Online Appendix

“Status quo bias in ballot wording”

This online appendix provides some supplementary material and some tables that provide a few robustness checks of our main results. All of the data and analysis code for these materials are available from the authors.

Table A1 provides the exact ballot wordings that were used for each of the issues under each treatment in our experiment.

Table A2 provides the raw fraction of participants how voted in favor of extending rights to the particular group separately by issue and treatment group.

Tables A3 provides results for a robustness check in which we exclude those observations for which the treatment condition does not match the current status quo in the state where the participant lives. For example, if marijuana is illegal in the state, they we wouldn’t use any observations from the “status quo= yes” treatment.

Table A4provides results for a robustness check in which we employ two different types of weights for our regression. First, we employ a set of weights that makes our experimental sample more representative of the adult population in the US. Second, we employ a set of weights that makes our experimental sample more representative of the individuals in the US who actually vote.

Tables A5 provides results where we use a logistic regression instead of using a linear probability model.

Table A1. Wording of Treatment Conditions

Issue	Neutral	Status quo = no	Status quo = yes
Same-sex marriage	Should marriage between same-sex couples be recognized under the state constitution?	State laws currently do not recognize the union of same-sex couples as a marriage. Should the law be amended to grant same-sex couples the right to marry?	State laws currently recognize the union of same-sex couples as a marriage. Should the law be amended to eliminate the right of same-sex couples to marry?
Mental Illness	Do you favor ensuring the right to vote for all persons under guardianship for reasons of mental illness?	Persons under guardianship for reasons of severe mental illness are currently prohibited from voting. Do you favor amending the state constitution to ensure the right to vote of persons under guardianship for reasons of severe mental illness?	Persons under guardianship for reasons of severe mental illness are currently allowed to vote. Do you favor amending the state constitution to prohibit voting for persons under guardianship for reasons of severe mental illness?
Indian Gaming	Should the State Compact with Indian Tribes allow high-stakes gambling on Indian land?	The State Compact with Indian Tribes currently does not allow Indian tribes to conduct any form of gambling on tribal lands. Should the Compact be amended to allow high-stakes gambling on Indian land?	The State Compact with Indian Tribes currently allows Indian tribes to conduct high-stakes gambling on tribal lands. Should the Compact be amended to outlaw any form of gambling?
Voter registration	Should voters be allowed under the law to register to vote on the day of an election?	Currently voters must register to vote two business days prior to an election. Should voters be allowed under the law to register to vote on the	Currently voters may register to vote on the same-day of the election. Should voters be required under the law to register to vote at

		day of an election?	least two business days before an election?
Medical marijuana	Shall the State Revised Statutes allow the use of marijuana for people with debilitating medical conditions who obtain a written certification from a physician?	The State Revised Statutes currently prohibit the use of marijuana products for medical purposes. Shall the State Revised Statutes allow the use of marijuana for people with debilitating medical conditions who obtain a written certification from a physician?	The State Revised Statutes currently authorize the use of marijuana products for medical purposes with a written certification from a physician. Shall the State Revised Statutes prohibit the use of marijuana for people with debilitating medical conditions?

Table A2. Overall fraction of subjects which report that they would vote to extend the rights to the group for each of the treatment conditions.

Treatment	Overall	Indian Gaming	Mental Ill	Voting	Marijuana	Same-Sex Marriage
Give	.70	.71	.39	.38	.88	.83
Neutral	.78	.77	.59	.77	.95	.81
Take	.76	.84	.58	.67	.86	.82

Robustness Check #1: Controls for actual status quo in the state

One concern is that some subjects in our experiment live in a state where the hypothetical status quo that we randomly assign to the subject might differ from the actual status quo in the state. Thus participants in the experiment might be influenced by the actual circumstance in their state.

To address this issue, we re-estimate our main results but exclude those observations for which the treatment condition does not match the actual status quo that was in place at the time of the experiment in the state where the participate lived. For example, if marijuana is illegal in the state, they we wouldn't use any observations from the "status quo=yes" treatment.

Table A3. Excluding Observations for which treatment mismatches the actual situation

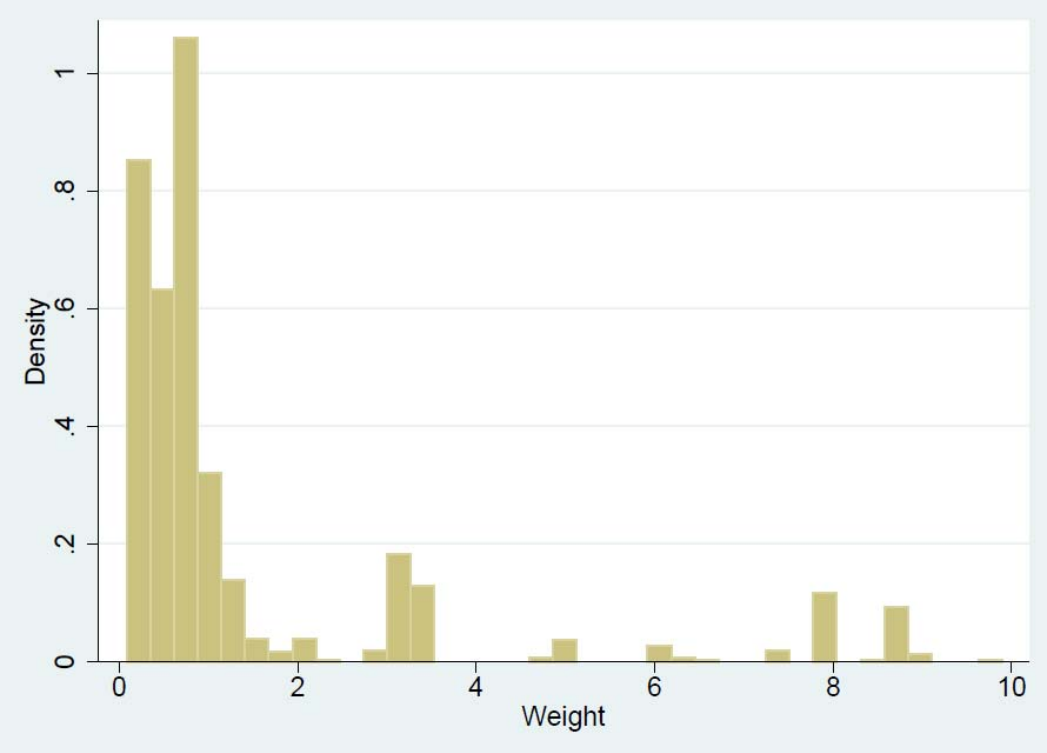
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Status quo = no	-0.16**	-0.11**	-0.09**	-0.09**
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Status quo = yes	-0.01	-0.01	-0.002	-0.002
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Controls Included:				
Gender, race, policy question		X	X	X
Political ideology			X	X
Education				X
H_0: no = yes , p-value	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001
R-squared	0.03	0.12	0.18	0.19

Notes: N = 2,617. The omitted group is the neutral condition (no status quo mentioned). **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, and 5% levels respectively. Standard errors are provided in parentheses.

Robustness check #2: Weighted data

The summary statistics of our sample population displayed in Table 1 are based on demographic questions asked at the end of the experiment. We compare these measures to the average adult in the U.S. using data from the American Community Survey and a recent Gallup poll. We find that our respondents are in fact younger and more liberal than the national average, but are 60% male, a higher proportion than either the national average or the typical MTurk sample. To account for this, we introduce weights to the sample that bring it in line with national averages and find that our results are very similar when we include these weights in our analysis.

Figure A1. Distribution of population weights



We also construct a set of weights that adjusts for the likelihood that the participant is to actually vote. We use data on demographics of voters from the Voting and Registration Supplement of Current Population Survey in November 2014 which roughly matches the timing of our when our experiment occurred. Data covered all 51 states and the District of Columbia and included 135,312 observations. Using this data relies on the assumption that the demographic characteristics of voters in national elections are similar to the demographic characteristics of voters in referendums.

We use this data to calculate the probability of voting given each unique age, gender, race, and education combination (where age is based on 10-year bins). We merge this information onto our sample using the same characteristics. Our sample includes 172 unique combinations of the variables above and for each these combinations there was an average of 427 observations from the CPS being used to calculate the probability of voting. Figure A2 provides the distribution of the assigned likelihood of voting for each of the participants in our sample.

Figure A2. Distribution of probability of voting weights.

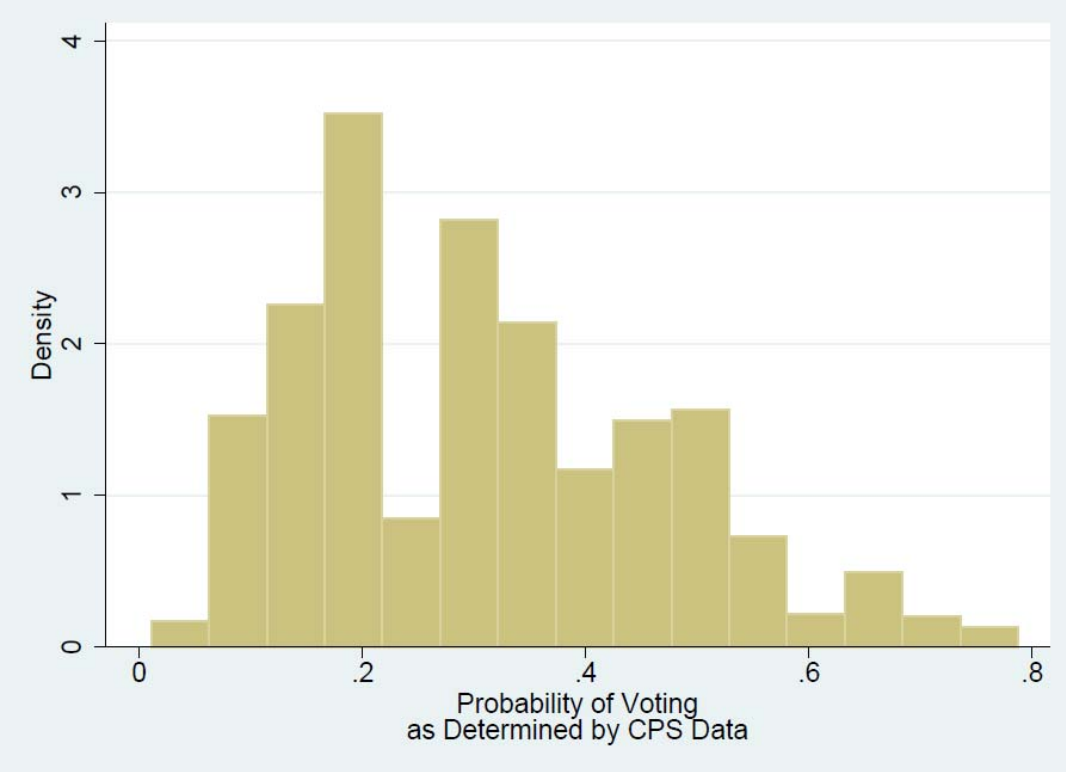


Table A4 provides the main results of our paper using either no weights, weights that make our sample representative of the general adult population, or weights that make our sample representative of the individuals who vote.

Table A4: OLS regression of the effect of ballot wording on share of individuals supporting rights for the minority group.

	No Weights	Population Weights	Voting Weights
Status quo = no	-0.08**	-0.07**	-0.08**
	(0.013)	(0.026)	(0.016)
Status quo = yes	-0.02	0.03	-0.03
	(0.013)	(0.031)	(0.016)
H_0: no = yes , p-value	0.0001	0.0002	0.0004
R-squared	0.15	0.20	0.16
N	5,720	5,720	5,680

Notes: The omitted group is the neutral condition (no status quo mentioned). **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, and 5% levels respectively. Standard errors are provided in parentheses. All columns include controls for gender, race, political ideology, and education.

Robustness Check #3: Nonlinear estimation

Table A5. Effect of ballot wording on share of individuals supporting the minority right policy (logistic regression)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Status quo = no	-0.08**	-0.07**	-0.12**	-0.12**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Status quo = yes	-0.02	-0.02	-0.04	-0.04*
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Controls Included:				
Gender, race, policy question		X	X	X
Political ideology			X	X
Education				X
H_0: no = yes , p-value	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001
Pseudo-R-squared	0.01	0.08	0.13	0.13

Notes: N = 5,720. The omitted group is the neutral condition (no status quo mentioned). **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, and 5% levels respectively. Standard errors are provided in parentheses.