimuli and Results

(a) The issue area, interest group, House of Representatives bill identifier, survey prompt, and Congressional vote breakdowns for the seven issues used in Study OA1

Issue	Interest Group	Vote	As shown to respondent: Did [interest group] support ...	Dems in favor	Reps in favor
Abortion	NARAL Pro-Choice America	HV 292 2011	banning federal funding for elective abortions	8.3%	97.5%
Energy	Chamber of Commerce, League of Conservation Voters	HV 650 2011	building the new Keystone XL oil pipeline	24.4%	96.7%
Trade	AFL-CIO	HV 283 2011	the free trade agreement with Korea	30.7%	90.5%
Environment	League of Conservation Citizens	HV 249 2011	preventing the Environmental Protection Agency from regulating greenhouse gases	9.9%	97.9%
Guns	NRA	HV 842 2011	allowing individuals to carry concealed firearms in all states if they have a licence in one state	21.9%	94.6%
Healthcare	Chamber of Commerce	HV 14 2011	universal healthcare	1.6%	100%
Taxes	Club for Growth	No Vote	a tax increase on individuals with \$400,000 or more in income to avert the fiscal cliff?	NA	NA

(b) Can citizens guess the positions SIGs take on key bills?

	AFL-CIO	Club for Growth	Chamber of Commerce	LCV (EPA)	LCV (Pipeline)	NARAL Pro-Choice America	NRA
Correct %	10	10	18	11	14	21	36
DK %	71	73	63	72	66	65	45
Correct % exclud. DK	35	36	49	40	41	59	66
N	522	470	502	512	527	507	488

Notes: $N = 3,532$. 1,181 respondents guessed which side of major legislation prominent interest groups supported for three of the seven issue-group pairs. LCV = League of Conservation Voters.

Table OA6b shows that only 10-36% of respondents correctly guess SIGs' issue stances. There is not a single SIG that the majority of respondents accurately perceive. For every single SIG, the largest group of respondents report that they do not know what the group's position is. The minority of respondents who hazard a guess do so correctly only 49% of the time on average, in line with what would be expected by random chance. We only see some signs of respondent knowledge about the NRA and "NARAL Pro-Choice America," although even for these groups the vast majority of respondents either say they do not know the group or get the answer wrong. Despite that these groups are among the most active in American politics (as judged by their budgets), a majority of those who do say they know these group's stances actually guess them incorrectly.

G Additional Study 2 on Voter Knowledge of Interest Group Policy Positions

One concern with the study in the previous appendix section is that voters may be hesitant to guess whether interest groups supported particular pieces of legislation even when they have some sense for a group’s policy orientation. They may know that a group is pro-environment, for instance, but may not know if the legislation is sufficiently pro-environmental for the group. To address this concern, we conducted another study where we asked respondents to identify which of two interest groups, both active in the same policy area, would be more likely to support a specific policy. We did so on a 2018 Sample Strategies national survey of 3,958 respondents (see Appendix [D](#)). To ensure the task was straightforward, we only asked about groups that opposed each other on the policies. For example, we asked some respondents to identify whether the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence or the National Rifle Association support requiring background checks before purchasing a firearm. We randomly assigned which of the interest groups appeared first to avoid order effects.

We phrased the question as follows: “There are many interest groups and PACs that endorse candidates and support certain positions on national issues. If you had to guess, between [1st interest group] and [2nd interest group], which do you think is more likely to favor [issue]?” Respondents could then choose between the first and second interest groups, with no “don’t know” option. Table [OA7](#) shows the exact language used in this question and the results. In most cases citizens are not much better than chance, picking the correct group only about 50% of the time. We only see evidence of greater accuracy from the NRA and the “National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare”—another example of a rare group that names itself to send a clear signal about what policies it supports.

We also show the results among individuals who identified themselves as in a relevant issue

Table OA7: Study OA1b–Perceptions of Interest Group Policy Positions

Groups Shown	Issue	% Correct, All Respondents	% Correct, Issue Public Members	% Correct, High Political Knowledge Respondents
Null of Random Guessing		50%	50%	50%
J Street PAC vs. Security PAC	“a Palestinian state in the Middle East”	50% (2%)	-	52% (4%)
Jobs, Opportunities, and Education PAC (Joe PAC) vs. Prosperity PAC	“expanding access to charter schools”	24% (2%)	-	26% (4%)
League of Conservation Voters vs. the Committee for the Preservation of Capitalism	“reducing regulations on greenhouse gas emissions”	55% (2%)	36% (11%)	50% (4%)
NARAL Pro-Choice America vs. Susan B Anthony List	“requiring parental permission for underage women to have abortions”	54% (2%)	29% (18%)	63% (4%)
National Committee to Preserve Social Security & Medicare PAC vs. FreedomWorks for America	“cutting taxes on corporations”	72% (2%)	67% (33%)	81% (3%)
Progressive Change Campaign vs. the Campaign for Working Families	“repealing the Affordable Care Act, also known as ‘Obamacare’”	55% (2%)	53% (9%)	55% (5%)
San Franciscans for Good Government vs. Conservative Victory Fund	“reducing the influence of money on politics”	57% (2%)	-	58% (4%)
The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence vs. The National Rifle Association	“requiring background checks before purchasing firearms”	76% (2%)	52% (5%)	81% (4%)

Notes: SEs shown in parentheses. Each respondent was shown one randomly assigned match-up. N = 3,958.

public.²⁴ We might expect members of an issue public to more accurately guess which of two groups holds a given policy, but, if anything, the issue publics are less accurate. Finally, we also show the results among individuals who correctly answered all four general political knowledge questions we included on the survey. We find similar, if only slightly higher, levels of accuracy among these individuals.

H Additional Study 3 on Whether Citizens Can Infer MC Policy Positions from SIG Ratings

In this section we also report an additional study we conducted that investigates the question of whether citizens know which policies SIGs support and provides similar results to the studies presented in the paper. We do not include this study in the paper for length but discuss the results here for completeness and transparency.

We replicated the accuracy findings in a study where we recruited 1,372 respondents through Amazon.com’s Mechanical Turk in March and April 2013. To implement this experiment, we asked respondents for their nine-digit zip code to determine their actual representative in the US House. The experiment involved three treatment conditions and a control condition. In the control condition, we asked respondents to provide their best guess about their representative’s vote on one of seven issues, detailed in Table OA6a, with the following prompt: “Please give your best guess for the question below: Did [respondent’s representative in the US House] vote for [policy text]?” Respondents could answer “yes,” “no,” or “abstained.” The first treatment condition exposed respondents to interest group ratings (see Table OA6a) from an interest group related to that issue. The cues varied by interest group, but generally took the form of “Before you answer this question, here’s some information you might find relevant: Representative [Rep.] received

²⁴We asked “How important to you personally are each of the issues below?” and count an individual as in the issue public if they name an issue as “Extremely important” (Bizer and Krosnick 2001).

a score of [x]% from the [Interest Group],” and presented all available ratings from the previous four years. Since voters know their MC’s party when voting in real world elections—it is on the ballot—the second treatment condition exposed respondents to their representative’s party: “Your representative is a member of the [respondent’s representative’s party] Party.” The third treatment condition presented respondents with both interest group ratings and their representative’s party.

The policy summaries we provided to respondents are in the fourth column of Table OA8. We determined each voter’s actual MC, and that MC’s votes, using data from Project Vote Smart (PVS). We selected interest group endorsements from several prominent SIGs. We matched 741 respondents to 278 MCs with SIG ratings and roll call votes.²⁵

Table OA8: The issue area, interest group, House of Representatives bill identifier, survey prompt, and vote breakdowns for the six issues.

Issue	Interest Group	Vote	As shown to respondent: Did your representative support...?	Dems in favor	Reps in favor
Abortion	NARAL Pro-Choice America	HV 292 2011	banning federal funding for elective abortions	8.3%	97.5%
Energy	Chamber of Commerce, League of Conservation Voters	HV 650 2011	building the new Keystone XL oil pipeline	24.4%	96.7%
Trade	AFL-CIO	HV 283 2011	the free trade agreement with Korea	30.7%	90.5%
Environment	League of Conservation Voters	HV 249 2011	preventing the Environmental Protection Agency from regulating greenhouse gases	9.9%	97.9%
Guns	NRA	HV 842 2011	allowing individuals to carry concealed firearms in all states if they have a licence in one state	21.9%	94.6%
Healthcare	Chamber of Commerce	HV 14 2011	universal healthcare	1.6%	100%

If these interest group ratings helped voters form more accurate impressions of how their MCs voted, then the treatment group that received SIG rating statements should be more accurate than the control group, and the joint cue condition should be more accurate than those receiving only their MC’s party affiliation.²⁶ However, this is not what we find. On average, respondents in the control condition accurately reported their MCs’ votes 60% of the time. Figure OA9a shows the

²⁵From the original 1,372 respondents, we lost 162 because they did not enter their nine-digit zip codes, 420 because we lacked SIG ratings for their MCs, and 49 because their MC was not in office during the votes. We assessed these prior to random assignment, except for the 49 with an MC not in office.

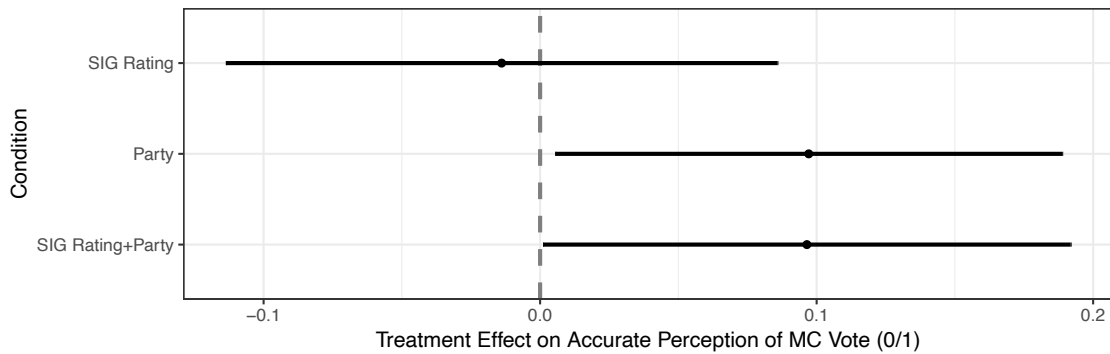
With half the sample, we randomly assigned which vote in the third column of Table OA8 we asked about. For the other half of the sample, we assigned a vote based on respondents’ answers to a question of what “political issues would you say is most important to you personally?” This manipulation had no effect on accuracy. To simplify the presentation, we pool the results for these conditions and discuss the details after presenting the main results.

²⁶SIG ratings are in fact highly predictive of MC’s votes on these issues; on average a regression can predict votes on these issues correctly approximately 95% of the time.

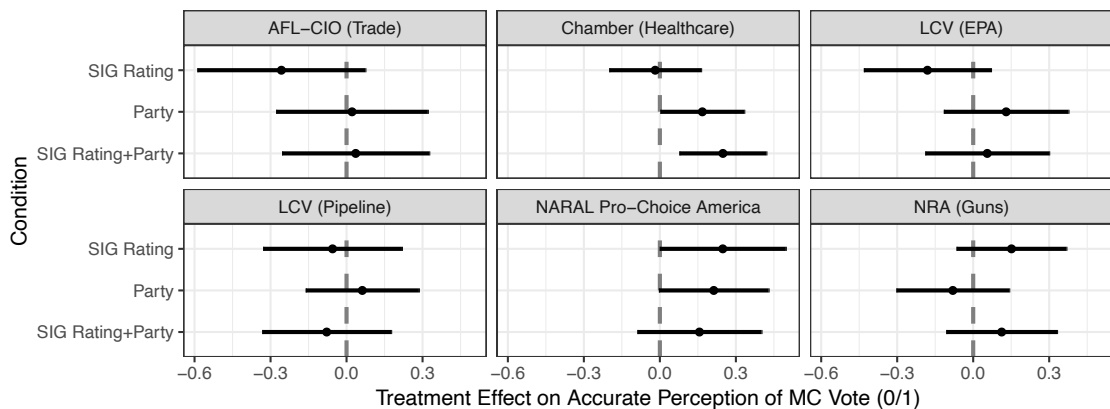
estimated effect on the proportion correct by condition, using a least squares regression and coding accuracy to 0/1. Being told MCs' party affiliation improves accuracy by 0.10 (or 10 percentage points) over the control group ($p = 0.038$), but providing respondents with a SIG rating does not increase accuracy—if anything, it slightly decreases it relative to the control. The estimates are somewhat imprecise but when we estimate main effects for the SIG and the party conditions, with no interaction to increase precision, the point estimate for the interest group cue effect is close to zero, -0.0017 , and the top of the 95% confidence interval is 0.066, implying that we can be reasonably sure the effect is smaller than a 6.6 percentage point increase.

Figure OA9: Can respondents infer how their representatives vote using heuristics?

(a) Estimated Effects on Accuracy, Pooled Across SIGs



(b) Estimated Effects on Accuracy, by SIG/Issue



Notes: $N = 741$. The top panel shows that providing respondents with special interest group ratings for their MC fails to improve respondents' accuracy at identifying how their representative voted on key legislation (coded to 0/1). In contrast, providing them with their Member's party affiliation does improve accuracy by about 0.10 (10 percentage points). Across the four conditions, the N s are 191, 214, 154, and 182, respectively. The bottom panels show that this pattern varies somewhat across groups, with NRA and NARAL ratings increasing accuracy but League of Conservation Voters (LCV), AFL-CIO, and Chamber of Commerce (CoC) reducing accuracy relative to the control group. Estimates are from least squares regression models with indicator variables for condition. 95% confidence intervals.

An important corollary of these findings is that there does not appear to be an interaction between providing a partisan cue and a SIG cue (see Figure [OA9a](#)).

A wrinkle in these finding is that there is some heterogeneity among interest groups. Figure [OA9b](#) shows change in respondents' accuracy by treatment condition and interest group. Although the pattern of effects reveals intriguing patterns, such as the NRA improving accuracy, we believe these mostly reflect noise, as we don't consistently find the NRA improving accuracy in the larger studies we conducted and presented in the main text. This MTurk sample is also less representative than the studies we present in the main text.

We emphasize that, for most respondents, the SIG ratings sent a clear signal about how MCs voted, predicting votes with 95% accuracy. Nevertheless, a small number of respondents did not receive a clear or accurate signal in three ways: (1) just over a dozen MCs had middling ratings (between 40 and 60); (2) since we showed SIG ratings from the previous four years, noticeable changes in ratings occurred, with 24 MCs experiencing ratings changes from under 50 to over 50; and (3) 31 MCs voted inconsistently with the ratings shown. To ensure that these mixed signals do not drive the findings, we discarded MCs whose average ratings were between 40 and 60, 30 and 70, 20 and 80, 10 and 90, whose ratings changed from below 50 to above 50, and who voted out of line with their ratings, reestimating after each discard. These robustness checks left the findings unchanged—the SIG-cue effect estimates remain stubbornly near zero and often negative.

Would respondents find the SIG ratings more helpful if they cared about the issue, perhaps because they are more familiar with the relevant SIGs? To explore this possibility, we asked before the experiment, “Which of the following issues would you say is most important to you personally?” Respondents could choose from a list of policies that matched the roll call votes we later asked them about, e.g., abortion, environment, guns and gun control, etc. Half of respondents were then asked about their MC's roll call vote that corresponded to the policy they chose (for the other half, the issue was randomly assigned). Respondents shown a SIG rating were then, as before, shown a rating from a SIG relevant to that issue. If respondents can better use SIG

ratings as heuristics on issues they care about, we should see the effect of providing a SIG rating on their accuracy increase. We do not find, however, any such effect. Even when respondents are assigned to the policy they say is most important to them, we find that the SIG ratings continue to slightly decrease accuracy relative to the control condition. There we also show that the results are unchanged for individuals high in political knowledge. Finally, we explored whether we could improve precision with random or fixed effects for Member and policy area or with probit or logit regressions, but the results remained unchanged.

I Pre-Analysis Plans for Studies 2 and 3

Our first PAP was for studies 2a(i) and 3(i) and is available at https://osf.io/3a9zf/?view_only=ef27a2012c1041d8b2a96988662d57db. We discovered the pattern documented in 2b(i) and the effect of positive ratings on approval shown in Study 3(i) after collecting sample (i). Since we did not preregister the findings, we preregistered code for a replication study at https://osf.io/qf3dc/?view_only=82ebf3947b994cbcb153b0de803a7dca and collected the data described as sample (ii) in the paper, the replication studies reported in studies 2a(ii), 2b(ii), and 3(ii).

We made the following deviations from the pre-analysis plans:

- In Studies 2a(i) and 2b(i), we originally pre-specified that we would control for possible treatments using a linear term. We now use fixed effects for every level, as this will be less sensitive to functional form. The results are nevertheless essentially identical when using a linear term. In Study 3(i), we use fixed effects for each set of the four treatment probabilities. Our replication study preregistered these approaches.
- As also noted, before conducting studies 2a(i) and 3(i) we did not originally anticipate that respondents would naively react to whether the rating was positive or negative regardless

of the SIG issuing the rating. However, the p -value on this comparison is 0.005, it would only be rendered insignificant under a Bonferroni correction if this were at least the tenth non-preregistered comparison we ran. More importantly, our preregistered replications in studies 2a(ii), 2b(ii), and 3(ii) did preregister these hypotheses and confirm these findings.

- In Study 2b(ii), our preregistered code accidentally included pure independents in Model 2 of Table 2b, which the table now excludes. Including them increases the treatment effect estimate.
- Figures OA7 and OA8 estimate the effects of SIG ratings on MC approval by SIG. For Study 3(ii), we had preregistered that we would run separate regressions by SIG to construct this Figure. When we ran these models, the standard errors were so large as to render the coefficients completely uninformative (e.g., the standard errors twice as large as the standard deviation of the outcome). We changed the estimation strategy to an approach that yields smaller standard errors, and is described in the notes under Figures OA7 and OA8.