
SURVEYING STATE LEGISLATORS

Views on K–12 Education, Choice-Based
Policies, and the Profession

Paul DiPerna



ABOUT EDCHOICE

EdChoice is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to advancing full and unencumbered educational choice as the best pathway to successful lives and a stronger society. EdChoice believes that families, not bureaucrats, are best equipped to make K–12 schooling decisions for their children. The organization works at the state level to educate diverse audiences, train advocates and engage policymakers on the benefits of high-quality school choice programs. EdChoice is the intellectual legacy of Milton and Rose D. Friedman, who founded the organization in 1996 as the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice.

We are grateful for the generous financial support of the Walton Family Foundation, which made this project possible.

SEPTEMBER 2016

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IMPORTANT NOTE

This survey was developed by staff of the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice and conducted prior to the organization's renaming as EdChoice, which occurred on July 29, 2016. For clarity, we will refer to the survey and its findings throughout this report as part of an "EdChoice" project or study.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Studying state legislators is like looking squarely at the future of American politics and policymaking. Many state lawmakers will be a presence in statehouses around the country for years to come. Others will seek and attain influential elected positions in the governor's mansion and other statewide offices. They will also leave their mark at the federal level as members of Congress and, history suggests, as future presidents.

The intent of this report is to describe survey data that measure legislators' opinions (if any) on a focused set of items about K-12 education topics and educational choice policies, trusted sources of K-12 information, as well as views and attitudes toward their profession, time demands and constraints, and factors in developing priorities and voting.

This study is based on a total of 344 live telephone interviews that were completed from July 16 to October 26, 2015. We used a randomly drawn sample derived from a list of state legislators obtained from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). The margin of sampling error (MoSE) for the study sample is ± 5.2 percentage points.¹ The response rate (AAPOR RR3) was 10.5 percent.² EdChoice developed this project in partnership with Braun Research, Inc., which conducted the phone-based interviews.

With this study, we sought to address the following five research questions:

1. What are the levels, margins, and intensities of support and opposition for types of K-12 educational choice policies, including education savings accounts (ESAs), school vouchers, and public charter schools?
2. What types of information sources do state legislators trust and use for making decisions on K-12 education matters?

3. What are the most significant challenges facing legislators today?
4. What sources of information, activities, and other external influences matter for legislative priorities and voting?
5. To what extent are legislators loyal and enthusiastic regarding their work?

In brief, we find:

- **Majorities of state legislators voiced their support for ESAs, school vouchers, and public charter schools.** The margins of support were substantial: +31 points, +12 points, +45 points, respectively. State legislators are twice as likely to say they supported ESAs, compared with opposing such a public policy (61% vs. 30%, respectively). We also found a majority of state legislators say they support school vouchers (52% favor vs. 40% oppose), and they are three times more likely to support public charter schools than to oppose them (67% vs. 22%, respectively).
- **Legislators' views on the direction of K-12 education, school vouchers, and charter schools do not appear well-aligned with the general public.** Compared to our state polls conducted since 2010, legislators tend to be much more likely than voters to think K-12 education is heading in the "right direction" in their home states. Compared to our 2015 national survey of the general public, we also detect a divergence between what legislators prefer versus what the public prefers when it comes to school vouchers and charter schools. State legislators are less likely to favor school voucher policies than the general public, but on the other hand, legislators are more likely to favor charter schools than the general public.

- **Engaging state legislators’ social networks is critical.** Based on our interviews it is clear that respondents trusted their personal contacts above all else when it came to learning about matters in K–12 education. More than eight of 10 respondents (82%) indicated personal contacts and networks were highly trustworthy. Other key sources for information included direct communications with constituents and legislative staff (65% and 61% highly trustworthy, respectively). And the latter source could reasonably be considered a part of the legislator’s personal network. Forty percent of state legislators said they used their personal contacts and networks daily for learning about current events and developments in K–12 education. A vast majority (85%) said they used these networks on a daily or weekly basis.
- **State legislators said they have a high degree of trust in personal networks, constituent communications, and legislative staff and relatively less trust in lobbyists, polls, and news media.** The survey results show legislators heavily favor their own direct communications with constituents and personal and professional experiences in order to inform their legislative agendas and voting. In contrast to other potential sources of influence (chamber caucus, interest groups, public opinion surveys, news/social media), the latter factors do not necessarily require a third party for interpreting information.
- **Time use and management is a huge challenge facing state lawmakers.** About one-third of our study sample (36%) responded to an open-ended question saying some aspect of time use was their biggest challenge. The survey data do not equip us to say if the current environment is better or worse than in the past. Legislators seem to rely on time-saving measures to meet their responsibilities.

- **It appears state legislators are enthusiastic about their work and activities and signal a somewhat high commitment to their vocation.** In our survey we have adapted the Net Promoter Score (NPS) method to measure levels of enthusiasm for and loyalty to the legislative career. NPS is an index that ranges from -100 to 100 that organizations use to measure the willingness of its customers to recommend a product or service to others. It can be used as a proxy for gauging the customer’s overall satisfaction or loyalty, or in other usage, employees’ commitment and loyalty. NPS is based on a single question, and we asked legislators, “On a scale from 0 to 10, how likely is it that you would recommend serving as a state legislator to a friend or colleague?” Based on the rating, I follow standard NPS protocol and classify state legislators in three categories: Promoters (9 or 10), Passives (7 or 8), and Detractors (0 to 6). Our state legislator study sample produced an overall NPS of 41. Using other large survey examples for comparative reference, it is reasonable to interpret this score as somewhat high.

What are the survey’s implications for readers?

- **A state legislator may see the relatively high NPS and make a subjective comparison to her/his own circumstance and set of experiences.** If they identify as Detractors, they might question running for re-election. Passive legislators might want to figure out how to reignite the flame for legislative work? Promoters will probably wonder how to address the needs and issues challenging their profession. When it comes to the survey results on educational choice measures, the data can also provide a starting point for conversations on why a given caucus may want to consider launching or expanding choice in the state.
- **A legislative staffer may see a challenge that either looks appealing for the next**

phase of her/his career or a deterrent for pursuing legislative office. A staffer is in a very influential position and may consider ways to manage information and relationships to ease time management strains on their bosses, allowing them to spend more time on the needs of constituents. If so, then legislator's increased satisfaction or engagement may carry over in positive ways to staff. If the staffer is interested in educational choice issues, then survey results provide the starting point to have those conversations in the legislator's office.

- **A policy wonk or advocate may want to take to heart the notions about legislators' time constraints and try first to earn the trust of those closest legislators.** Tapping into social networks, more offline than online, may provide the best opportunities to engage with state lawmakers. For those looking to pitch educational choice policies, winning over sources closest to legislators could lend the credibility needed to get the wonk's foot in the door for a conversation. Our findings suggest a multi-channel approach to reaching legislators can be fruitful. Communications technologies like phone, email, and social media, can effectively complement the communications channels that are offline.
- **A public service "explorer" is someone who may be looking for a new kind of fulfillment in elected state office.** Not unlike the staffer who is considering a future in state legislative politics, the public service explorer can use the survey data to get a sense for how legislators use their time and the challenges facing them today. Those challenges may attract public service explorers to or deter them from the profession.

- **A graduate student in political science or public affairs may see the potential for meaningful research questions.** Could new survey research shed light on the potential for improving legislative structures or norms that guide the state legislator's activities? What measures could legislative leaders implement to mitigate the time challenges reported? Do those challenges produce sub-optimal decision-making and voting environments? Survey research designs that maximize sample size, even within a single state, can expand on our survey's questionnaire and go into more state-specific challenges or issues. Students intrigued by the possibility of running for state legislative office or working for a legislator can glean some sense of the demands of this line of work.

The "Surveying State Legislators Survey" questionnaire with topline results are publicly available and posted separately at www.edchoice.org/LegislatorSurvey. That document allows the reader to follow the survey interview per question as well as item wording and ordering.

¹Unadjusted for design effects.

²American Association for Public Opinion Research, *Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys*, 9th ed. (Oakbrook Terrace, IL: American Association for Public Opinion Research, 2016), p. 62, http://www.aapor.org/AAPOR_Main/media/publications/Standard-Definitions20169theditionfinal.pdf.

PROLOGUE

Understanding the average state legislator’s point of view is essential for the sustainability and advancement of that vocation, and that is the motivation for this study. Such learning is also crucial for setting a course toward optimal policymaking in K–12 education and pursuing choice-based policies.

That premise is at least partially inspired by a passage in Alan Rosenthal’s 2009 book *Engines of Democracy: Politics and Policymaking in State Legislatures*. Rosenthal was a highly influential political scientist who studied American state legislatures for nearly five decades. His book was unique because it shared an intimate point of view at the sunset of his career. *Engines of Democracy* affords readers a unique synthesis of political science scholarship—Rosenthal’s and others’ research—as well as his personal observations while working with and consulting state legislatures. Rosenthal’s career is noteworthy. On the one hand, he had rigorously studied legislatures for many years and, in the process, earned respect among his academic peers. On the other hand, Rosenthal was very much a public servant who worked with and had a tangible impact on different legislatures and legislator organizations like the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL).

As a father of two young kids, Rosenthal grabbed my attention in the first few paragraphs of his introduction to *Engines of Democracy*:

“Generations of American toddlers have enjoyed the story about the little engine that rescued a train that had broken down while climbing a steep hill. The Little Engine That Could chugged and puffed, ‘I think I can, I think I can, I think I can,’ as it pulled the train over the crest of the hill. Boys and girls in the valley town, who eagerly awaited the toys, food, and other goodies that the train was bearing, cheered when it finally arrived.

“Much like the little engine, the legislature chugs and puffs along. The legislature (and not the executive or the judiciary) is truly the engine of democracy. It tugs and pulls a heavy load, uphill much of the way. Like the little engine that could, the legislature usually delivers the goods—a mixed bag, depending on one’s tastes. The legislature, however, upon its arrival is far more likely to be greeted by jeers than cheers.”¹

¹Alan Rosenthal, *Engines of Democracy: Politics and Policymaking in State Legislatures* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2009), p. 1.

INTRODUCTION

In this report we share results from a 2015 telephone survey of 344 state legislators.¹ We sought to gain a better understanding of lawmakers' views on current developments in K–12 education as well as their jobs in public service in general. This survey research reflects a snapshot in time, and so the findings are intended to be descriptive in their nature, not imply causality.

Why Survey State Legislators?

Studying state legislators is like looking squarely at the future of American politics and policy making. Of the 7,368 state legislators in office today, we can be reasonably certain that a sizable proportion of those officeholders will establish a presence in statehouses around the country for years to come, if they have not done so already.² Others will seek and attain influential elected positions in the governor's mansion and other statewide offices. In a recent issue of *State Legislatures* magazine, Louis Jacobson pointed out this pattern, noting that roughly half of all recent governors from both parties previously served in state legislatures.³

State legislators will not only become future governors, but they will also leave their mark at the federal level in Washington, D.C. Nearly 50 percent of members serving in the 114th Congress (267 members) at one time had served in their state's legislature.⁴ Though the pathway through the state legislature has been less common in the last 50 years, a little less than half of our presidents (20 out of 44) have worked as state legislators. Most recently, President Barack Obama served in the Illinois Senate from 1997 to 2004.⁵

How Can a Survey of State Legislators Be Useful?

There have been many surveys of state legislators going as far back as the 1960s, but this project should be useful for at least four reasons.

First, this survey should be informative for a variety of K–12 stakeholders because, to our knowledge, there has not been a survey of legislators that focused on questions of educational choice policies like school vouchers, public charter schools, and education savings accounts (ESAs), or even more generally inquired about legislative matters in K–12 education.

Considering that states dedicate so much effort and resources to K–12 education (on average, one-fifth of state spending is on K–12 education) the scarcity of survey research in this public policy domain is striking.

The percentage of total fiscal year expenditures dedicated to K–12 education ranged from a low in West Virginia (9.8%) to a high in Indiana (32.0%) in FY2014. In that fiscal year, eight states allocated 25 percent or more of total expenditures to K–12 education. It is unambiguous that funding elementary and secondary education is a priority for state government, and it has been for many years.⁶

It is plausible that legislators or their close confidants are reluctant to speak up one way or the other on these issues because they feel they have a lone voice. This study's findings could change that mindset and build confidence to take a position one way or the other.

Second, we are likely to see increased legislative attention and activity toward assessment and accountability policies at the state level, and if recent trends continue, we should also see more legislative activity launching, expanding, or otherwise affecting educational choice programs.

Private school choice programs, such as school vouchers and ESAs, have seen tremendous growth since 2011, both in terms of newly enacted programs as well as participating students.⁷ Public charter school laws have been on the books in most states for at least a decade or more, so although the enactment of laws has slowed, the growth of charter schools continues to increase.⁸

In coming years, state lawmakers will be forced to reconcile their newfound responsibilities for overseeing accountability, whether that means implementing similar measures as in the past or broadening the meaning of accountability to include market-based mechanisms by way of parental choice in schooling.

This survey should provide a starting point for legislators to see how their peers in other states or demographics view these issues, and advocates may be able to use findings to help develop engagement strategies with legislators and their close networks.

Third, K–12 education is a highly salient state-level issue area, and will remain so.

A 2015 survey of more than 400 education journalists found nearly two-thirds of respondents said “education journalism at their own news outlet is going in the right direction.”⁹ Another two-thirds reported that the size of their education news staffs had increased or saw no change in the past year, in contrast to journalist employment trends generally. The strength of education-focused outlets such as Education Week, Chalkbeat, and StateImpact (a project of NPR), are more likely to see growth than print outlets, where reporting on education now seems to be a lower priority than it has been in the past.

A brief 2015 Education Next article by Michael Petrilli of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute asserted a “new breed” of education journalism has arrived, quantifying the coverage by some of these education-focused media outlets over a three-

month period.¹⁰ Alexander Russo, who has written about education reporting for years, said in a brief interview that he believes “journalism has gone through an enormous series of disruptions and cutbacks in the past several years, at least some of that has been offset by the rise of nonprofit sites and foundation-funded positions at places like NPR, the LA Times, and the Seattle Times.” Russo also points out that Chalkbeat and POLITICO have increased their state-level reporting in recent years. Another major change in education reporting, he said is “the shift from eager, almost credulous coverage of new ideas and approaches to improving schools to much more of a focus on setbacks, challenges, and obstacles.”¹¹

Philanthropic foundations and the non-profit sector are driving the K–12 education coverage in many states. Liz Willen, editor in chief at The Hechinger Report, said she believes local-level attention and reporting should only increase and further innovate in coming years.¹² Willen pointed out that the most recent iteration of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, now called the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), will be a focus of local and state reporting in the coming years. The former No Child Left Behind Law (NCLB) increased the centralization of school accountability at the federal level. Fourteen years later, ESSA implementation will move substantial authority back to state governments, and in the near future state legislators will have an increasingly vital role in shaping assessment and accountability policies across the country. The overhaul and reauthorization of the federal law took nearly a decade. The law is now moving toward the implementation phase and returns more discretion to local and state-level policymaking in K–12 education.¹³

These survey results may dispel or reinforce assumptions we have made about legislators. The findings should at least provide helpful context to journalists, bloggers, policy wonks, and advocates about how legislators set their agendas and make voting decisions.

Finally, exclusively using the telephone to conduct survey interviews with state legislators is very rare, and we believe this is the first phone-only survey of this population in more than 15 years.

The vast majority of legislator surveys have used mailed questionnaires, and more recently online surveys. Although the response rate we achieved tends to be lower than the former mode and at par with the latter mode, this should not be a problem for interpreting results. In fact, we expected a lower response rate for this project because “elite” populations tend to be more difficult to contact, engage, and interview compared with general population surveys.¹⁴ The 10.5 percent response rate achieved in this state legislator survey closely matches the response rates we have achieved in our other polling, whether observing general population responses at the national level or registered voters’ opinions at the state level.¹⁵

In contrast to mailed questionnaires and online surveys, we should have a higher degree of confidence that the person responding to the phone interview (because of the mode and proper interviewer training) was indeed the state legislator and not a staff member.¹⁶

Research Questions and Report Organization

With the potential utility mentioned above in mind, we sought to address the following five research questions:

1. What are the levels, margins, and intensities of support and opposition for types of K–12 educational choice policies, including education savings accounts (ESAs), school vouchers, and public charter schools?
2. What types of information sources do state legislators trust and use for making decisions on K–12 education matters?

3. What are the most significant challenges facing legislators today?
4. What sources of information, activities, and other external influences matter for legislative priorities and voting?
5. To what extent are legislators loyal and enthusiastic regarding their work?

In the first section of this report, I provide some background on specific educational choice concepts, about which we ask state legislators to share their awareness and opinions. I include additional information about the recent program growth, student enrollment trends, state variation with respect to the designs of laws and programs, and state variation in public opinion toward different types of educational choice policies. The second section offers a brief review of the research literature regarding surveys of state legislators. And in the third section I detail the survey methodology, including its strengths and limitations. The fourth section describes the main survey findings, and in the final section, I revisit the research questions and discuss key takeaways and potential implications for different audiences reading this report.

BACKGROUND: THE STATE OF K–12 EDUCATIONAL CHOICE IN AMERICA

The United States has seen dramatic growth in the numbers of enactments and expansions of private educational choice programs since 2011. (Hereafter, we use “educational choice,” “school choice,” and “choice-based” interchangeably.) State legislators and governors—highly influential policy actors in U.S. education—have passed and signed into law 36 new programs over the last six years.¹⁷ States had previously enacted 25 programs from 1990 to 2010.¹⁸

Today there are 61 publicly-funded private educational choice programs in 30 states and the District of Columbia. It is estimated that school voucher, ESA, and tax-credit scholarship programs will collectively serve at least 418,000 school children in the 2016–17 school year. By contrast, there were approximately 206,000 participating school choice students in those three types of programs in the 2010–11 school year.¹⁹ Both the number of participating students and the number of programs have more than doubled in the span of six years. Most programs operate in the Midwestern and Southern regions of the country.

When discussing educational choice, it is prudent to clarify what policy mechanisms fall within that policy domain and clearly define those mechanisms and note their distinctions. Otherwise it is easy for people to communicate past each other, one person having a different definition than another.

There are currently four types of policy mechanisms that allow for private educational choice: vouchers, ESAs, tax-credit scholarships, and individual tax credits and deductions. Other mechanisms for choice exist within public school systems. Those policies typically establish public charter schools or open enrollment programs. The three educational choice mechanisms considered in this study are school vouchers, ESAs, and public charter schools.

School Vouchers

School vouchers give parents the option of sending their children to the private school of their choice, often including both religious and non-religious schools. Tax dollars typically expended by state government or a public school district are reallocated to parents in the form of a “school voucher” to pay partial or full tuition for their children’s schooling. Milton Friedman, a Nobel Laureate economist, began to advocate and popularize the voucher concept in K–12 education more than 60 years ago.²⁰

EdChoice tracks and collects data on all private educational choice programs, and we estimate that at least 169,000 students used school vouchers in the 2015–16 school year.²¹ There are currently 26 voucher programs in 15 states—Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana (2), Maine, Maryland, Mississippi (2), North Carolina (2), Ohio (5), Oklahoma, Utah, Vermont, Wisconsin (4)—and the District of Columbia.²² Most voucher programs have limits on student eligibility, based on household income, residential location, or whether the student has special needs. In recent years, a handful of statewide programs have had accelerated participation growth. For example, in the state of Indiana more than half of the K–12 education students are eligible to qualify for a school voucher (called a “Choice Scholarship”). The voucher program concluded its fifth year of operation in 2015–16 and enrolled more than 32,000 students.²³

Education Savings Accounts (ESAs)

A close cousin to school vouchers are education savings accounts (ESAs). In their current design, ESAs allow parents to take their children out of their public district or charter school and receive a payment into a government-authorized debit account with restricted, but multiple uses.

Parents can use these funds to pay for education-related goods and services such as private school tuition, tutoring, online education programs, or special needs therapies. Some states allow for rolling over funds year to year to save for future expenses (including post-secondary expenses). Essentially, there are three key distinctions between an ESA and a standard school voucher. The ESA functionally operates as a (1) government-funded bank account, (2) may be designated for multiple educational uses, and (3) allows for unused funds to rollover for use in future years. By comparison, a school voucher is single-use and only allows parents to specifically offset private school tuition

and sometimes fees. When considering policy design, the differences are noteworthy by degrees. However, in terms of policy implementation and from the perspective of school parents, the differences tend to be profound.

There are currently five ESA programs operating in five states: Arizona, Florida, Mississippi, Nevada, and Tennessee. The state of Arizona enacted the first ESA program in 2011. EdChoice estimates that there were nearly 8,000 ESA students in the 2015–16 school year. Florida has the largest program in terms of participation (5,844 enrollees).²⁴ In 2015, Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval signed into law the country’s largest ESA program in terms of statewide eligibility—more than 90 percent of all K–12 students in the state qualify for the program.²⁵ Two lawsuits have been filed by regular opponents of educational choice laws, which is a common occurrence for newly enacted educational choice programs.²⁶ A Nevada State Supreme Court decision on those lawsuits is still pending at the time of this writing.

The 61 private school choice programs can be similar in terms of policy design and implementation, but they also can vary to wide degrees on pivotal design elements. For more than a decade, EdChoice has published *The ABCs of School Choice*, providing detailed program profiles that include information about student eligibility, student funding, rules and regulations on participation (either student or school), and annual program participation.²⁷

When comparing programs based on general design elements, we see they can vary in many ways, such as placing household income limits for student eligibility, requiring students to be previously enrolled in a regular public school, per-student funding caps on the value of a voucher or ESA, and requiring the assessment of participating students and to whom those results should be reported.²⁸

Public Charter Schools

Charter schools are operationally independent public schools that are exempt from many state and local rules and regulations in exchange for increased financial and academic accountability.

These mostly autonomous public schools are typically required to adhere to state-based standards and to administer state-approved assessments and testing programs. Charter schools are much more likely to be closed because of persistent low test performance or poor financial management than public district schools.

Minnesota enacted the country’s first public charter school law in 1991. The state’s first charter school opened the following year. Thousands more have opened their doors in the 25 years since the signing of that first landmark law. Today 42 states and the District of Columbia have charter school laws, and there are more than 6,700 charter schools educating nearly 3 million students. The number of charter school students has more than doubled since 2007–08.

The regulations and funding of charter schools vary from state to state. For years, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS) and Center for Education Reform (CER) have published annual reports that go into great detail describing the similarities, differences, and rankings of all state charter school laws according to organization rubrics.²⁹

Public Opinion on Educational Choice, State by State

Like the programs and laws that vary and contrast across states, statewide public opinion on choice-based policies also differs across states.

As more and more school choice bills would be considered in statehouses with every passing session. Over the past decade, EdChoice noticed

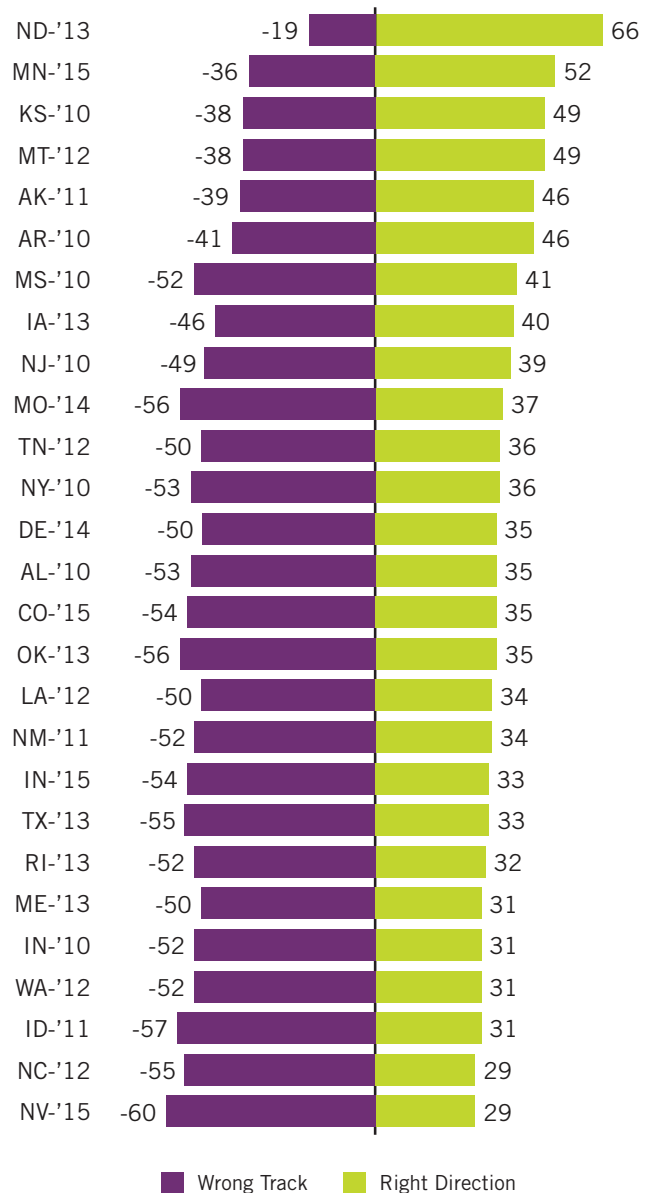
increasing interest and need among state-level partners, as well as state legislators, to better understand public opinion in their respective states. Since 2009, EdChoice has partnered with Braun Research, Inc., on 29 statewide public opinion polls.³⁰ State-level polling with a specific focus on choice in K–12 education remains rare to this day.

Figure 1 depicts a range of public opinion on how registered voters generally assess K–12 education in their home states. For the most part, in the states we have surveyed, voters are more likely to be negative about where things stood at the time of the survey. Since 2010 our surveys have shown just two out of 26 states (North Dakota, Minnesota) have majority positive views about the trajectory of K–12 education. Four more states (Kansas, Montana, Alaska, Arkansas) at least produced net positive views. The other 20 states were decidedly negative. Later in this report, we will see that, on average, state legislators view the direction of K–12 education more positively than the state voters in our prior statewide public opinion polling. The stark contrast suggests a curious disconnect between voters and lawmakers.

Figures 2, 3, and 4 (on following pages) have been constructed in parallel and offer a summary view from the states toward school vouchers, ESAs, and public charter schools.³¹ Generally speaking the x-axis and y-axis both represent a difference observed for a given survey sample: a proportion of positive responses minus a proportion of negative responses to the same survey question about a specific type of choice policy. More specifically, a value that follows the x-axis is the difference between those in a state who strongly or somewhat favor a policy minus the state proportion who strongly or somewhat oppose the policy. We refer to that difference as the “margin.” The y-axis reflects the difference of extreme responses for a given sample on the same question. The arithmetic, like the margin, is simple subtraction: the sample’s proportion saying she/he strongly favors a policy minus those who strongly oppose. We refer to that difference between the extremes as the “intensity” on a given policy question.

In a nutshell, state voters that are represented near or in the upper-right of these charts are much more likely to be positive and relatively enthusiastic about a given school choice policy concept. Those states situated near or in the bottom-left are relatively less likely to be positive and attracted to such policies.

FIGURE 1 State Voters’ Views on the Direction of K–12 Education in Their Home States

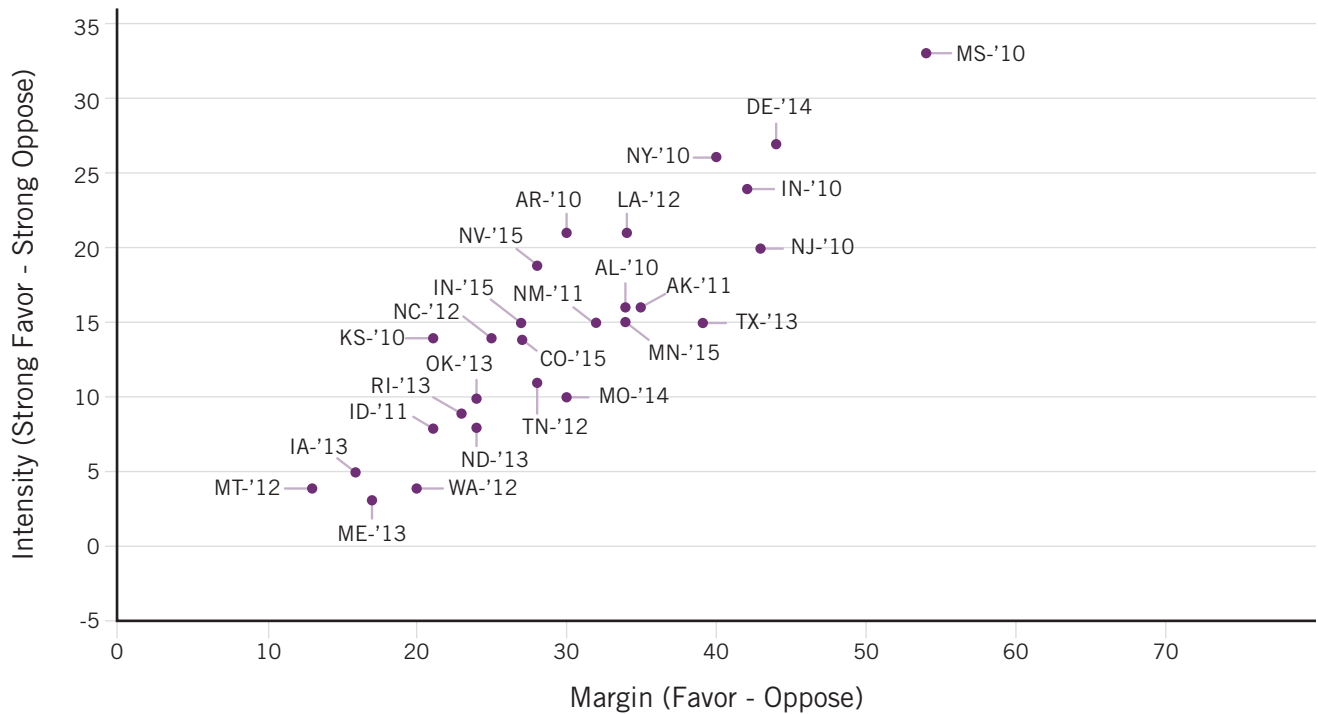


Sources: See entries in EdChoice’s Polling Paper series at <https://www.edchoice.org/what-we-do/research>.

FIGURE 2

State Voters' Views on School Vouchers

Margin x Intensity (net percentage points)

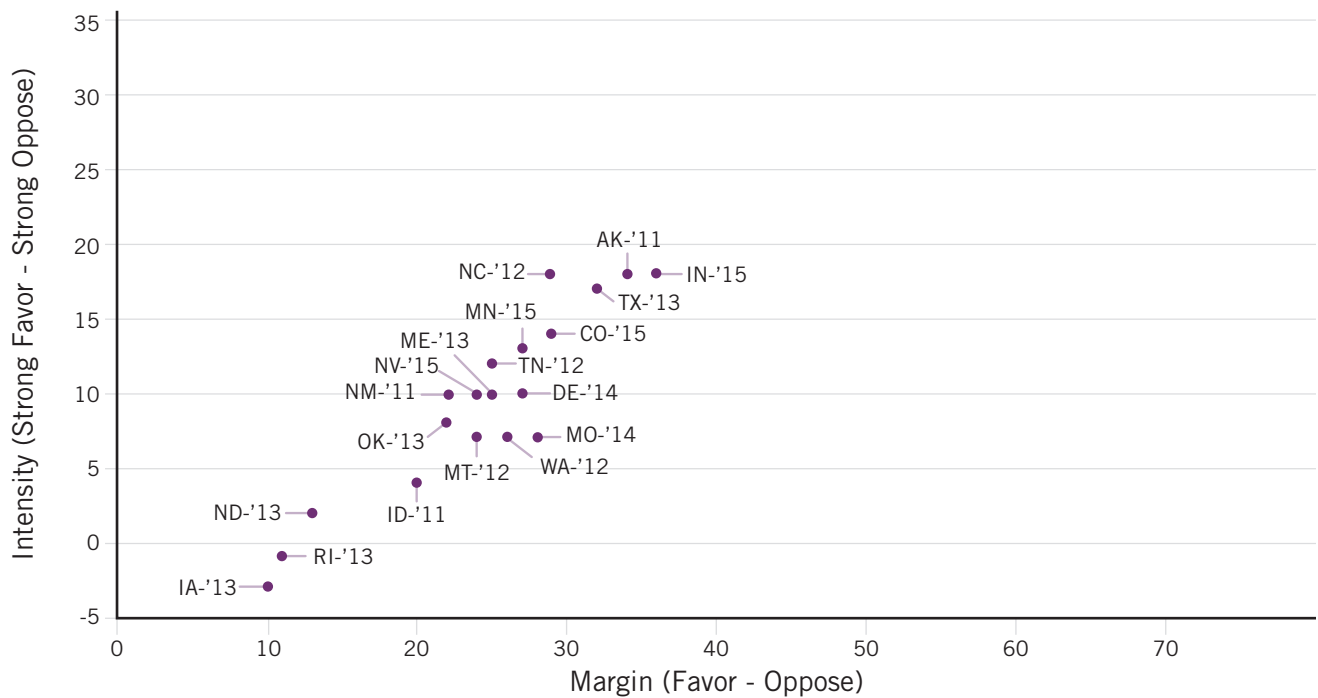


Sources: See entries in EdChoice's Polling Paper series at <https://www.edchoice.org/what-we-do/research>.

FIGURE 3

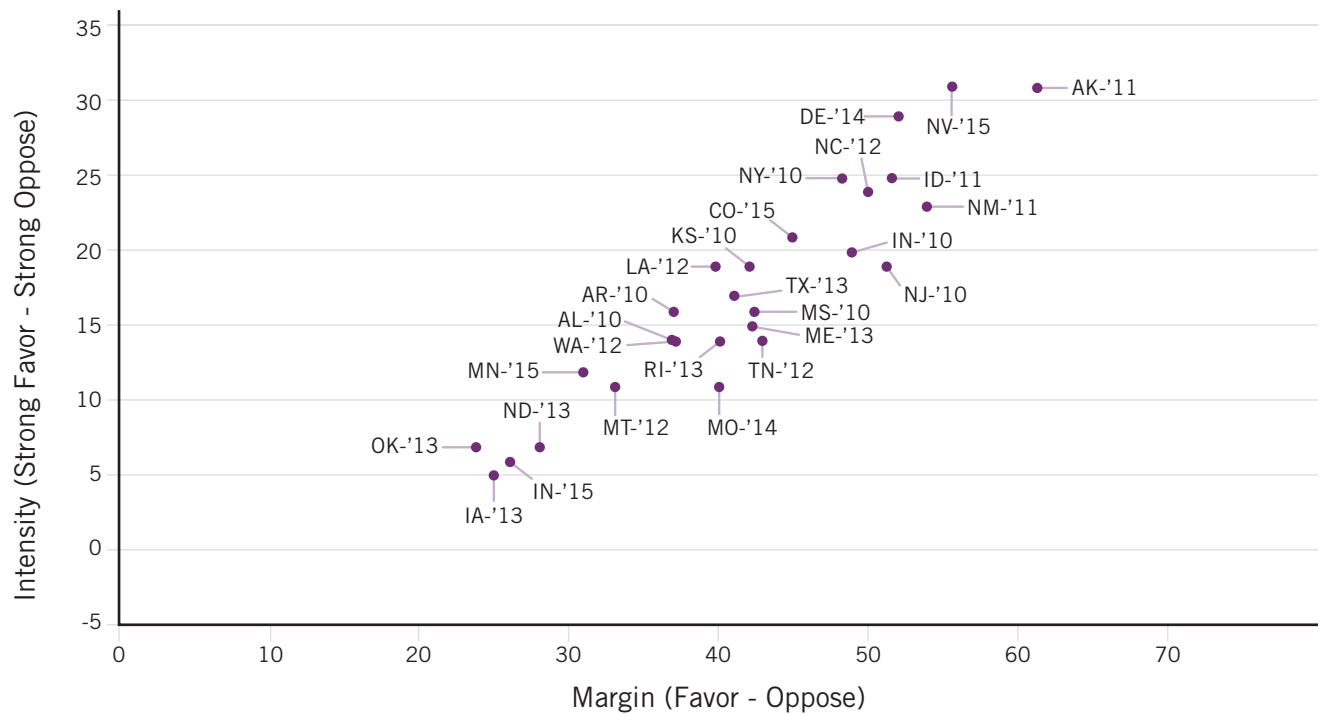
State Voters' Views on Education Savings Accounts (ESAs)

Margin x Intensity (net percentage points)



Sources: See entries in EdChoice's Polling Paper series at <https://www.edchoice.org/what-we-do/research>.

FIGURE 4 State Voters' Views on Charter Schools
Margin x Intensity (net percentage points)



Sources: See entries in EdChoice's Polling Paper series at <https://www.edchoice.org/what-we-do/research>.

States we have surveyed are generally positive by their margins and intensities on the three choice types: school vouchers, ESAs, and charter schools.³² However the degrees of those positive differences have a fairly wide range. The three parallel figures are shown here primarily to illustrate the point that even generally positive public opinion differs across states on educational choice concepts, both by margin and intensity.

REVIEWING OTHER LEGISLATOR SURVEY RESEARCH

Political scientists have been surveying public officials, including state legislators, for many years. In this section, I share several relevant experiences from more than 40 years worth of legislator survey literature. This was no easy task,

but we were fortunate to have two previously completed literature reviews of the legislator survey research, both published in *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* in the past 15 years.³³ They cover much ground and serve as a road map for possible replication.

In a 2003 journal article, Cherie Maestas, Grant Neeley, and Lilliard Richardson examined 73 political science journal articles published from 1975–2000; all of the articles were at least partially based on a survey of state legislators.³⁴ In their review, the authors included qualitative as well as quantitative research, so studies that included personal interviews and focus groups were part of their sample. Nationwide (50-state) surveys of state legislators were also quite rare. The authors noted that eight such studies had been conducted during the time period. They also identified “60 separate datasets with state legislators as respondents—26 of these primarily used personal interviews, 34 primarily used

surveys, and five used both interviews and surveys. The vast majority of the surveys were conducted by mail only, but three were by telephone and two use both telephone and mail.”

It is clear that a telephone methodology was rarely used in this time period. This is not terribly surprising. The capacity needs and costs associated with systematic phone interviewing via call center requires multiple phone callers with appropriate training. Before online surveys became more widely available in the early 2000s, mail surveys would be comparatively more cost-effective and practical from an academic researcher’s point of view.

A decade after the Maestas et al. review, Samuel Fisher and Rebekah Herrick published a study in the same journal that replicated the Maestas et al. review process for political science articles published from 2000–2010. They discovered 25 additional publications that cited surveys of state legislators. Fisher and Herrick said, “Between 2000 and 2010, we found, in our updated replication of the Maestas et al.’s work, 25 publications that used surveys of state legislators. Three surveys were used in more than one publication for a total of 22 surveys [datasets], of which 19 were mail surveys.”³⁵

Scanning the same journals as Fisher and Herrick had done for their review, we could only observe two unique 50-state surveys of state legislators during this time period. In an endnote, the authors mention that the only telephone survey conducted during this time consisted of interviewing legislative staff members. In their analysis, they noted the substantially declining response rates compared to those response rates reported by Maestas et al. In fact, such declines were not unique to elite surveys such as the ones with state legislators. As the authors note, the 2000s saw precipitously shrinking response rates for both phone and mail surveys across the entire survey research and polling industry. But there has been some research to suggest that even with significantly lower survey response rates, the potential threat of non-response bias may be

mitigated by weighting and other methodological techniques.³⁶ In their article, Fisher and Herrick compared the utility and representativeness of a mail survey with an online survey. With some cost-benefit considerations, they found carefully designed and implemented online surveys can be a promising alternative to more expensive mail and phone surveys.

To briefly summarize the findings of the two separate research reviews:

From 1975 to 2010, political scientists had published journal articles that used 59 unique surveys of state legislators for data analysis. Nearly all were based on mailed questionnaires. In the span of 40 years, and from what we could observe, there had been 10 nationwide surveys of state legislators, and it is evident that phone-only surveys of legislators were exceptionally rare.³⁷ We did not discover any phone surveys of state lawmakers since 2010.

We attempted a replication of the Maestas et al. literature review, searching for relevant research articles from the first issue of eight prominent political science journals all the way to the most recent available issue.³⁸ Appendix 1 provides some additional detail about our approach. The literature search initially produced more than 150 articles that contained some type of inquiry based on either legislator surveys or interviews. After reading through abstracts, we narrowed the collection to include only 84 articles that reported primary or secondary findings based on one or more surveys of state legislators.

So what have these articles in reputable political science journals reported to peers in the academic community?

If we consider the main themes that establish the questions for our legislator survey, there is substantial research that has addressed those themes in some manner. For example, several studies have examined the importance of

legislators' time use and management. Karl Kurtz, Gary Moncrief, Richard Niemi, and Lynda Powell observed significant differences between part-time and full-time legislatures in terms of the amount of time spent on legislative work. Full-time legislators spend more time on the job than part-timers. However, digging beneath that unsurprising finding they also observed that there was a lot of variation across states and both types, as well as across individual legislators.³⁹ When researchers see such variation, then that represents fertile opportunity for further investigation. Other studies focused on legislators' time usage has considered how and why legislators spend their time on casework activities.⁴⁰ In terms of priorities, legislators tend to rank casework ahead of potential pork projects.⁴¹ Other research has confirmed, maybe unsurprisingly, that ambitious state lawmakers are more likely to follow public opinion polls than other legislators who do not seek other elected office.⁴² The demands and constraints of legislative institutions, constituents, and personal traits often guide how legislators set representational priorities and toward the goal of re-election.⁴³

The use of information and media was another important theme in our survey questionnaire. Robert Bradley published a study more than 35 years ago that concluded: State legislators choose information sources "to complement one another in fulfilling the members' diverse information needs."⁴⁴ Could the ubiquity of the internet change this assessment? We are unable to answer that question directly, but our survey results show that legislators do trust and use a range of information sources. The amount of trust and usage varies. Because of the way the questions were structured and scaled, we are unable to measure any kind of sequencing or ordering of information sources.

Christopher Cooper found that state legislators will use the media to influence and sway peers' policymaking. Not only do lawmakers use the media to engage and reach constituents, but they also like to use media to twist the arms of "policy

elites." The more well-resourced the legislator, then the more likely she/he will use media tactics as a means of influence.⁴⁵

I briefly reviewed some of the relevant research that has shed light on some of the core themes embedded in our state legislator survey. To the best of our knowledge, it appears there are several areas that we explore in our survey that have not adequately been addressed in depth in the literature, such as: views on K-12 educational choice concepts, trustworthiness of K-12 information sources, and job loyalty and commitment. At the same time, we hope that we can bring fresh survey data that may add insights into state legislators' job challenges, use of time, and the influences on legislative priorities and voting. In the next section, I discuss our survey methods, fieldwork specifications, and some of the administrative detail and study sample statistics.

DATA AND METHODS

In 2015, EdChoice (at that time, the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice) commissioned and developed the "Surveying State Legislators" project (SSL). Braun Research, Inc., interviewed 401 state legislators by live telephone across 50 U.S. states. That Total Sample included 344 state legislators drawn by random sampling procedure plus an oversample of 57 state legislators from the state of New Hampshire.⁴⁶ A subset of the Total Sample, called the Study Sample (N = 344), is the focus of this study.⁴⁷ All survey data and results are unweighted for the purpose of this exploratory and descriptive report.

Braun Research's live callers conducted all interviews via computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) using a survey instrument developed and scripted by the author. Braun Research advised on the questionnaire. For this entire project, 3,968 total phone calls were made by landline telephone. Of these calls 316 were

unusable phone numbers (disconnected, fax, busy, or non-answers, etc.) and 3,246 were usable numbers but eligibility unknown (including, callbacks, answering machines and refusals). All phone numbers were obtained using a list provided by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). All state legislator phone numbers were eligible to be drawn for this survey. Five legislators did not complete the interview. The average response rate, using AAPOR RR3, was 10.5 percent (see Appendix 2). Details on sample dispositions and response rate are discussed in following sections.

The MoSE for the Total Sample of interviews (N = 401) is ± 4.9 percentage points. This means that, in 95 of every 100 samples drawn using the same methodology, estimated proportions based on the entire sample will be no more than 4.9 percentage points away from their true values in the population. We have not made adjustment for potential design effects. The MoSE for the Study Sample (N = 344) is ± 5.2 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording, ordering, and other practical difficulties when conducting surveys may introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion research.

Sample Design

The sampling design for this study required a series of steps to achieve a satisfactory random sample of state legislators. We obtained a list of current state legislators (as of June 2015) from NCSL. The list comprised of the entire U.S. state legislator population including the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and various U.S. territories. Braun Research reviewed this list and checked the list against the websites of all 50 state legislatures, as well as territories and any protectorates. That was performed in order to try and clean the list and delete those legislators who have left, resigned, passed, were appointed to other jobs or otherwise no longer subjects of this project. Braun Research added and updated any new persons appointed or elected.

We began with 7,528 individual legislator records. The objective of the study was to interview only state legislators, and so we removed the records pertaining to territories or protectorates as well as any records related to the District of Columbia from the list. After doing so, we arrived at a sample of 7,368 state legislators from which we drew a subset random sample list in order to begin the phone calls.⁴⁸

Contact Procedures

After having drawn our random sample, we worked with and dialed a total of 3,968 individuals from the randomly drawn list. Live telephone interviews were conducted from July 16, 2015, through October 26, 2015.

All numbers in the random sample we dialed were contacted at least once via telephone. All state legislator respondents completed the interview via telephone. The Braun Research call center was open a span of 15 hours on weekdays in order to make calls and receive any call-ins for this study. The call center was also open on Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. ET and from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. ET on Sundays in case Braun Research received any call-ins.

As Braun Research callers proceeded to contact legislators (within the N = 3,968 random sample list), they randomly selected phone numbers rather than employ a consecutive number procedure. The random selection was done across time zones. If a secondary number was provided for a legislator that was used in addition to the primary number in the list when needed.

If a legislator was busy (e.g., in chamber or in a meeting), callers left messages and collected emails, often from the legislators' scheduler or from an aide. When needed, as a follow-up to the initial call (if that initial call did not achieve a completed interview), callers sent emails to state legislators, schedulers or both, to encourage participation or to schedule appointments for a callback. As part of this process, Braun Research sent 134 follow-up emails.

One additional, important point about the telephone call process: Braun Research noticed that the use of the sponsor name (at that time, the Friedman Foundation) proved to be effective to engage legislators. Many legislators, once the name of the study sponsor was revealed within the introduction, on a qualitative basis, were generally familiar with the organization. Call efforts were aided by being transparent in telling the legislators the nature and purpose of the research study, suggesting the anticipated study length, and coupling with the use of the sponsor name (see Appendix 3 for the phone introduction text). Braun Research believed those procedural elements facilitated legitimacy throughout the course of the telephone contacts, interviewing, and data collection.

Any email communications to encourage callbacks were also transparent about the nature and purpose of the survey. In those emails, Braun Research callers stated the anticipated length of the interview and mentioned an offer to share preliminary findings of the research at some point in 2016. Callers also provided available telephone hours, a contact person, and provided additional information about both the sponsor and Braun Research (see Appendix 4 for the email text).

Publicly Available Data on Legislators

Our survey questionnaire included only one demographic question (self-identification as urban, suburban, small town, or rural) because we wanted the questionnaire to maximize topical items of interest while avoiding breakoffs. Braun Research started 406 interviews and completed 401 of them to achieve the Total Sample. We anticipated that we could acquire demographic and other background information on the internet, and for the most part that strategy was successful. We collected information on a range of context variables:

- At the outset, the NCSL list was useful for establishing basics on legislative background.

TABLE 1

Call Dispositions and Response Rates for the Total Sample (N = 401)

Summary	
3,968	Total
3,968	Released
0	Unreleased
3,652	Usable
155	Unusable
161	Usability Unknown
3,806	Qualified
92.03%	Est. Usability Rate
100.00%	Est. Eligibility Rate
10.53%	Est. Response Rate

Detail	
155	Disconnected
0	Fax
155	Unusable
129	No Answer
32	Busy
161	Usability Unknown
401	Complete
5	Break-off
406	Usable/Eligible
18	Refused
1,089	Answering Machine
1,587	Call back-Retry
2	Strong Refusal
550	Left 800#
3,246	Usable/Eligibility Unknown
0	Terminate
0	Usable/Ineligible

By way of that list, we immediately obtained information about the following variables: region, state, chamber, political party, and gender.

- For additional demographic information, and after the fieldwork concluded, we scanned four online sources to learn more about the state legislators in the study sample: the respondent's legislative website, the state legislature's website, the respective caucus website, Ballotpedia, and Vote Smart. We also conducted organic searches using Google search first page results, social media websites Facebook and LinkedIn, Wikipedia, and personal and/or campaign websites. Those searches allowed us to obtain data for the following variables: age, start year of current office tenure, total years of legislative experience (across terms and chambers), current education committee member, occupation, highest education, marital status, , whether or not he/she has children, race/ethnicity, and religious affiliation.
- In addition to the demographic data, we also collected information about public expressions of support/opposition to school vouchers, ESAs, charter schools, and "educational choice" generally. We operationalize "public expressions" to include public statements and quotes directly cited to come from the legislator, votes on bills, and sponsorship/co-sponsorship of legislation or resolutions.⁴⁹
- Of the four main sources that helped us record public expressions of support or opposition to a given policy, Vote Smart proved to be the most useful. The website's three tabs "Positions," "Votes," and "Public Statements," were utilized for the searches. Individual and legislature websites would occasionally provide information about positions and sponsorships, but rarely votes. Ballotpediatended to be the least useful

because of the lack of information on public positions on school choice issues.

RESULTS

In this section, I report response levels for the SSL Study Sample ("study sample," hereafter). The study sample consists of 344 state legislators. When we detect statistically significant differences, we also briefly describe those corresponding response levels.⁵⁰ I briefly describe state legislators' opinions on various K-12 education and educational choice topics, such as:

- perceived direction of K-12 education in their home states;
- views on ESAs;
- views on school vouchers;
- views on charter schools;
- trustworthy sources of information regarding K-12 education;
- frequency using specific media (e.g. broadcast, print, online, social media) to learn about K-12 education;
- time management and other job challenges;
- influences on legislative priorities and voting; and
- loyalty and commitment toward the job of being a legislator.

Ground Rules and Organization

Before describing the survey results, some brief ground rules and organization for this section are worth mentioning.

When considering each topic, there is a general sequence for reporting various analytical frames: First, I describe the raw response levels for the study sample on a given question. If I detect statistical significance on a given item, then I briefly report those corresponding subgroup results and differences. **Explicit subgroup comparisons/differences are statistically significant with 95**

percent confidence, unless otherwise noted.⁵¹

Finally, I orient any listing of subgroups’ “more/less likely” to respond one way or the other, typically emphasizing the propensity of a given subgroup to be more/less positive.

The organization of the survey results section goes as follows: The first sub-section describes the unweighted summary statistics for the study sample. I draw on some comparisons with a sample analyzed in a 2015 NCSL-Pew Charitable Trusts study of legislators. The second sub-section shares the key findings, organized by general survey topics and followed up by corresponding tables.

We have a brief special feature for the third sub-section. I adapt the Net Promoter Score (NPS) method to measure how state legislators would recommend their job as a legislator.⁵² Legislators’ responses fall under three NPS classifications: Promoters, Passives, and Detractors. I also combine the latter two groups into a single Non-Promoter aggregate category. We use NPS mainly for classification purposes and the focus of the analysis will aim at comparing subgroup responses, rather than the NPS score itself. There is more description of the NPS method beginning on page 40.

Overview of Study Sample and Subgroups

The SSL study sample of 344 completed legislator interviews compares relatively well with recently reported demographic statistics from NCSL.⁵³ Table 2 displays the background characteristics of the state legislators in both samples. Demographic compositions are very similar when comparing the two samples: gender, average age, and certain categories within the race/ethnicity, religion, highest education, and occupation variables. Randomization appears to have worked with respect to representativeness on most key variables.

Several differences do stand out, however. Our study sample consists of higher proportions of House members, Republicans, Whites, “Other Christians,” less educated (less than college), as well as retirees and “Other Professionals.” On the other hand the NCSL data reflect comparatively larger proportions of Senate members, Democrats, African Americans, Latinos, Protestants, more educated, and full-time legislators. Only three demographic subgroup comparisons show gaps exceeding 10 percentage points: Other Christians, Other Professionals, and those whose highest education is less than a bachelor’s degree. For the first two subgroups we suspect that some success researching respondents’ religious affiliation and occupations might explain those differences to a large degree. Other subgroups within those demographic categories are roughly similar.

Table 3 acknowledges a limitation of our study sample, which shows that we completed disproportionately fewer interviews from legislators working in full-time or professionalized legislatures (NCSL’s “Green” category), and conversely we completed disproportionately more interviews from part-time, citizen legislatures (“Gold”). Other researchers have reported a disproportionate challenge completing surveys with respect to professional state legislatures.⁵⁴

That would explain the study sample’s smaller proportion of full-time legislators, based on our search of online biographies. This appears to be the starkest contrast between our study sample and NCSL subgroup percentages.⁵⁵

TABLE 2

Comparing Summary Statistics, Study Sample vs. NCSL

	Study Sample N = 344	NCSL Census
House	82%	73%
Senate	18%	27%
Democrat	33%	43%
Republican	63%	56%
Other	3%	1%
Female	25%	24%
Male	75%	76%
Average Age	58%	56%
American Indian/Native American	< 1%	< 1%
Asian/Pacific Island	< 1%	1%
Black/African American	5%	9%
Hispanic/Latino	1%	5%
Other	< 1%	3%
White	91%	82%
No Data	< 1%	< 1%
Protestant	31%	38%
Catholic	19%	16%
Other Christian	26%	2%
Non-Christian	3%	2%
Unspecified/No Data	23%	42%
< Bachelors	23%	4%
Bachelors	38%	33%
Postgraduate	35%	40%
No Data	4%	23%
Agriculture	4%	5%
Attorney	9%	14%
Business Owner/Other	31%	29%
Educator	6%	6%
Legislator (Full-time)	1%	11%
Professional/Consultant/Nonprofit/Other	36%	20%
Retired	13%	8%
No Data	< 1%	5%

Sources: Author's calculations; National Conference of State Legislatures, *2015 State and Legislative Partisan Composition* (Washington, DC: National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015), http://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/Elections/Legis_Control_2015_Feb4_11am.pdf; "Legislator Demographics," National Conference of State Legislatures, accessed Aug. 31, 2016, <http://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures/who-we-elect-an-interactive-graphic.aspx>

Notes: Summing percentages within a demographic category may exceed or fall short of 100% because of rounding error. Unless otherwise indicated, all displayed demographic figures are obtained from the NCSL list. Regarding the NCSL data collection, researchers compiled data between May and September 2015.

Complete data were obtained for members of Congress in all categories and for state legislators on gender, race and ethnicity. Other categories have incomplete data from legislators. Researchers found the occupation of 95 percent of lawmakers, the educational level attained for 77 percent, the ages of 85 percent, and the religion—or none—for only 58 percent. The "Who We Elect" project was funded by NCSL and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

TABLE 3

Comparing Legislature Type Proportions, Study Sample vs. NCSL

	Study Sample N = 344	NCSL Census
Green	10%	22%
Gray	44%	45%
Gold	46%	33%

NCSL Descriptions	
Green	"Green legislatures require the most time of legislators, usually 80 percent or more of a full-time job. They have large staffs. In most Green states, legislators are paid enough to make a living without requiring outside income. These legislatures are more similar to Congress than are the other state legislatures. Most of the nation's largest population states fall in this category."
Gray	"Legislatures in these states typically say that they spend more than two-thirds of a full time job being legislators. Although their income from legislative work is greater than that in the Gold states, it's usually not enough to allow them to make a living without having other sources of income. Legislatures in the Gray category have intermediate sized staff. States in the middle of the population range tend to have Gray legislatures."
Gold	"On average lawmakers spend the equivalent of half of a full-time job doing legislative work. The compensation they receive for this work is quite low and requires them to have other sources of income in order to make a living. The Gold states have relatively small staffs. They are often called traditional or citizen legislatures and they are most often found in the smallest population, more rural states."

Sources: Author's calculations; "Full- and Part-Time Legislatures," National Conference of State Legislatures, last modified June 1, 2014, <http://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures/full-and-part-time-legislatures.aspx>.

Once we finalized the study sample, we were able to collect additional background information on the respondents (see Table 4). One out of four respondents (25%) were serving on education committees in 2015. A sizable number of respondents (38%) were freshman legislators. A majority (60%) had started their current tenure in office in 2011 or more recently. We also included dichotomous categories of whether or not a given legislator resided in a state with private educational choice (school vouchers, ESAs, etc.) or public charter schools. More than six out of 10

respondents (63%) do serve in a "Choice State." State constitutions often contain language that provide the origination for lawsuits opposing educational choice programs: so-called Blaine Amendments and Compelled Support clauses.⁵⁶ We also coded each state dichotomously regarding whether or not a state contains a Blaine Amendment or Compelled Support clause. Roughly two-thirds of the study sample respondents are from "Blaine States" (67%), as well as "Compelled Support States" (64%).

TABLE 4

Summary Statistics, Study Sample (N = 344)

	Study Sample	N =
CENSUS REGION		
Northeast	21%	72
Midwest	29%	100
South	28%	97
West	22%	75
EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEMBER?		
Yes	25%	85
No	75%	257
LEGISLATIVE EXPERIENCE		
1–2 Years	38%	129
3–8 Years	33%	112
≥ 9 Years	30%	103
TENURE START YEAR		
< 2011	40%	136
≥ 2011	60%	207
CHOICE STATE?		
Yes	63%	217
No	37%	127
BLAINE AMENDMENT STATE?		
Yes	67%	236
No	33%	108
COMPELLED SUPPORT STATE?		
Yes	64%	221
No	36%	123
PUBLIC EXPRESSION ON SCHOOL VOUCHERS		
Supports/Likely Supports	43%	44
Supports/Likely Opposes	57%	58
PUBLIC EXPRESSION ON CHARTER SCHOOLS		
Supports/Likely Supports	75%	89
Supports/Likely Opposes	25%	29

We conducted online research to determine whether or not a given legislator has publicly expressed views on school vouchers or charter schools. For many legislators we managed to find concrete statements, legislative votes, and/or bill sponsorships that gave us reasonable certainty about expressed support or opposition. Of those observable public expressions, a majority of legislators in our sample have stated opposition to school vouchers (43% support/likely support vs. 57% oppose/likely oppose). It is a different story, however, with public expressions about charter schools. Of those on the public record, three out of four (75%) have expressed support for charter schools, while only 25 percent have opposed charter schools.

When comparing publicly expressed positions with legislators' answers in our interviews, we saw consistency between public expressions and private preferences: 84 percent of those legislators who had expressed public support for school vouchers also said they somewhat or strongly favored vouchers in our phone interviews (responding to a baseline item without a description); 88 percent of legislators who had expressed public support for charter schools also said they somewhat or strongly favored charter schools in our phone interviews (baseline item without a description). The survey results on policy questions appear to be valid and reliable measures of support or opposition to specific educational choice issues.

Perceived Direction of K–12 Education in Legislators' Home States

As it was noted earlier, EdChoice surveys have consistently found state voters to be decidedly negative about the trajectory of K–12 education in their states. In contrast, state legislators view the direction of K–12 education more positively. On this type of question there is a disconnect between voters and lawmakers. The latter are slightly more likely to think K–12 education is heading

in the “right direction” (49%) in their home states, compared with 43 percent who said K–12 education has gotten off on the “wrong track.” On balance we observe positive opinions across most legislator demographics. Some key differences stand out when making comparisons within certain demographic categories, or comparing a subgroup to the study sample average:⁵⁷

- Male legislators (53%) are significantly more positive about K–12 education in their home states than female legislators (39%).
- Northeastern legislators (60%) are more positive than Western legislators (48%) and the national average (49%). Midwestern legislators (48%) are much more pessimistic than Northeasterners (32%).
- Senior legislators (55%) are much more likely to be positive than young legislators (43%).⁵⁸
- College graduates (50%) are more likely to say K–12 education is on the “wrong track” compared with postgraduates (34%) and the national average (43%).
- Legislators with 3–8 years (56%) of experience are significantly more likely to say “right direction” than legislators with 1–2 years of experience (40%).
- Legislators who started office before 2011 (57%) are more likely to be satisfied with K–12 education, compared with legislators starting office 2011 or later (44%).

TABLE 5**State Legislators' General Assessment of K–12 Education**

State legislators, on average, are more likely to view how things are going in K–12 education in their home states positively.

	Right Direction	Wrong Track	Margin	N =
ALL RESPONDENTS	49%	43%	6	344
PARTY ID				
Democrat	50%	43%	7	115
Republican	47%	44%	3	218
REGION				
Northeast	60%	32%	28	72
Midwest	43%	48%	-5	100
South	49%	46%	3	97
West	48%	43%	5	75
COMMUNITY				
Urban	47%	45%	2	64
Suburban	47%	42%	5	105
Small Town-Rural	51%	43%	8	173
GENDER				
Female	39%	48%	-9	87
Male	53%	41%	12	257
AGE GROUP				
18 to 54	43%	49%	-6	110
55 & Over	55%	39%	16	207
LEGISLATIVE EXPERIENCE				
1–2 Years	40%	51%	-11	129
3–8 Years	56%	32%	24	112
9+ Years	52%	45%	7	103
TENURE START				
≥ 2011	44%	46%	-2	207
< 2011	57%	38%	19	136
ON EDUCATION COMMITTEE?				
Yes	51%	44%	7	85
No	49%	43%	6	257
LEVEL OF EDUCATION				
< College	49%	45%	4	80
College	44%	50%	-6	130
Postgraduate	55%	34%	21	122

Source: EdChoice, *Questionnaire, Results, and Additional Data: Surveying State Legislators Project* (Indianapolis: EdChoice, 2016), Q7, <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Surveying-State-Legislators-Questionnaire-.pdf>.

Notes: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in the United States and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews. The total number of responses within a given demographic may not add up to the total number of completed interviews in the Study Sample. We were unable to collect some respondents' background information via internet search.

Views on Education Savings Accounts (ESAs)

State legislators were twice as likely to say they favored ESAs than opposed them (61% favor vs. 30% oppose). The margin (+31 points) is very large. There appears to be a net positive intensity on this topic. The difference between strongly held positive and negative views is +17 points.

We asked a pair of questions about ESAs. The first question asked for an opinion without offering any description. On this baseline question, 61 percent of legislators said they favored ESAs and 10 percent said they opposed the idea. In the follow-up question, respondents were given a description for an ESA. With this basic context, support stayed the same (61%), and opposition increased 20 points to 30 percent. The proportion of “don’t know” or “no answer” responses shrank by 21 points (29% to 8%). Democrats seem to be driving the increased opposition. When comparing the ESA baseline and description items, that subgroup’s level of opposition moved from 17 percent to 62 percent. No other subgroup jumped that much. The subgroups having the highest proportions either having no opinion or saying “don’t know”

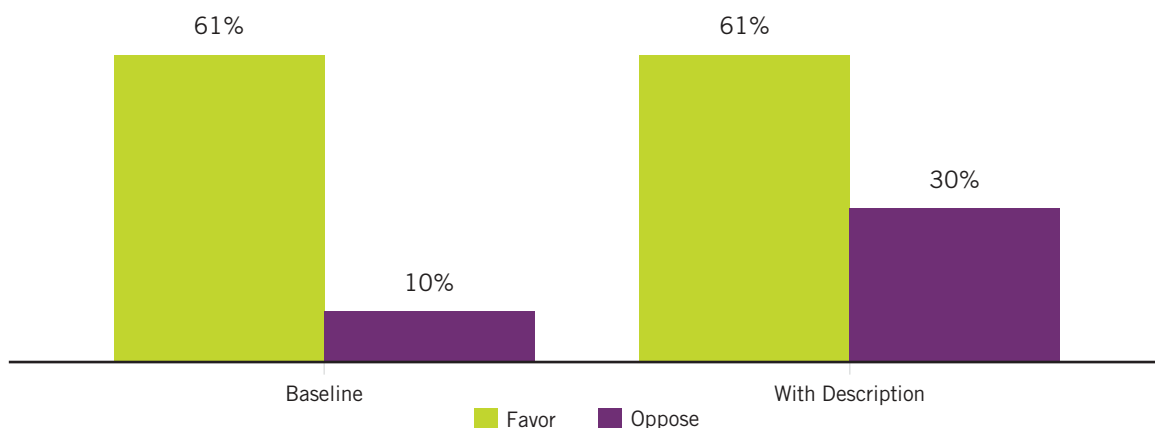
are: urbanites (44%), Northeasterners (42%), and postgraduates (36%).

Subgroup differences are also visible on the description item. Male legislators (66%) are much more likely than female legislators (46%) to favor the survey’s definition provided of ESA. Northeasterners (44%) stand out as the most likely to oppose ESAs compared with other regions. Seven out of 10 Westerners (71%) said they would support ESAs, and just 24 percent opposed them. Urbanites (50%) are roughly twice as likely to oppose ESAs than suburbanites (25%) and small town-rural legislators (26%). Republicans (82%) were much more likely to support ESAs compared with Democrats (23%). Young legislators (69%) are more likely to say they support ESAs than senior legislators (57%). There is a big gap in support between college graduates (72%) and postgraduates (46%). Approximately four out of 10 postgraduates (43%) said they opposed ESAs. Legislators who have started office since 2011 (66%) are more favorable toward ESAs than those who had started before 2011 (53%). The subgroups most likely to oppose ESAs are: Democrats (62%), urbanites (50%), Non-Blaine State (49%), Northeasterners (44%), postgraduates (43%), and legislators starting office before 2011 (40%).

FIGURE 5

State Legislators' Views on Education Savings Accounts (ESAs)

*Legislators' initial level of support does not change after hearing a description of ESAs.
(Percentage of All Respondents)*



Source: EdChoice, *Questionnaire, Results, and Additional Data: Surveying State Legislators Project* (Indianapolis: EdChoice, 2016), Q14 and Q15, <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Surveying-State-Legislators-Questionnaire-.pdf>.

TABLE 6**State Legislators' Views on Education Savings Accounts (ESAs), With Description**

Legislator subgroups most likely to support ESAs are Republicans, college graduates, age 18 to 54, have three to eight years of experience, and located in the West. By far, Democratic legislators are most likely to oppose ESAs. The average margin (+31 points) is positive and large.

	Strongly/Somewhat Favor	Strongly/Somewhat Oppose	Margin	N =
ALL RESPONDENTS	61%	30%	31	344
PARTY ID				
Democrat	23%	62%	-39	115
Republican	82%	12%	70	218
REGION				
Northeast	44%	44%	even	72
Midwest	63%	29%	34	100
South	63%	25%	38	97
West	71%	24%	47	75
COMMUNITY				
Urban	41%	50%	-9	64
Suburban	68%	25%	43	105
Small Town-Rural	64%	26%	38	173
GENDER				
Female	46%	36%	10	87
Male	66%	28%	38	257
AGE GROUP				
18 to 54	69%	21%	48	110
55 & Over	57%	33%	24	207
LEGISLATIVE EXPERIENCE				
1–2 Years	62%	24%	38	129
3–8 Years	71%	24%	47	112
9+ Years	48%	44%	4	103
TENURE START				
≥ 2011	66%	24%	42	207
< 2011	53%	40%	13	136
ON EDUCATION COMMITTEE?				
Yes	59%	28%	31	85
No	62%	30%	31	257
LEVEL OF EDUCATION				
< College	64%	24%	40	80
College	72%	22%	49	130
Postgraduate	46%	43%	3	122

Source: EdChoice, *Questionnaire, Results, and Additional Data: Surveying State Legislators Project* (Indianapolis: EdChoice, 2016), Q14 and Q15, <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Surveying-State-Legislators-Questionnaire-.pdf>.

Notes: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in the United States and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews. The total number of responses within a given demographic may not add up to the total number of completed interviews in the Study Sample. We were unable to collect some respondents' background information via internet search. Because of rounding, taking the difference of values between the "Favor" and "Oppose" columns may not correspond with the "Margin" column value by ± one point.

Views on School Vouchers

A majority of state legislators (52%) said they support school vouchers, compared with 40 percent who said they oppose such an educational choice system. The margin of support is +12 points. Legislators were more likely to express an intensely favorable view toward school vouchers by +9 points (38% “strongly favor” vs. 29% “strongly oppose”).

Similar to the pair of ESA questions, our interviewers asked baseline and follow-up description questions about school vouchers. In the first question, respondents were asked for their views on school vouchers without a definition or any other context: 52 percent of legislators said they favored vouchers; 36 percent said they opposed such a policy. The follow-up question with a basic description for a school voucher system did not produce a major impact. Support was unchanged (52%), while opposition increased only four points to 40 percent.

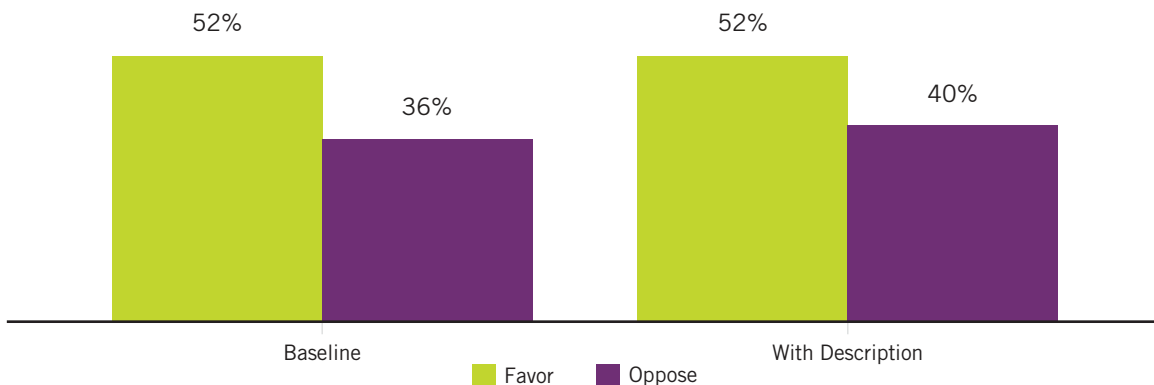
We estimate 11 percent of the legislators were initially unfamiliar with school vouchers. The proportion of “don’t know” or “no answer” responses shrinks by five points (11% to 6%) when comparing the baseline and description items. Initially, Northeasterners (19%) were the most

likely subgroup to say they “have never heard of school vouchers,” “don’t know,” or “no answer.”

Legislator subgroups vary regarding their support or opposition toward school vouchers. Midwesterners (55%) and Southerners (62%) are significantly more likely to support vouchers than Northeasterners (38%). Legislators living in suburbs (65%) and small towns-rural areas (54%) are about twice as likely as urbanites (28%) to say they support vouchers. Republicans (74%) are about five times as likely as Democrats (14%) to support vouchers. Young legislators (62%) are more likely to favor vouchers than senior legislators (49%). Another big gap in support of vouchers emerges between college graduates (64%) and postgraduates (36%).

Newer legislators who entered office since 2011 (59%) are significantly more likely than those who started office before 2011 (43%). Those living in a Blaine State (56%) are more likely to favor school vouchers than those living in states without a restrictive Blaine Amendment (44%). The subgroups most likely to oppose school vouchers are: Democrats (80%), urbanites (66%), postgraduates (57%), Northeasterners (56%), legislators starting office before 2011 (53%), and Non-Blaine State (49%).

FIGURE 6 State Legislators' Views on School Vouchers
Legislators' initial level of support does not change after hearing a description of school vouchers.
(Percentage of All Respondents)



Source: EdChoice, *Questionnaire, Results, and Additional Data: Surveying State Legislators Project* (Indianapolis: EdChoice, 2016), Q12 and Q13, <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Surveying-State-Legislators-Questionnaire-.pdf>.

TABLE 7**State Legislators' Views on School Vouchers, With Description**

Legislator subgroups most likely to support school vouchers are Republicans, college graduates, age 18 to 54, and located in the South. Democrats and urban legislators are the most likely groups to oppose vouchers. The average margin (+12 points) is positive, and lower than what is observed for public charter schools (+45 points) and ESAs (+31 points).

	Strongly/Somewhat Favor	Strongly/Somewhat Oppose	Margin	N =
ALL RESPONDENTS	52%	40%	12	344
PARTY ID				
Democrat	14%	80%	-66	115
Republican	74%	18%	56	218
REGION				
Northeast	38%	56%	-18	72
Midwest	55%	37%	18	100
South	62%	31%	31	97
West	51%	43%	8	75
COMMUNITY				
Urban	28%	66%	-38	64
Suburban	65%	31%	33	105
Small Town-Rural	54%	37%	17	173
GENDER				
Female	44%	48%	-5	87
Male	55%	38%	18	257
AGE GROUP				
18 to 54	62%	31%	31	110
55 & Over	49%	44%	5	207
LEGISLATIVE EXPERIENCE				
1–2 Years	55%	35%	20	129
3–8 Years	58%	36%	22	112
9+ Years	43%	52%	-10	103
TENURE START				
≥ 2011	59%	32%	26	207
< 2011	43%	53%	-10	136
ON EDUCATION COMMITTEE?				
Yes	53%	41%	12	85
No	53%	40%	12	257
LEVEL OF EDUCATION				
< College	55%	33%	23	80
College	64%	32%	32	130
Postgraduate	36%	57%	-21	122

Source: EdChoice, *Questionnaire, Results, and Additional Data: Surveying State Legislators Project* (Indianapolis: EdChoice, 2016), Q12 and Q13, <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Surveying-State-Legislators-Questionnaire-.pdf>.

Notes: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in the United States and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews. The total number of responses within a given demographic may not add up to the total number of completed interviews in the Study Sample. We were unable to collect some respondents' background information via internet search. Because of rounding, taking the difference of values between the "Favor" and "Oppose" columns may not correspond with the "Margin" column value by ± one point.

Views on Public Charter Schools

State legislators in the study sample are three times as likely to support charter schools as oppose them. Two out of three respondents (67%) said they favor charter schools, whereas 22 percent said they oppose charters. The margin of support for charter schools is very large (+45 points). Legislators were nearly four times as likely to express strong positive responses compared with strong negative responses (42% “strongly favor” vs. 11% “strongly oppose”).

We also asked a pair of questions about public charter schools. The first question inquired without giving any description. On this baseline question, 64 percent of respondents said they favored charters and 21 percent said they opposed them. In the follow-up question with a description, legislators were given a basic definition for a charter school. With that context, support climbed a few points to 67 percent, and opposition inched upward by one point to 22 percent.

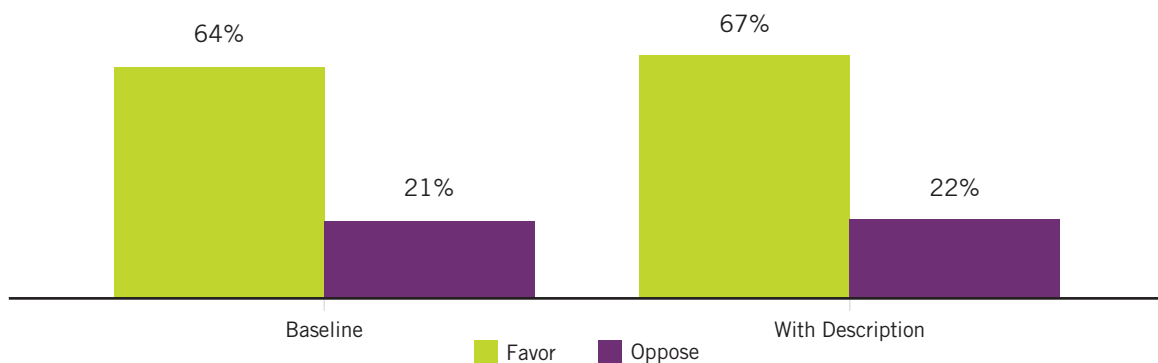
The proportion of “don’t know” or “no answer” responses shrinks by six points (15% to 9%) when comparing the baseline and description items. Nearly 3 percent of the respondents said they

disagreed with the description that was provided. Based on responses to the description question, Northeastern legislators (26%) were the most likely to say they “have never heard of charter schools,” “don’t know,” or “no answer.”

Positive views on charter schools span across most demographic subgroups. Male legislators (70%) are more likely to support charter schools than females (56%). Westerners (83%) and Southerners (74%) were significantly more likely to support charters than Northeasterners (43%) and the study sample average (67%). Three out of four suburban respondents (75%) said they favored charter schools, which is much higher when compared with urbanites (53%).

Republicans (86%) are more than twice as likely as Democrats (33%) to support charter schools. Young legislators significantly differ from senior legislators (76% favor vs. 63% favor). Those living in a Blaine State (74%) are much more likely to favor charters than those living in states without a restrictive Blaine Amendment (50%). The subgroups most likely to oppose charter schools are: Democrats (52%), Northeasterners (35%), urbanites (34%), and postgraduates (29%).

FIGURE 7 State Legislators' Views on Public Charter Schools
Legislators' initial level of support barely changes after hearing a description of charter schools.
(Percentage of All Respondents)



Source: EdChoice, *Questionnaire, Results, and Additional Data: Surveying State Legislators Project* (Indianapolis: EdChoice, 2016), Q10 and Q11, <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Surveying-State-Legislators-Questionnaire-.pdf>.

TABLE 8**State Legislators' Views on Public Charter Schools, With Description**

Across the board, most legislator subgroups are largely supportive of charter schools. Democratic lawmakers are the only subgroup to be more likely to oppose charters. Northeasterners appear to be lukewarm to charters.

	Strongly/Somewhat Favor	Strongly/Somewhat Oppose	Margin	N =
ALL RESPONDENTS	67%	22%	45	344
PARTY ID				
Democrat	33%	52%	-19	115
Republican	86%	5%	82	218
REGION				
Northeast	43%	35%	8	72
Midwest	64%	24%	40	100
South	74%	18%	57	97
West	83%	12%	71	75
COMMUNITY				
Urban	53%	34%	19	64
Suburban	75%	15%	60	105
Small Town-Rural	67%	21%	45	173
GENDER				
Female	56%	29%	28	87
Male	70%	20%	51	257
AGE GROUP				
18 to 54	76%	17%	59	110
55 & Over	63%	24%	39	207
LEGISLATIVE EXPERIENCE				
1–2 Years	63%	21%	42	129
3–8 Years	76%	16%	60	112
9+ Years	61%	29%	32	103
TENURE START				
≥ 2011	68%	20%	48	207
< 2011	65%	25%	40	136
ON EDUCATION COMMITTEE?				
Yes	66%	21%	45	85
No	67%	22%	44	257
LEVEL OF EDUCATION				
< College	70%	20%	50	80
College	72%	18%	54	130
Postgraduate	58%	29%	30	122

Source: EdChoice, *Questionnaire, Results, and Additional Data: Surveying State Legislators Project* (Indianapolis: EdChoice, 2016), Q10 and Q11, <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Surveying-State-Legislators-Questionnaire-.pdf>.

Notes: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in the United States and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews. The total number of responses within a given demographic may not add up to the total number of completed interviews in the Study Sample. We were unable to collect some respondents' background information via internet search. Because of rounding, taking the difference of values between the "Favor" and "Oppose" columns may not correspond with the "Margin" column value by \pm one point.

Trustworthy Sources of Information Regarding K–12 Education

Who do state legislators trust as reliable information sources? On a scale from 0 to 10, we asked legislators how trustworthy they deem specific sources, and the results are not too surprising. Respondents were most likely to say personal contacts and networks were trustworthy—82 percent gave a rating of 8, 9, or 10. Nearly two out of three (65%) appeared to value the communications from district residents via email, phone, or postal mail. Six out of 10 respondents (61%) said they could rely on legislative staff. About half (49%) assigned high ratings of trust to public meetings. Other sources were not considered to be as trustworthy.

None of the following sources garnered high trust ratings (aggregated 8, 9, or 10 ratings) from more than roughly one-fifth of the study sample: interest groups (21%), lobbyists (16%), public opinion surveys/polls (12%), and the news media (5%).

Frequency Using Specific Types of Media to Learn About K–12 Education

Legislators use different types of media to learn about current news and developments in K–12 education, and the frequency of use varies quite a bit. In terms of daily use, nothing beats the state capital’s local newspaper or personal contacts/networks. Forty-one percent said they rely daily on the state capital’s local newspaper for K–12 news. Two out of five said personal contacts and networks (40%) were used daily. That finding makes sense considering the relatively high levels of trust legislators place on those relationships. Nearly one-third of respondents said they followed one of the major networks’ (ABC, CBS, NBC) nightly news broadcasts (31%) or cable network news (31%) daily to learn about K–12

education. Half that proportion (15%) said they listened to NPR every day for K–12 information.

Legislators also utilize social media. About one-quarter of respondents (26%) said they use Facebook every day for K–12 education information. Eleven percent cited daily use of Twitter. Small numbers of respondents said they used public meetings (2%) or public opinions surveys/polls (1%) on a daily basis.

When considering expanded time frames, some sources appear more likely to be used on a weekly or monthly basis:

- At least weekly (including daily responses): personal contacts/networks (85%), state capital newspaper (66%), cable network news (56%), major network nightly news (46%), NPR (34%), Facebook (45%), Twitter (20%), public meetings (20%), public opinion surveys/polls (10%).
- At least monthly (including daily and weekly responses): personal contacts/networks (98%), state capital newspaper (80%), public meetings (79%), cable network news (66%), Facebook (56%), major network nightly news (54%), NPR (45%), public opinion surveys/polls (42%), Twitter (26%).

Most Important Issue Facing Their States

About midway through the survey’s questionnaire, and before asking specifically about K–12 education matters, we asked the question: “What do you see as the most important issue facing your state right now?” Of those legislators who gave a specific response, the “economy/jobs” was the most pressing issue for her/his state.⁵⁹ A plurality (29%) of legislators shared that type of open response. State government revenue and budgetary concerns (25%) was the second-most cited specific response. K–12 education (16%) registered the third-most frequent response.

TABLE 9

State Legislators Giving a High Trustworthy Rating to a Specific Source of Information About K–12 Education Issues

Legislators deem personal contacts/networks, constituents, and legislative staff as the most trustworthy sources of information when it comes to matters about K–12 education.

(Respondents Saying 8, 9, or 10, on a 0 to 10 Scale)

	Personal Contacts/ Networks	Constituents	Legislative Staff
ALL RESPONDENTS	82%	65%	61%
PARTY ID			
Democrat	90%	73%	72%
Republican	77%	60%	56%
REGION			
Northeast	81%	64%	57%
Midwest	81%	57%	65%
South	85%	72%	61%
West	81%	65%	61%
COMMUNITY			
Urban	86%	67%	81%
Suburban	80%	53%	50%
Small Town-Rural	82%	70%	61%
GENDER			
Female	86%	70%	63%
Male	81%	63%	61%
AGE GROUP			
18 to 54	81%	62%	56%
55 & Over	84%	67%	66%
LEGISLATIVE EXPERIENCE			
1–2 Years	84%	64%	61%
3–8 Years	84%	65%	54%
9+ Years	78%	64%	71%
TENURE START			
≥ 2011	83%	64%	57%
< 2011	82%	65%	68%
ON EDUCATION COMMITTEE?			
Yes	85%	59%	62%
No	81%	67%	61%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION			
< College	83%	70%	73%
College	82%	69%	54%
Postgraduate	83%	57%	62%

Source: EdChoice, *Questionnaire, Results, and Additional Data: Surveying State Legislators Project* (Indianapolis: EdChoice, 2016), Q8, <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Surveying-State-Legislators-Questionnaire-.pdf>.

Notes: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in the United States and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews. The total number of responses within a given demographic may not add up to the total number of completed interviews in the Study Sample. We were unable to collect some respondents' background information via internet search.

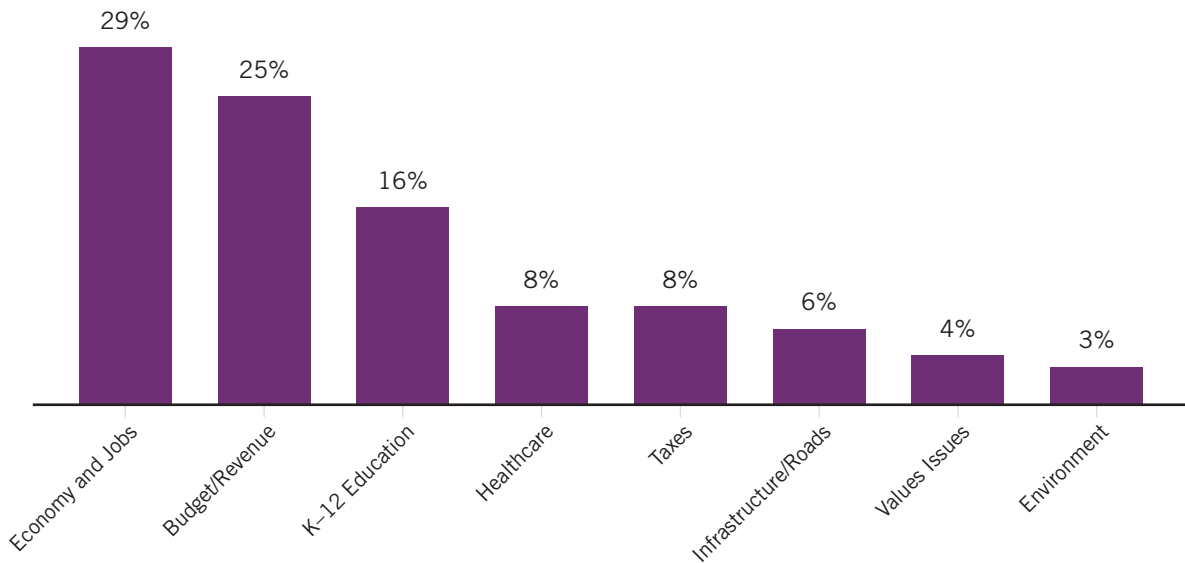
Public Meetings	Interest Groups	Lobbyists	Public Opinion Surveys/Polls	News/Media
49%	21%	16%	12%	5%
59%	31%	20%	17%	9%
44%	16%	13%	9%	3%
54%	19%	8%	17%	4%
46%	26%	18%	9%	5%
54%	21%	22%	14%	9%
41%	15%	12%	7%	1%
55%	34%	25%	14%	8%
42%	20%	13%	8%	3%
51%	16%	13%	13%	5%
56%	36%	22%	17%	8%
46%	16%	14%	10%	4%
46%	17%	15%	12%	4%
51%	23%	17%	12%	7%
47%	26%	15%	12%	7%
52%	13%	16%	10%	3%
48%	21%	17%	13%	6%
46%	21%	15%	12%	6%
53%	21%	18%	12%	4%
52%	24%	18%	15%	2%
48%	20%	15%	10%	6%
50%	26%	20%	14%	5%
49%	19%	15%	9%	3%
48%	21%	13%	14%	8%

TABLE 10**State Legislators Saying How Frequently They Use a Specific Medium to Learn About K–12 Education (Percentage of All Respondents)***Legislators use a wide variety of media to learn about K–12 education—most notably personal contacts/networks and the state capital newspaper.*

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Hardly Ever/Never
Capital Newspaper	41%	25%	14%	20%
Personal Contacts/Networks	40%	44%	13%	2%
Cable Network News	31%	24%	11%	34%
Nightly Network News	31%	15%	8%	46%
Facebook	26%	20%	11%	44%
NPR	15%	19%	11%	55%
Twitter	11%	9%	6%	73%
Public Meetings	2%	19%	58%	20%
Public Opinion Surveys/Polls	1%	8%	33%	57%

Source: EdChoice, *Questionnaire, Results, and Additional Data: Surveying State Legislators Project* (Indianapolis: EdChoice, 2016), Q8, <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Surveying-State-Legislators-Questionnaire-.pdf>.

Notes: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in the United States and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews. The total number of responses within a given demographic may not add up to the total number of completed interviews in the Study Sample. We were unable to collect some respondents' background information via internet search.

FIGURE 8**Most Frequently Mentioned Top Issue Among State Legislators***(Percentage of Specific Responses, N = 240)*

Source: EdChoice, *Questionnaire, Results, and Additional Data: Surveying State Legislators Project* (Indianapolis: EdChoice, 2016), Q6, <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Surveying-State-Legislators-Questionnaire-.pdf>.

There are statistically significant differences across demographics. Female legislators (25%) were almost twice as likely as males (13%) to signal K–12 education as a top concern. Just one Northeastern legislator pointed to education as a priority, out of 39 who gave that specific response. In stark contrast, 34 percent of Western legislators pointed to K–12 education. Democrats (24%) were twice as likely as Republicans (12%) to respond that way.

Job Challenges, Time Use, and Time Management

The very first question of the interview asked legislators about the “biggest challenge” on the job. It was an open-ended question, so respondents were allowed to offer a couple sentences or phrases to describe what tends to be challenging for them. The following are examples of actual legislator responses:

- “Having enough time to deal with and understand all the issues we deal with as legislators in our state.”
- “Having the time to gather all the facts before making the right decision.”
- “Making sure I get all the necessary, comprehensive information in a short, compressed time.”
- “Prioritizing the issues I work. You can’t do it all.”
- “The all-nighters when we are in session.”
- “Time commitments. We are in session from January through April. It is difficult being away from family and my career.”⁶⁰

The open-ended responses generally fell within 13 categories, which coders used to group the responses in order to detect any patterns or consistencies.

One general type of response stands out: time management. More than one out of five legislators (22%) cited the aspect of time as the single biggest challenge in their work. If we combine that kind of response with those specifically citing the challenges of being a part-time legislator and balancing two or more “jobs,” then the challenge of time does appear to be the hardest aspect of being a legislator. Thirty-nine respondents mentioned the balancing act of being a part-time legislator. In total, about one-third of the study sample (36%) suggested some aspect of time management being their biggest challenge.

The differences between younger and senior legislators (age 18–54 vs. age 55+) showed the only statistically significant difference between observed demographic subgroups. Thirty percent of younger legislators mentioned time use and management being a serious issue, whereas 19 percent of older legislators said the same. Interestingly, when looking at years of experience (1–2 years vs. 3–8 years vs. 9+ years), there were no significant differences across the three subgroup categories. A legislator’s stage in life appears to be more of a factor than years of experience regarding how one handles time management in the legislature.

What were some other common job challenges mentioned by legislators at the beginning of the interviews? Four other general responses clustered together: partisanship (27%); budgets and finance (18%); constituent services (17%); and working on legislation (16%).

TABLE 11**Biggest Challenges Facing State Legislators***(Percentage of Coded Responses, N = 321)**Time management/being part-time is the most commonly cited concern.*

	Percent
Time Management, Being Part-Time	36%
Partisanship	27%
Budget, Finance Issues	18%
Constituent Service	17%
Working on Bills/Legislation	16%
Staying Current on Issues, Learning Issues	15%
Issue Advocacy	10%
Bureaucracy (State, Federal)	7%
Lack of Experience	5%
Accurate Information	4%
Limited Staff, Resources	3%

Source: EdChoice, *Questionnaire, Results, and Additional Data: Surveying State Legislators Project* (Indianapolis: EdChoice, 2016), Q1, <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Surveying-State-Legislators-Questionnaire-.pdf>.

So it has been established time management is a prominent issue for legislators in the study sample. In a follow-up question, we asked legislators if they spend “too much,” “too little,” or the “right amount” of time on eight activities that would seem to be part of the job description:

- committee meetings,
- communications via social media,
- fundraising,
- meetings with constituents,
- meetings with interest groups,
- political party meetings,
- responding to news media, and
- working on legislation.

Average response levels varied depending on the activity. The highest and lowest levels—spending too much time or too little time—suggest frustration points for lawmakers.

No more than one-fifth of our sample would say they spend too much time on any given activity, so the levels themselves are not that noteworthy. However, when comparing the levels across activities, a few signals appear to light up. Relatively speaking, attending political party-related meetings (21%) and fundraising (17%) are the two areas where lawmakers most likely feel they devote too much time. Lawmakers are about three times as likely to say they spend too much time on party-related or fundraising activities compared with constituent meetings (4%), dealing with the news media (6%), using social media (6%), or working on legislation (6%).

At least one-quarter of legislators in the study sample said they spend too little time on each of a handful of activities. Nearly two out of five (39%) said they spend too little time on social media communications like Facebook and Twitter. Working on legislation (36%), fundraising (35%), and meeting constituents (29%) were the next three activities where lawmakers would like to allocate more time.

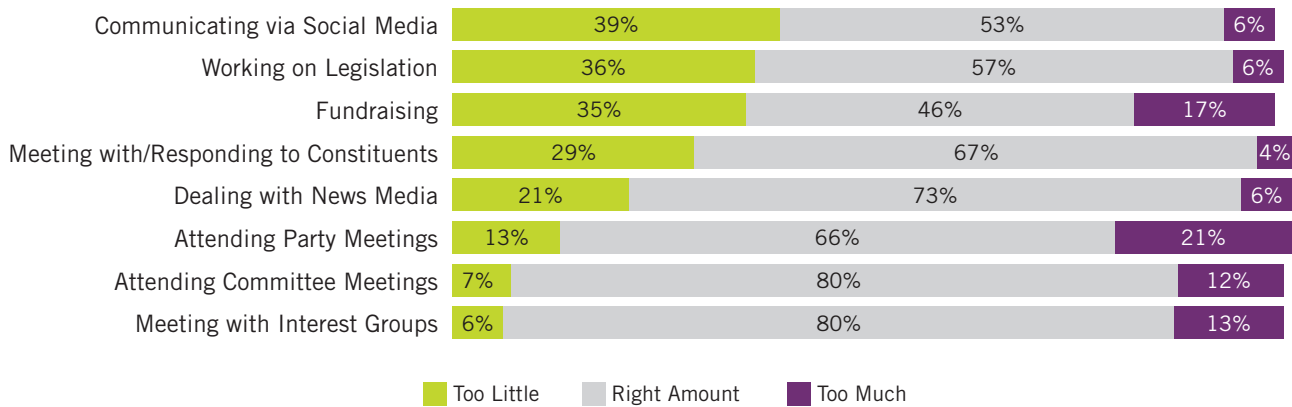
Next, we take the difference between the “too much” and “too little” responses to each activity, while discounting the “right amount” responses simply as neutral. The net results appear to indicate where lawmakers are hoping to increase or decrease time on the activity. The larger the absolute value of the net result, we interpret that activity as having greater “intensity.”

Lawmakers are more likely to want to increase time on communications via social media (+33 points), working on legislation (+30 points), and constituent meetings (+25 points). On the other hand, they give an impression they want to spend less time on party-related meetings (-8 points), interest group meetings (-7 points), and legislative committee meetings (-5 points).

FIGURE 9**Amount of Time Spent on Different Legislator Activities**

Substantial proportions of lawmakers would like to spend more time utilizing social media, working on legislation, and fundraising.

(Percentage of All Respondents)



Source: EdChoice, *Questionnaire, Results, and Additional Data: Surveying State Legislators Project* (Indianapolis: EdChoice, 2016), Q3, <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Surveying-State-Legislators-Questionnaire-.pdf>.

Influences on Legislative Priorities and Voting

What are the factors influencing how legislators develop their agendas and cast their votes?

We asked respondents to gauge on a scale of 0 to 10 (lowest to highest importance) seven potential influences on their decision-making. The answers indicate a broad spectrum portraying inputs of relatively high importance to low importance. Here we focus on the proportions of respondents who assigned an 8, 9, or 10, to the various influences.

When it comes to setting an agenda and developing legislative priorities, a lawmaker’s direct experience is paramount. The vast majority of respondents (85%) said that directly communicating with constituents is of high importance. That response was followed by “professional experience” (77%) and “personal experience” (76%). Greater than one-third of legislators (36%) said that caucus leadership was highly important. Just more than one-quarter (27%) indicated the same for information provided by interest groups. On the other end of the spectrum, respondents pointed to “hot issues”

in the news (19%) and public opinion surveys/polls (13%) as very important.

Some demographic comparisons are noteworthy. Female legislators are more likely than males to assign high importance to caucus leadership (48% vs. 32%, respectively) and receiving information from interest groups (38% vs. 23%). Democrats are more likely than Republicans to assign importance to hot issues in the news media (26% vs. 16%).

When comparing regions, Southern lawmakers were significantly different than other regions on a couple of influences. They are more likely than Midwestern legislators to give high ratings to caucus leadership considerations (45% vs. 30%, respectively). Southerners are also more likely than Northeastern and Western legislators to prioritize personal experiences (84% vs. 69% vs. 71%). Northeasterners are less likely than other regions to place a high value on interest group information. Just 15 percent gave that kind of response, while Westerners (32%) were mostly likely to put high value on interest group inputs. Just 3 percent of Western legislators gave a high rating to polling, whereas closer to one out of five Northeasterners (22%) and Southerners (18%)

said that public opinion surveys were important to developing priorities.

On several items, there also appear to be some distinctions between younger and senior legislators and how they develop priorities. The latter (age 55+) is more likely than younger legislators (age 18–34) to say the following influences are of high importance: caucus leadership (42% vs. 26%), interest group information (30% vs. 18%), and polling (16% vs. 8%).

Based on legislators’ responses to the next survey question, the array and importance of influences is similar between agenda-setting and actual voting.

Once again the factor that received the highest rating for influencing voting is direct communications with constituents (82%). Female legislators and senior legislators are more likely to value these interactions than their demographic

counterparts. Both personal experience (79%) and professional experience (76%) also appear to be key influences on legislative votes. We see that older legislators emphasize personal experiences more than younger legislators (83% vs. 71%). Legislators with the most experience (≥ 9 years) prioritize their professional experiences more than the least experienced lawmakers who have one or two years of service (83% vs. 70%).

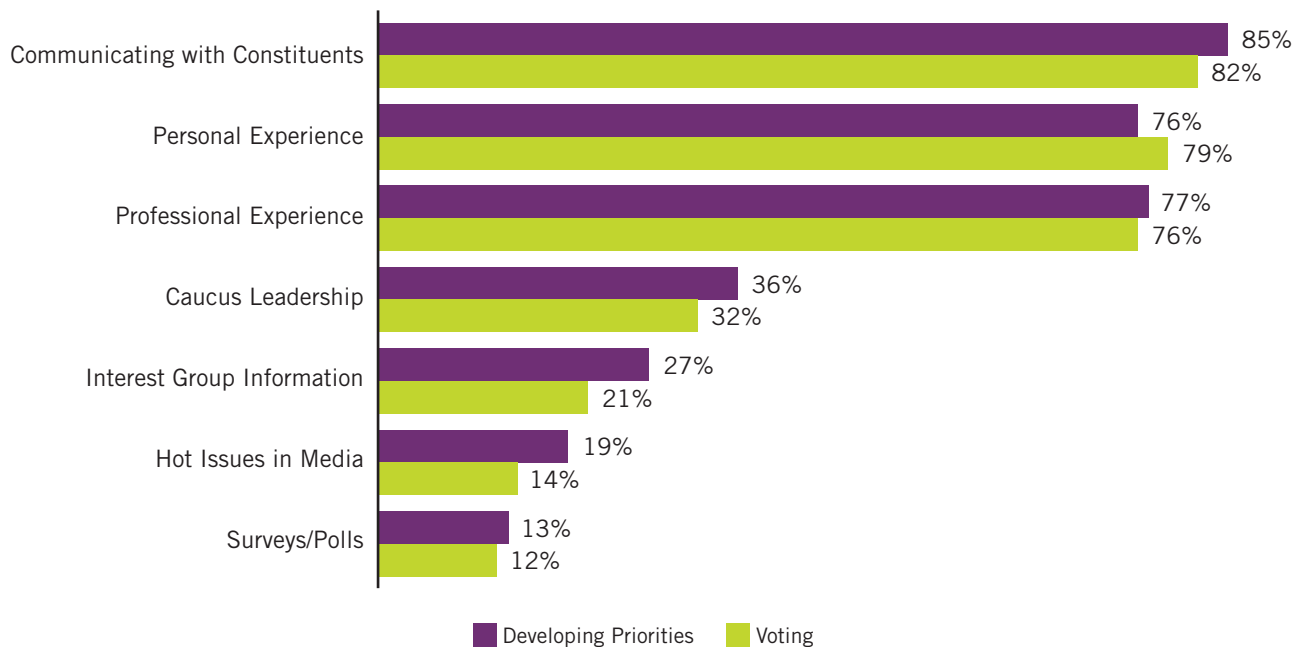
Caucus leadership is a middling influence (32%). Female legislators (44%) are more likely than males to give a high value to their caucuses (44% vs. 28%). Likewise, senior legislators appear more likely to respond to their caucus than younger legislators (39% vs. 17%). High-profile news topics (14%) and public opinion surveys (12%) are not nearly as important on votes, according to respondents. Democrats are more likely than Republicans to use polling for voting decisions (19% vs. 8%).

FIGURE 10

Percentage of State Legislators Rating a Specific Factor as Highly Important for Developing Legislative Priorities or Voting

Communications with constituents, personal experience, and professional experience were mentioned as the most important influences on setting priorities and voting.

(Percentage of All Respondents Saying 8, 9, or 10, on a 0 to 10 Scale)



Source: EdChoice, *Questionnaire, Results, and Additional Data: Surveying State Legislators Project* (Indianapolis: EdChoice, 2016), Q4 and Q5, <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Surveying-State-Legislators-Questionnaire-.pdf>.

Net Promoter Score Results and Comparisons

What is a Net Promoter Score?

Thirteen years ago, Frederick Reichheld introduced the Net Promoter Score (NPS) as a way to measure loyalty and enthusiasm among customers for a product, company, or brand.

Reichheld's 2003 article in Harvard Business Review has been widely cited and made a seismic impact on how firms and organizations assess relationships with customers and employees.⁶¹ NPS is an index that ranges from -100 to 100 that organizations use to measure the willingness of its customers to recommend a product or service to others. It can be used as a proxy for gauging the customer's overall satisfaction with a product or service or loyalty to the brand.⁶²

Essentially a survey poses a single question to a person to determine to what degree she or he would "recommend" a product or organization. The person answering is asked to give a rating on a scale of 0 to 10.

- A "Promoter" is someone who gives a 9 or 10. This person shows a high degree of loyalty, commitment, and enthusiasm.
- A "Passive" is someone who answers with a 7 or 8. This profile can be described as being satisfied and content, but not someone who would go out of her/his way to boost a brand, product, or organization.
- "Detractors" are those people who responded in the range of 0 to 6.⁶³ This group is unhappy and ready to move away from a brand, product, or organization.

The original purpose of computing NPS was to measure loyalty and attempt to predict growth.⁶⁴ Reichheld's work has shown NPS correlates with

customer and revenue growth. Though there has been research that criticized the extent to which NPS can be a predictor and whether or not it is superior to other loyalty and growth measures.⁶⁵ NPS has been validated by empirical research as a measure of customer loyalty, and some versions of NPS are commonly used today by many organizations in the private and nonprofit sectors.

More recently, Tim Legerstee developed and validated an Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS) based on the NPS method. The purpose of this adaptation was to assess employee loyalty to a given organization. Legerstee concludes in his paper:

"In short, it was found that the eNPS, the question whether or not employees of an organization would recommend their workplace, mostly is a measure of affective commitment, but also is akin to person-organization fit and intention to leave. So in organizations that have a higher eNPS, employees have a feeling that they affectively belong to an organization, that their values and beliefs are in accordance with the culture and values of the organization and are less likely to leave. To raise the eNPS, the most important thing that employers can do is to raise the work atmosphere, because employees who laugh more and show more collegiality towards each other, tend to recommend their employer sooner. Adequate leadership, a strong vision and ambition and relieving workload are all useful tools for raising this score too. Raising the eNPS means that employees fit better in the organization, are more affectively committed and would sooner recommend their workplace so that the organization is a more attractive one to work for."⁶⁶

Why Use Net Promoter Score with State Legislators?

Because eNPS measures employee attitudes in the workplace, this variant on NPS probably comes even closer to what we are hoping to measure about the legislative profession. We are not trying to measure loyalty or commitment to a brand or product. Rather, we want to better understand how legislators view their jobs.

The appeal of adapting NPS and eNPS for the purposes of our survey is threefold.

First, we wanted to capture a sense of legislators' commitment to their jobs in the simplest and most straight-forward way. An NPS approach is ideal for the phone interview and allows more time to be devoted to other substantive questions.

Second, we thought that attempting to measure loyalty could be more meaningful than trying to use a typical question, explicitly asking about job satisfaction. The issue of social desirability bias can be a serious challenge when surveying public officials who can be very keen to “staying on message,” or any verbal miscues, especially if it related to an elected position.⁶⁷ In other words, we wanted to minimize the chance that legislators would try to give what they perceive as the socially desirable response—in this case, a highly positive rating for their legislative job. We thought the “would recommend” focus of NPS wording would not be as prone to satisficing when compared with a typical job satisfaction item or set of items.

Third, reporting the results of an item based on NPS should be straight-forward and potentially actionable. If comparisons between Promoters, Passives, and Detractors, show statistically significant differences, then there could be implications for those who are currently committed to being a legislator and those who are either passive or disillusioned. For example, to what extent should peers, political parties, and

legislatures themselves try to increase job loyalty among legislators? Are there tradeoffs?

State Legislators' Net Promoter Score Results

We adapted the NPS question for our survey and used the following wording:

“On a scale from 0 to 10, how likely is it that you would recommend serving as a state legislator to a friend or colleague?”

A majority of respondents enthusiastically endorsed and recommended the job of a state legislator. In our survey's study sample, there were 184 Promoters (54%), 107 Passives (31%), and 44 Detractors (13%). The responses of the last two subgroups can also be combined to represent Non-Promoters (n = 151; 44%). Using the NPS method, our survey of state legislators produced a Net Promoter Score of 41 for a state legislator.

What does a score of 41 actually suggest? Is that a high score or low score? Obviously the legislative profession is not a product or necessarily a brand, so how can we use legislators' Net Promoter Scores to better understand their profession and K-12 decisions? I suggest possible answers to those questions and the potential for implications in the Discussion section later in this report. For the remainder of the current section, I report brief takeaways and comparisons, when significant, across three subgroups: Promoters, Passives, and Detractors. We want to know if there are real dissimilarities when comparing those designated NPS groups.

TABLE 12**State Legislators by Net Promoter Score (NPS) Groups**

NPS Subgroups based on responses to the following question: "On a scale from 0 to 10, how likely is it that you would recommend serving as a state legislator to a friend or colleague?"

	Promoter (9 or 10)	Passive (7 or 8)	Detractor (0 to 6)	NPS	N =
ALL RESPONDENTS	54%	31%	13%	41	344
PARTY ID					
Democrat	54%	32%	11%	43	115
Republican	53%	31%	14%	39	218
REGION					
Northeast	68%	21%	8%	60	72
Midwest	62%	26%	10%	52	100
South	47%	36%	16%	32	97
West	36%	41%	17%	19	75
COMMUNITY					
Urban	48%	31%	17%	31	64
Suburban	48%	33%	14%	33	105
Small Town-Rural	59%	30%	10%	49	173
GENDER					
Female	60%	28%	8%	52	87
Male	51%	32%	14%	37	257
AGE GROUP					
18 to 54	53%	34%	12%	41	110
55 & Over	56%	30%	12%	44	207
LEGISLATIVE EXPERIENCE					
1–2 Years	57%	32%	9%	47	129
3–8 Years	48%	33%	16%	32	112
9+ Years	55%	28%	14%	42	103
TENURE START					
≥ 2011	53%	34%	10%	43	207
< 2011	55%	27%	16%	39	136
ON EDUCATION COMMITTEE?					
Yes	52%	31%	14%	38	85
No	54%	32%	13%	42	257
LEVEL OF EDUCATION					
< College	63%	28%	6%	56	80
College	49%	32%	17%	32	130
Postgraduate	50%	35%	13%	37	122

Source: EdChoice, *Questionnaire, Results, and Additional Data: Surveying State Legislators Project* (Indianapolis: EdChoice, 2016), Q2, <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Surveying-State-Legislators-Questionnaire-.pdf>.

Notes: We measure an NPS Score by subtracting the percentage of "Detractor" responses from the percentage of "Promoter" responses. The difference indicates loyalty and commitment within a specific population for the job of state legislator. Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in the United States and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews. The total number of responses within a given demographic may not add up to the total number of completed interviews in the Study Sample. We were unable to collect some respondents'

Views on the Issues by Net Promoter Score

Demographics

Differences in geography and gender appear to matter on the propensity of a legislator to fit one of the NPS profiles. The regional breakout is interesting: 68 percent of Northeastern legislators were Promoters, compared with 62 percent of Midwesterners, 47 percent of Southerners, and 36 percent of Westerners. That range reflects the widest variation for any observed demographic category. On most demographic breakouts, the Promoter averages tend to cluster around 50 or 55 percent. Legislators from small towns and rural areas were also more likely to be Promoters than those living in either urban or suburban areas (61% vs. 57% vs. 48% vs. 48%, respectively). Gender differences are observed as well. Female legislators (60%) appear to be more likely than male legislators (51%) to be Promoters. We did not detect significant differences across subgroups within the following demographic categories: Party ID, Age, Legislative Experience, Chamber (i.e. House vs. Senate), and Education Attainment.

Educational Choice

What NPS subgroup differences emerge when examining responses to the questions about vouchers, ESAs, and public charter schools? The short answer is that we see superficial differences in most cases. The levels of opposition across questions were basically the same across the NPS subgroups. A couple differences stood out, but their meaning is unclear: Non-Promoters (72%) were more likely than Promoters (61%) to support public charter schools. However, Promoters were less likely to give an opinion. Sixteen percent would not share a view on charter schools compared to seven percent of Non-Promoters. We detected no significantly different levels of NPS subgroup support or opposition to school vouchers or ESAs.

Trustworthy Sources of K–12 Information

How do NPS subgroups compare on the kinds of sources they trust for gathering information on K–12 education? Promoters are generally more trustworthy of various sources of K–12 education information than are Detractors, with respect to constituent communications (69% vs. 52%), interest groups (23% vs. 9%), and lobbyists (17% vs. 7%). Promoters are generally more trustworthy of public meetings for gathering K–12 education information than are Passives (54% vs. 41%). Promoters (15%) are more likely to trust public opinion surveys for K–12 education information than Non-Promoters (8%).

Frequency of Using Information Sources

How do NPS subgroups differ based on how often they use various sources for learning about K–12 education matters? Nearly half of Promoters (46%) use personal contacts/networks daily to learn about K–12 education, compared with 33 percent of Passives. Thirty-seven percent of Promoters use nightly network news “daily” for learning about K–12 education, which is more than the frequencies of Passives (22%) and Detractors (30%). Three out of four Passives (76%) say they read the state capital’s newspaper at least weekly, compared with 62 percent of Promoters. Passives are more likely than Promoters to say they “hardly ever” use cable network news (28% vs. 8%) or use nightly network news (30% vs. 15%) to learn about K–12 education.

The frequency of using social media also differs across NPS subgroups. Nearly one-third of Promoters (30%) use Facebook daily, compared with Non-Promoters (21%). The latter (25%) appear more likely to be weekly users of Facebook than Promoters (16%). When it comes to Twitter, usage in general is very low among legislators. That said, Promoters (12%) are significantly more likely to use Twitter on a daily basis, compared with Detractors (2%).

Time Use and Time Management

Passives appear frustrated with what may be perceived as a misuse of their time. They are more likely than Promoters to say they spend “too little time” on meeting with constituents (38% vs. 24%, respectively) and working on legislation (44% vs. 31%). Detractors (27%) and Passives (23%) were about twice as likely as Promoters (12%) to say they spend “too much time” on fundraising.

Legislative Priorities

What differences are there between NPS subgroups for developing legislative priorities? Promoters are more likely than Passives to say caucus leadership is highly important (42% vs. 28%). Promoters are also twice as likely than Passives to say public opinion surveys are very important for setting priorities (17% vs. 8%). That said, Promoter responses indicate that caucus leadership is still more than twice as important than polling for setting their priorities.

Voting

We also see differences among NPS subgroups when it comes to how they see factors that influence their actual voting. Promoters place more importance on caucus leadership than Detractors (36% vs. 21%). The former also say they place higher importance on interest group information than Passives (26% vs. 14%). Even while observing relatively small proportions, Promoters are more likely to use polling to inform voting decisions than either Passives or Detractors (16% vs. 8% vs. 2%, respectively).

DISCUSSION

Surveying state legislators about their activities and on views regarding educational choice topics should be meaningful on several levels.

First, many of the members in this population will be active in politics and policymaking for many years to come. Getting a sense of where state legislators’ minds are can offer a glimpse of the working lives of lawmakers. Their deliberations, actions, or inactions can have direct and lasting effects on society, especially on matters such as education, healthcare, and social welfare, among other public policy areas that are predominant at the level of state government.

Second, we are not aware of any other surveys of state legislators that have delved into specific matters of K–12 education and educational choice. Asking questions to lawmakers about K–12 education and school choice should matter because large chunks of state budgets are specifically dedicated to this general policy domain. Since 2011, state policymaking has accelerated the growth of school choice programs.

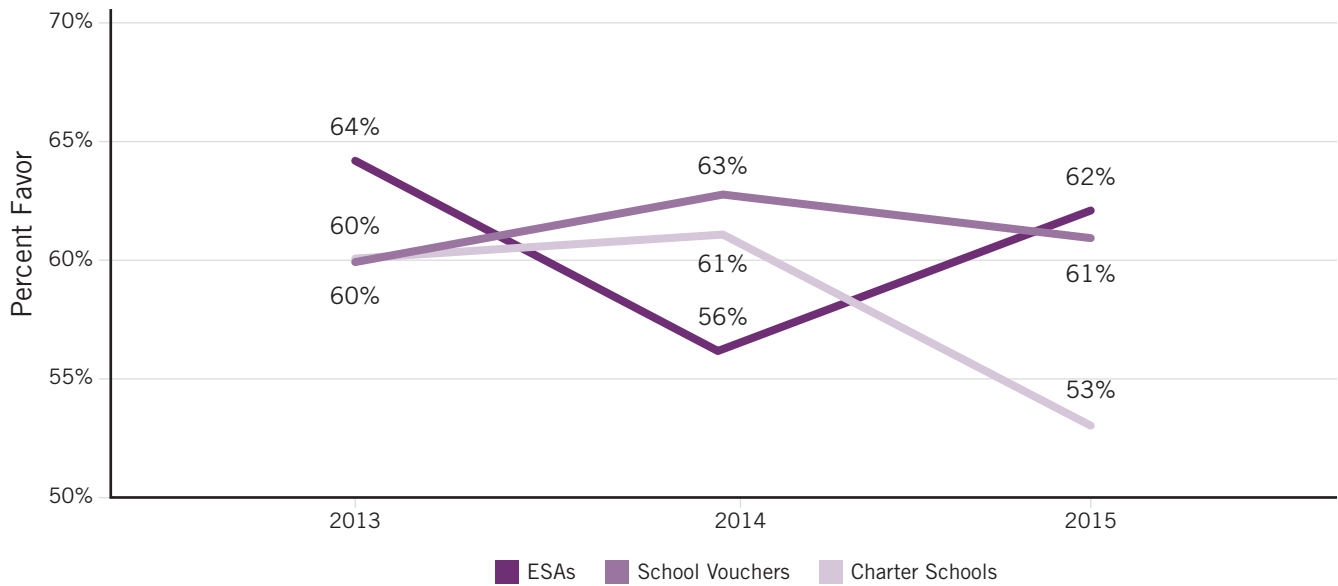
Finally, the adaptation and application of the Net Promoter classification may point to aspects of the profession that could use some attention in order to boost the proportion of legislators steadfastly committed to their constituents and work.

Five research questions have served as a guide for this survey project. How did the survey’s data address each of those questions and several pre-study expectations? In this section, I revisit those research questions and attempt to make some interpretations of the survey’s empirical findings.⁶⁸

Questions About Educational Choice

1. *What are the levels, margins, and intensities of support and opposition for types of K–12 educational choice policies, including ESAs, school vouchers, and public charter schools?*

Majorities of state legislators voiced their support for ESAs, school vouchers, and public charter schools. The margins of support were substantial:

FIGURE 11**The General Public's Support of Educational Choice Policies, 2013–2015***(With Description, Percentage of All Respondents)*

Sources: Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, *Schooling in America Survey*, 2013–2015, <https://www.edchoice.org/what-we-do/research>.

+31 points, +12 points, +45 points, respectively. Even when respondents were given the initial baseline question, without any description, lawmakers are more likely to support those policies rather than oppose them. Those results generally met expectations. In EdChoice's national and state surveys, we have seen majorities supporting various school choice policies. Though more recently there have been slightly higher levels of support for ESAs and school vouchers than public charter schools.⁶⁹

Around 2010, the public profile of charter schools appeared to be on the upsurge, receiving more positive than negative media attention. President Obama and Secretary Arne Duncan had visibly been making the case for charter schools for at least two years at that point, and other high-profile political figures celebrities were following that lead.⁷⁰ That has not necessarily been the case in recent years though, and public opinion may be responding to sensational news reports.⁷¹ Public attention and media trends appear to have been status quo or going slightly in a more positive direction for private school choice reforms like ESAs and vouchers.⁷²

Is it plausible that state legislators are lagging public opinion when it comes to views on public policies and social trends? Opinion differences between elites and the general public have been documented in the research literature as well.⁷³ Elected officials may eventually arrive at where public opinion appears to be right now. This could offer at least a partial explanation for the differences we see comparing the study sample with previous national and state surveys we have conducted. This has a clear implication for reformers and advocates on the issue: Educate legislators about where the general public and state voters stand on these issues. It will be more effective to show legislators where their constituents stand on educational choice issues.

2. *What types of information sources do state legislators trust and use for making decisions on K–12 education matters?*

Engaging state legislators' social networks is critical for earning their attention and serious consideration to make an issue a priority. Based on our interviews it is clear that respondents trusted their personal contacts above all else

when it came to learning about matters in K–12 education. More than eight of 10 respondents (82%) indicated personal contacts and networks were highly trustworthy. Other key sources for information included direct communications with constituents and legislative staff (65% and 61% highly trustworthy, respectively). And the latter source could reasonably be considered as part of the legislator’s personal network. The frequency of tapping into these sources is important for the consideration of those seeking to educate. Forty percent of state legislators said they used their personal contacts and networks daily for learning about current events and developments in K–12 education. A vast majority (85%) said they used these networks on a weekly basis. It is clear that a legislator’s social network is the most trusted and frequently relied upon information channel for keeping up with K–12 education issues.

Emerging from these findings is a non-conventional implication for interest groups, advocates, and lobbyists, who may not yet have a personal/working relationship with a lawmaker. Rather than trying to directly access legislators themselves, it may be more effective to earn credibility and reputation by first educating those people in a legislator’s inner circle, reflecting a network-based approach to advocacy.⁷⁴

Questions About the Profession

1. What are the most significant challenges facing legislators today?

Time use and management is a huge challenge facing state lawmakers. About one-third of our study sample (36%) responded to an open-ended question saying some aspect of time use was their biggest challenge. The survey data do not equip us to say if the current environment is better or worse than in the past, but time affects legislators’ views of their work and activities. Legislators seem to be forced to rely on time-saving measures in order to meet responsibilities. Lobbyists and

advocates who want to get time to speak with a lawmaker must clear a high threshold that what they have to say is important and useful enough to obtain access. This finding implicitly suggests that a multi-channel communications approach to reaching legislators can be fruitful. Communications technologies like phone, email, and social media, can effectively complement the communications channels that are offline.

This is not a very surprising finding. State legislators need to use shortcuts in order to have even a tentative grasp on the sheer volume and range of issues, bills, and requests that come across their desks or inboxes. This year alone, more than 63,000 bills were introduced in 46 state legislatures. For any given session, and of course depending on a state, there are likely hundreds of bills a legislator is asked to consider, if not cast a vote. The state of Texas, which convenes legislators every two years, had 5,517 bill introductions in 2015 alone.⁷⁵

It makes sense that legislators feel both pressed for time as well as possibly feeling they are misallocating their own time. In our survey, at least 20 percent of respondents said that they spend too little time on five of eight activities that were mentioned. Sizable numbers of lawmakers said they do not spend enough time on social media (39%), which can potentially save time communicating positions and information to the media and constituents. They also say they do not spend enough time on matters that could be viewed as being directly related to being productive, like working on legislation (36%) and meeting constituents (29%); or focused on activities that are key to re-election chances like fundraising (35%).

The job of a legislator is not conducive to balancing time-intensive meetings or public events on isolated topics or issues with the needs of working on legislation. For example, lawmakers do not have the time nor incentive to read 50-page research reports. Time saving heuristics are essential. If a

brief text, email, or phone call to a state lawmaker's friend, advisor, colleague, or staffer can help address a decision, that appears likely to be the first, good course of action when trying to start a relationship with a legislator and her/his office.

2. *What sources of information, activities, and other external influences matter for legislative priorities and voting?*

The survey results show legislators heavily favor their own direct communications with constituents and personal and professional experiences to inform their legislative agendas and voting. In contrast to other potential sources of influence (chamber caucus, interest groups, public opinion surveys, news/social media), the latter factors do not necessarily require a third party for interpreting information. The legislator can meet with a constituent and form her/his own conclusions about need and priority of the request being made. Leaning on previous experience requires memory and recall, but that is about it.

Personal inputs are just as likely to be experienced through a legislator's life experiences and relationships/networks. Likewise, professional experiences outside the legislature are going to occur independent of the demands in the statehouse. All of these factors are essentially typical course-of-day interactions and activities and less affected by the job of being a legislator. On the other hand, meetings with one's caucus, an interest group, reading news online or offline, and scanning polling topline or data require relatively more dedicated time investments. So the responses to these items about the importance of these seven factors appear to sync with earlier mentions that time management can tend to be a struggle for at least one-third of legislators.

3. *To what extent are legislators loyal and enthusiastic regarding their work?*

State legislators appear to be loyal and committed to their work as public servants. In our survey

we have adapted the Net Promoter Score (NPS) method to measure those dimensions, or lack thereof, to the legislative career. A close cousin to NPS is the Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS).⁷⁶ We propose an NPS baseline for the state legislator profession as it stands today.

Our state legislator study sample produced an NPS of 41. What does that mean? There are very few frames for reference on how to interpret this number. Scores vary by industry. Customer Gauge reported a recent benchmarking survey of more than 600 firms, and the average NPS was 44. The range of average scores spanned from a high of 56 in the Retail/Trade industry to a low of 27 in the Telecommunications industry.⁷⁷ Most firms used their NPS assessments for improving the customer experience.⁷⁸ Relatively few were using NPS to track employee engagement, which is the closer parallel to the adaptation used in our study.

However, one firm that has tracked eNPS for European and Australian companies has said the average eNPS across the clients they have measured is -10. And they suggest a 30 is a "truly excellent eNPS score."⁷⁹ With these large survey examples for comparative reference, it is reasonable to interpret the 41 NPS score in our legislator survey as at least somewhat high. This is a little surprising given the challenges that confront legislators, especially the demands on time, access, and attention. In short, state legislators appear to be a resilient career population. I have been around a number of state legislators who say it is a vocation or a calling, not a job or career, and our survey's NPS score supports that idea.

Future Research Possibilities and Needs

This study is an exploration of state legislators' attitudes and experiences about their work and activities, as well as views on choice-based policies. There can be a lot more work to do. Here I take

quick turns suggesting possible paths for future research:

What other research questions can be addressed by the dataset used for this study?

There are some questions we do not address in this report, but can be explored further with the current dataset. Three areas come to mind.

First, as we noted earlier, we collected public expressions of support or opposition to educational choice policies such as school vouchers and charter schools. We have reported a cursory glance that those public expressions are very consistent with the privately communicated views in our phone interviews. Roughly about 85 to 90 percent of state legislators were consistent with their public expressions. What should we expect based on the research literature on revealed preferences? Can this have broader implications on how we think about the trustee and delegate models of representation when it comes to the role of the legislator?

Second, in our data collection we designated state legislators based on whether or not they resided in “Blaine States,” “Choice States,” and “Compelled Support States.” We do not examine to what extent those two variables may influence views on K–12 education and school choice issues. Additional variables could be added to this dataset such as various Census socioeconomic indicators at least at the state level, if not trying to align as closely as possible to each state legislator’s district (district office ZIP code could be used as a kind of proxy). Other measures and variables not in the current dataset could be informative as well: party competition for control of state government; interest group strength (e.g. teachers unions); state political culture; state constitutional factors; and of course economic and fiscal indicators. Each of those types of variables may allow for broader understanding of legislative environments. The environments may play a bigger role in shaping legislators’ views and experiences regarding their

activities or preferences for or against educational choice policies.

Third, researchers can expand the analysis to include an examination that compares educational choice supporters and opponents. One approach could be to construct an index of educational choice (vs. opposition), based on how state legislators responded to the three description-given questions for ESAs, school vouchers, and charter schools. Then this index could be used to see how it relates to others items measured in this survey. It is plausible that there could be interesting findings about how and why support for choice-based policies happens? Based on this index, do supporters differ from opponents in how they get information or influence by activities and other communications? Consideration of the cross-tabulations that go beyond demographics and lawmaker background variables may lead to additional insights or interesting research questions.

Are there other techniques that can go toward a deeper examination of the data?

The short answer is “yes.” This report is mostly descriptive and straight-forward on reporting response levels, margins, and intensities. I also point out significant differences between comparison groups based on straight-forward two-way t-tests. The next step is to conduct multivariate regression analysis to see if the significant differences we have reported persist even when controlling for other interacting variables. For example, Party ID appears to be a driver of legislators’ support or opposition regarding educational choice. What happens when we control for other variables such as region, community type, and age? Based on our current and previous polling of educational choice questions, it is a reasonable hypothesis to suggest that age is a stronger driver of opinion more than political party, and we could learn that by way of multivariate regression analysis. Regression analysis can help us better understand the

relationship of a given factor with a particular survey item while simultaneously controlling for other relevant factors.

What do the study's limitations and strengths suggest for future research?

First the limitations, and then some strengths. The study sample size (N = 344) was large enough to produce reasonable estimates for the sample and certain demographics that contained two or three subgroups. However, a larger sample size would allow for more reliable estimates, for example, of African American or Latino legislators. The small sizes of certain subgroups limits our power to make inferences. Compared to NCSL statistics, our percentages of those demographics were not far off, but they are just relatively small subgroups within the state legislator population. Larger sample size is required to achieve large enough subgroup sample sizes for meaningful interpretation.

Second, we chose not to apply statistical weights to the survey data and have assumed some degree of representativeness with respect to the national census of state legislators. It is possible that some of the previously mentioned under-represented or over-represented demographics could have otherwise changed the portrait of responses, especially to the school choice items. Randomization appeared to have worked based on comparing representativeness of most demographics with NCSL population targets.

When compared to NCSL's membership survey data, our unweighted sample results under-represent three notable demographics: lawmakers in professionalized ("green") state legislatures, state senators, and Democrats. Along similar demographic variables, our study sample tends to over-represent legislators in citizen ("gold") state legislatures, state representatives, and Republicans. We observed large, significant differences between Democrats and Republicans on the school choice questions. Fewer Democrats suggest that the study sample's mean opposition

level to ESA, school voucher, and charter school items would likely be higher if we applied statistical weights to the study sample to correct for demographic discrepancies.

How much higher and meaningful? That question is unclear.

For example, a computation to adjust the responses on the school voucher question based only on Party ID suggests the sample's mean opposition would rise about five points (from 40% to 45%) and support conversely depresses by three points (from 52% to 49%).⁸⁰ Because the Democrat-Republican differences were so large on this question—relative to other questions and demographic comparisons—that correction from potential weighting is likely the largest we would see for any question or subgroups.

The differences between subgroups within the NCSL Legislature Type and Chamber variables have less clear implications. If a researcher chooses to employ statistical weights in a future analysis, then it is possible that weighting on the latter two variables could partially or mostly offset the adjustments based on Party ID. For example, under-represented "Green" legislators were more likely to support school vouchers than the over-represented "Gold" legislators (62% vs. 45%, respectively). Likewise, the under-represented senators were more likely to support school vouchers than over-represented representatives (68% vs. 49%, respectively). That illustrates why we felt at least for the initial reporting of the survey data, it would be most straightforward to present the unweighted survey results.

Third, the study sample consists of cross-sectional data. Observing trends over time would give a better sense of direction and momentum for the state of the profession and for the opinions on educational choice policies.

There are certain strengths to this study that may inform future survey research of state legislators

and elected officials more broadly. First, the live telephone method should give us greater confidence that actual state legislators responded to the survey items and not legislative staff. That cannot be said of mail questionnaires, which have been the dominant form of surveying state legislators for more than 40 years. Even the recent innovation of online surveys cannot match live telephone interviewing in terms of minimizing the chance that someone else other than the state legislator is taking the survey. The latter is much less expensive to administer, so tradeoffs need to be considered when it comes to research design and implementation.

Second, the study sample came reasonably close (within a few percentage points) of matching the demographic targets of NCSL membership based on their survey data. Even without weighting the data, the study sample appears to be fairly representative on many demographic indicators.

Third, we believe this is the broadest survey that asks about (or examines) state legislators' views on K-12 education topics and sources of information. K-12 spending comprises anywhere from one-fifth to one-third of state budgets or total expenditures. For this reason, among others, K-12 education is an important policy area for many people and advocates. Educational choice programs have begun to flourish in a number of states in the past decade. Taking stock of legislators views in these areas should be valuable for better understanding the potential for new programs or expansions of existing ones at least in the near term.

Fourth, this is the first time we are aware that the NPS method has been used for the purpose of measuring loyalty and engagement among state legislators or for other elected officeholders.

Why is this important?

Work should be done to validate the NPS construct for the purpose of how it has been applied in this

study. It is possible that NPS could serve as a canary in the coal mine for a profession that is in trouble. If a sizable proportion of state legislators or other elected officials are going through the motions or worse, very unhappy with their work and activities, then that could have serious implications for the quality of casework by legislative offices (to be specific to the studied population here), or the quality of representation in government (to be more general about public officeholders). This study suggests that NPS may be a useful starting point to assess the health of a profession.

CONCLUSION

This survey of state legislators provides a snapshot in time that produces some expected and surprising results.

First, the average lawmaker is at least open to supporting ESAs, school vouchers, and public charter schools. They clearly support the latter, even more than the general public based on our surveys. The margins of support for ESAs and public charter schools are very large. As of now, the general public is relatively more likely than legislators to support ESAs and school vouchers.

Which is the leading indicator, and which is the lagging indicator? There is room for more research on that question, which could have implications for the future of educational choice proposals in statehouses.

Second, the direct experiences of legislators rule the day when it comes to influencing their decisions on legislative priorities and voting. The vast majority of legislators say that directly communicating with constituents is a very important factor. So are lawmakers' own professional and personal experiences. They view information from third parties as substantially less critical for making up their minds and decision-making. Lawmakers are more likely to trust their own personal contacts

and social networks than what they learn from lobbyists, polls and news media.

Finally, we observe that legislators tend to be promoters of their vocation. The use of NPS is exploratory and at most suggestive because we believe this is the first time the method has been used to measure elected officials' loyalty, commitment, and engagement to their work. There is much more work to be done to determine the validity and utility of the measure as a proxy for understanding the health of a given profession.

In 2015, the Aspen Institute's Education and Society Program released a report called, *Engaging State Legislators: Lessons for the Education Sector*, based on focus groups and interviews with 50 state legislative leaders from around the country.⁸¹ Findings and recommendations are similar to some of the findings in our SSL survey project. Kristen Soltis Anderson and Marisa Goldstein, authors of the report, recommended the following ways to educate and inform legislators:

- Start with values and principles
- Share successful examples
- Create opportunities to learn with and from legislators
- Offer hands-on experiences
- Define the right role for state policy
- Develop an implementation plan

Those are useful recommendations, especially for policy wonks and interest group advocates. Based on our survey's findings, I would suggest at least three others to complement the Aspen recommendations.

First, engagement timing and the respect for a legislator's time is essential. This is not a new insight, but rather meant to reinforce what many in the fields of politics and political science research have known for quite some time.⁸² Our survey at least suggests timing sensibilities are required to educate legislators and staff, as well as making it a top priority.

Second, a social network-focused advocacy is likely to increase the chances to earn a legislator's attention and consideration. Legislators say they rely heavily on and place enormous trust in their own networks and experiences (personal and professional). The Aspen report also highlights the huge importance of interpersonal relationships. If a legislator's staff and/or friends endorse or at least point out a piece of information or meeting opportunity is important, that third-party credibility could significantly boost advocacy efforts. Using this network approach also can avoid "putting all of one's eggs in a single basket." A given contact may have connections or relationships (to varying degrees) with two or more legislators or future legislators. And so even if a legislator rejects an advocate's message or policy wonk's information, then there is still the possibility of having one or more network connections to pursue a given communications goal. Third, our survey results show that when given proper descriptions of educational choice policies, legislators are at least privately supportive of ESAs and at least open to school vouchers.

That finding tends to fly against conventional wisdom in statehouses, where for example even conservative Republicans can say "school vouchers" should not be discussed. The language of school choice bills and program laws make this evident. Following Aspen's recommendation of providing concrete examples, this survey can dispel these publicly held conventions and allow for frank discussions about different policy types and their meaningful distinctions in terms of policy design and implementation.

What are other implications for readers? I suggest further questions and some ideas here:

- A state legislator may see the relatively high NPS and make a subjective comparison to her/his own circumstance and set of experiences. If one identifies as Detractor, running for re-election seems to come into question. Maybe it is time to step aside and

allow for new candidates to run and serve so that energy and motivation can match the challenges facing the House or Senate district. A current legislator may feel like a Passive right now. Why? Assuming that has not always been the case—someone running for office is highly unlikely to be a Passive or Detractor—how can one return to that feeling of being attached to legislative responsibilities and work? Promoters will probably wonder how to address the needs and issues challenging their profession. Working with organizations such as NCSL, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), or Council of State Governments (CSG) may allow Promoters to reach the more disaffected members of their professional community. When it comes to the survey results on ESAs, school vouchers, and charter schools, the data can provide starting point for conversations on why a given caucus may want to consider launching or expanding educational choice in the state. Proponents are more likely to find encouragement and a possible morale boost from the results.

- A *legislative staffer* may peer into our survey data and see a challenge that either looks appealing for the next phase of her/his career or a deterrent for pursuing legislative office. A staffer is in a very influential position as a conduit (either for information or relationships) between the legislator and other advisors, constituents, interest groups, or the news media. Are there ways to manage information and relationships to ease any time management strains on their bosses? If so, then legislator's increased satisfaction or engagement may carry over in positive ways to staff. Or maybe constituents matter more to the staffer than the legislator. If that's the case, can one or more of the survey questions and results inform a given work situation so the legislator can pay more time and attention to the needs of constituents. Legislators seem to want to engage more

online and in the realm of social media like Facebook and Twitter. That could provide the value-add moment for a staffer to advance goals of serving constituents while helping legislators manage their communications and/or time more efficiently. If the staffer is interested in educational choice issues, then survey results provide the starting point to have those conversations in the legislator's office.

- A *policy wonk or advocate* may want to take to heart the notions about timing, respect for legislators' time, and trying to first earn the trust of those personal or professional relationships closest to a legislator. Tapping into social networks, more offline than online (in contrast with the above suggestion to legislative staffers), may provide the best opportunities to sit and talk with state lawmaker. Many think tanks today make sure to include at least one or two public officials in their events for the policymaker's point of view, and rightly so. Those kinds of events can allow for the opportunity to make social and professional connections, if not with the lawmaker, then at least with trusted staff or advisors. For policy wonks hoping to pitch a certain policy design to advance educational choice, winning over those close to legislators will give third party credibility that could get the wonk's foot in the door for a conversation. Policy wonks who are in think tanks, or similar organizations, will want to engage state legislators because they are a necessary group of policy actors who will set in motion the policies and programs that affect the K-12 experiences for tens of millions of American families.
- A *public service "explorer"* is someone who may be in a career transition or looking for a new kind of fulfillment in elected state office. Not unlike the staffer who is considering a future in state legislative politics, the public service explorer can use the survey data to

get a sense for the challenges currently facing state legislators today. Those challenges may be appealing or disincentives to run for office. The survey results reported here should give a 30,000 ft. view of the legislator's activities and how time is spent on those activities. To what degree do the survey results portray a good fit for moving toward the vocation of being a state legislator? Perhaps an analysis like the one in this report can be used as a starting point for evaluating the costs and benefits of joining the profession.

- *A graduate student in political science or public affairs* may see the potential for meaningful research questions. As mentioned before, a lot of work can be done with the current survey dataset, either with more sophisticated statistical techniques, or by adding new variables to the dataset. Could new survey research shed some light on the potential for improving legislative structures or norms that guide the state legislator's activities? Time management appears to be a serious issue. What measures could legislative leaders implement to mitigate some of those strains? Do those challenges produce sub-optimal decision-making and voting environments? Survey research designs that maximize sample size, even within a single state, can expand on our survey's questionnaire and go into more state-specific challenges or issues. Students interested in public affairs and intrigued by the possibility of running for state legislative office or working for a legislator should be able to glean some sense for the demands that will go into that line of work, based on survey findings and this report.

State legislatures and legislators are essential to advancing public policy in K-12 education. From the 1940s to 1970s there had been an important shift within states increasing state funding responsibilities while decreasing local government responsibilities. Relative state-local

funding proportions have been comparable ever since the 1980s.⁸³ State legislator-driven K-12 laws, including funding formula changes, broadly affect local policymaking and funding. Recently, the federal government enacted the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which transfers more authority and discretion from the federal government to state governments, especially for assessment and accountability systems. An acceleration of educational choice policies and programs have also been led at the state level, not the local or federal levels. Political power in K-12 education is amassing in statehouses around the country. All of these developments compel the need to better understand the legislative environment and circumstances facing state legislators. With this information, influencers can better optimize personal contacts and social networks, so legislators receive timely, accurate, and highly relevant information that affects how they develop priorities and make decisions.

APPENDIX 1

Literature Review Methodology

Journals with corresponding databases and years included in search:

- American Journal of Political Science: JSTOR: 1973-2014; Wiley: 2003-2016
- American Political Science Review: JSTOR: 1906-2012; Cambridge: 2010-2015
- Journal of Politics: JSTOR 1939-2015
- Legislative Studies Quarterly: JSTOR 1976-2010; Wiley: 2002-2016
- Social Science Quarterly: JSTOR 1968-2010, Wiley 2001-2016
- State Politics & Policy Quarterly: JSTOR: 2001-2012; ProQuest: 2002-2016
- American Politics Research, formerly American Politics Quarterly: Sage 1973-2016 (didn't have full access to all abstracts or articles)
- Political Research Quarterly / WPQ: JSTOR: 1993-2014, Sage: 1948-2016

Search terms used:

- “State legislator” AND survey
- “State legislator” AND “mail survey”
- “State legislator” AND “questionnaire”
- “State legislator” AND “internet survey”
- “State legislative” AND “survey”
- legislature AND survey
- legislature AND questionnaire

“State legislator” was omitted from SPPQ search entirely.

In order to determine relevant articles, we read abstracts and searched the full text of the article for: (1) “survey” and (2) “questionnaire” by using the “Find in Document” tool.

Additionally, we reviewed all articles that were cited in the References section of the following sources, and published in the eight primary journals:

1. Cherie Maestas, Grant W. Neeley, and Lilliard E. Richardson, “The State of Surveying Legislators: Dilemmas and Suggestions,” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (Mar. 2003), pp. 90–108, doi:10.1177/153244000300300104.
2. Samuel H. Fisher III and Rebekah Herrick., “Old Versus New: The Comparative Efficiency of Mail and Internet Surveys of State Legislators,” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (June 2013), pp. 147-63, doi:10.1177/1532440012456540.

Information included in literature review:

- citation pulled from database citation tool
- abstract or summary
- additional information on survey type, size, response rate from Data or Methodology sections and/or relevant info found using “survey” and “questionnaire” via “Find in Document” tool
- citations to other articles mentioned for their use of a survey tool (when applicable)

The literature review’s working files containing the above information are available on request.

APPENDIX 2

Survey Profile

TITLE: Surveying State Legislators Project

SURVEY SPONSOR: Walton Family Foundation

SURVEY DEVELOPER: EdChoice
(formerly Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice)

**SURVEY DATA COLLECTION
AND QUALITY CONTROL:** Braun Research, Inc.

INTERVIEW DATES: July 16, 2015, through October 26, 2015

INTERVIEW METHOD: Live (CATI) Telephone (100% Landline)

INTERVIEW LENGTH: 14.5 Minutes (Average)

LANGUAGE(S): English

SAMPLE FRAME AND METHOD: Randomly drawn list sample of current state legislators in the 50 U. S. States
(Total Population, N = 7,368)

SAMPLE SIZE: TOTAL Sample, N = 401
STUDY Sample, N = 344

MARGINS OF ERROR: TOTAL Sample = ± 4.9 percentage points
STUDY Sample = ± 5.2 percentage points

RESPONSE RATES USING AAPOR RR3: 10.5% (TOTAL Sample)

WEIGHTING? No

OVERSAMPLING? Yes (New Hampshire State Legislators, n = 57)*

** The New Hampshire oversample is excluded in this study and report.*

PROJECT CONTACT: Paul DiPerna, *Vice President of Research & Innovation*
paul@edchoice.org

The author is responsible for overall polling design; question wording and ordering; this paper's analysis, charts, and writing; and any unintentional errors or misrepresentations.

APPENDIX 3

Phone Call Introduction Text for Interviews

Thank you for taking time to talk with me today. I know your schedule is busy.

My name is _____, from BR Interviewing in Princeton, New Jersey. We're conducting interviews of state legislators, like yourself, for the Friedman Foundation, a nonpartisan, nonprofit research organization based in Indianapolis.

This interview is completely voluntary and confidential. Identifying information will be removed from the dataset once the data collection phase has completed.

The results of the survey will only be reported in aggregate forms, and we will ensure in any public reporting that it is impossible for anyone to identify you based on your responses.

If I read any question that you do not want to answer, just let me know, and we can go on to the next question.

[IF ASKED FOR TIME:] This survey should take approximately 10 to 12 minutes.

“For this brief interview, if you are completely unsure about your answer or have no feelings for an answer, you can say ‘I Don’t Know’ or ‘No Answer’.”

[ENTER AS “DK” or “NA”].

Also, we would like to ask if you could please consider, that with each response, we are interested in what you personally think or feel about each question. We are asking for your unique, personal point of view.

APPENDIX 4

Email Template Text for Invitations

Email template used for state legislator contacts when needed:

The Honorable NAME
POSITION
ADDRESS
CITY, STATE ZIP CODE

MONTH DATE, 2015

Dear TITLE NAME:

My name is Cynthia Miller, and I am the Managing Director with Braun Research, Inc., an independent market research company based in Princeton, New Jersey.

I am writing to invite you to participate in a national, State Legislator Survey, being conducted by the Friedman Foundation, a nonpartisan, non-profit research organization based in Indianapolis, Indiana. This study has a two-fold purpose:

- (1) To gain a better understanding of your needs, priorities, and time commitments as a state legislator; and
- (2) To consider the information sources, external pressures, personal and professional contexts that affect legislators' decision-making toward setting agendas, priorities, and other elements of policymaking when it comes to K-12 education.

We will be happy to share preliminary findings of this survey research early next year.

We understand that, as a state legislator, the demands upon your time are many. The survey only takes about 10 to 12 minutes to complete via the phone.

Please feel free to call our toll-free line at 1-877-274-1600 ext. 9512. Our business hours are Monday through Friday 9 am to 11 pm Eastern Time; Saturday 11 am to 7 pm Eastern Time; and Sunday 1 pm to 9 pm Eastern Time. If you leave a message, please let us know the best time to call you back.

If you have any questions about the State Legislator Survey, please feel free to contact me at 609-279-1600, ext. 130, or cmiller@braunresearch.com.

All the best with your work and continued public service to STATE. We look forward to your participation and are grateful for your point of view and responses in this study.

Sincerely,

Cynthia

Cynthia L. Miller
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The Braun Research network of companies, founded in 1995, combined employ 39 full-time and over 236 part-time employees engaged in data collection via telephone, and internet for various survey research firms, government and advertising agencies, local community organizations, local and national business groups, foundations, universities and academic entities, as well as religious organizations. In 20 years Braun Research has conducted almost 10,000 research projects by telephone, internet, and mail worldwide.

The Friedman Foundation is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization that studies attitudes toward K–12 education issues facing the states and the country. The Foundation has no connection to the government, political parties, or any campaigns. Surveys and other publications are typically made available free of charge to the general public.

APPENDIX 5

Comparing Legislator Proportions by State, List Sample vs. Study Sample

State	NCSL List Sample Count	Percent of NCSL List	Completed Interviews	Percent of Study Sample
Alabama	140	1.9%	7	2.0%
Alaska	60	0.8%	2	0.6%
Arizona	90	1.2%	6	1.7%
Arkansas	135	1.8%	8	2.3%
California	120	1.6%	2	0.6%
Colorado	100	1.4%	15	4.4%
Connecticut	187	2.5%	5	1.5%
Delaware	62	0.8%	7	2.0%
Florida	160	2.2%	2	0.6%
Georgia	234	3.2%	5	1.5%
Hawaii	76	1.0%	1	0.3%
Idaho	105	1.4%	12	3.5%
Illinois	177	2.4%	2	0.6%
Indiana	150	2.0%	17	4.9%
Iowa	150	2.0%	18	5.2%
Kansas	164	2.2%	9	2.6%
Kentucky	138	1.9%	7	2.0%
Louisiana	144	2.0%	3	0.9%
Maine	189	2.6%	10	2.9%
Maryland	188	2.6%	1	0.3%
Massachusetts	200	2.7%	1	0.3%
Michigan	148	2.0%	7	2.0%
Minnesota	201	2.7%	3	0.9%
Mississippi	174	2.4%	9	2.6%
Missouri	195	2.6%	7	2.0%
Montana	150	2.0%	5	1.5%
Nebraska	49	0.7%	3	0.9%
Nevada	63	0.9%	4	1.2%
New Hampshire	423	5.7%	23	6.7%
New Jersey	120	1.6%	1	0.3%
New Mexico	112	1.5%	4	1.2%

APPENDIX 5

Continued

State	NCSL List Sample Count	Percent of NCSL List	Completed Interviews	Percent of Study Sample
New York	212	2.9%	1	0.3%
North Carolina	170	2.3%	3	0.9%
North Dakota	141	1.9%	16	4.7%
Ohio	132	1.8%	4	1.2%
Oklahoma	147	2.0%	9	2.6%
Oregon	90	1.2%	4	1.2%
Pennsylvania	249	3.4%	2	0.6%
Rhode Island	112	1.5%	10	2.9%
South Carolina	168	2.3%	2	0.6%
South Dakota	105	1.4%	3	0.9%
Tennessee	131	1.8%	17	4.9%
Texas	181	2.5%	1	0.3%
Utah	104	1.4%	8	2.3%
Vermont	180	2.4%	19	5.5%
Virginia	139	1.9%	2	0.6%
Washington	147	2.0%	6	1.7%
West Virginia	134	1.8%	14	4.1%
Wisconsin	132	1.8%	11	3.2%
Wyoming	90	1.2%	6	1.7%
TOTAL	7,368	100.0%	344	100.0%
CHAMBER				
House	5,400	73.3%	281	81.7%
Senate	1,968	26.7%	63	18.3%
TOTAL	7,368	100.0%	344	100.0%

NOTES

1. See Appendix 1 for the survey's profile and specifications regarding design and implementation.
2. There are actually 7,383 total seats in the 50 state legislatures. As we researched individual state legislators on the internet, we estimate there were 15 seat vacancies when we were conducting our survey last year.
3. Louis Jacobson, "Experience Preferred," *State Legislatures*, Jan. 2016, p. 28, http://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/magazine/articles/2016/SL_0116-All.pdf.
4. Jennifer E. Manning, *Membership of the 114th Congress: A Profile*, CRS Report (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2016), <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R43869.pdf>; Jeff Hurley, *Former State Legislators in the 114th Congress (as of Nov. 24, 2014)* (Washington, DC: National Conference of State Legislators, 2014), http://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/statefed/FSL_114th_11-24.pdf, supplemented by data from the CQ Roll Call Member Profiles.
5. "About Barack Obama," Organizing for Action, accessed Sept. 8, 2016, <https://www.barackobama.com/president-obama/> <https://www.barackobama.com/president-obama/>.
6. National Association of State Budget Officers, *State Expenditure Report: Examining Fiscal 2013–2015 State Spending* (Washington, DC: National Association of State Budget Officers, 2015), p. 13, table 5, <https://www.nasbo.org/sites/default/files/State%20Expenditure%20Report%20%28Fiscal%202013-2015%29S.pdf>.
7. "Fast Facts," EdChoice, last modified Sept. 20, 2016, <http://www.edchoice.org/our-resources/fast-facts>.
8. National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, *2015 Annual Report* (Washington, DC: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2016), http://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/560116/NAPSCAR_Booklet_Digital_V1_WEB.pdf.
9. Education Writers Association, *State of the Education Beat 2016: A Field With a Future* (Washington, DC: Education Writers Association, 2016), p. 5, <http://www.ewa.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/2016-05-10-state-of-beat-report.pdf>.
10. Michael J. Petrilli, "A New Breed of Journalism: Education Coverage is on the Rise," *Education Next* 15, no. 1 (Winter 2015), p. 82, http://educationnext.org/files/ednext_XV_1_whatnext.pdf.
11. Alexander Russo, email conversation with author, July 22, 2016. Also see Alexander Russo, "New EdBeat Survey Reveals Diversity and Independence Challenges – But No Shortage of Enthusiasm," *Washington Monthly*, May 3, 2016, <http://washingtonmonthly.com/2016/05/03/new-edbeat-survey-reveals-diversity-independence-challenges-but-no-shortage-of-enthusiasm>.
12. Liz Willen, phone conversation with author, July 27, 2016. Willen sees the more traditional coverage not going away, such as beat reporting on local meetings, political/policy actors and events, and school budgets and finance. However, she also believes there is likely to be more reporting of thematic coverage of topics like technology-use in schools and consequent changes of how to deliver education and facilitate student learning, inequality issues, effects of immigration, and the coming demographic shifts within schooling populations. At least some of these topics and the traditional beat reporting are likely to make their way into the information streams where state legislators cast their nets for information in order to set agendas and make policy decisions.
13. Alyson Klein, "The Every Student Succeeds Act: An ESSA Overview," *Education Week*, accessed Aug. 30, 2016, <http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/every-student-succeeds-act>.
14. Tom W. Smith, *Surveying Hard-to-Reach Populations in Comparative Perspective*, GSS Cross-National Report 33 (Chicago: NORC at the Univ. of Chicago, 2012), p. 7, <http://gss.norc.org/Documents/reports/cross-national-reports/CNR%2033.pdf>.
15. See entries in EdChoice's Polling Paper series at <https://www.edchoice.org/what-we-do/research>.
16. "One cannot be sure who actually completes a mail questionnaire—a serious limitation when surveying elite populations, such as members of Congress or state legislators who, because they are bombarded with questionnaires, may have a staff person fill out the survey form." Herb Asher, *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know*, 9th ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2017), p. 141.
17. "America's School Choice Programs by Dates Enacted and Launched," EdChoice, last modified Aug. 30, 2016, <https://www.edchoice.org/school-choice/enacted-and-launched-table>.
18. Most researchers, analysts, and advocates consider 1990 as the year that marked the arrival of modern educational choice programs, the first one enacted and launched in Milwaukee, WI.
19. The student count estimate only considers students using school vouchers, ESAs, and tax-credit scholarships, not use of individual tax credits or tax deductions. "School Choice in America," EdChoice, last modified Aug. 22, 2016, <http://www.edchoice.org/school-choice/school-choice-in-america>. For complete program profiles and descriptions, see The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, *The ABCs of School Choice: The Comprehensive Guide to Every Private School Choice Program in America*, 2016 ed. (Indianapolis: Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, 2016), p. 4, <http://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/2016-ABCs-WEB-2.pdf>.
20. Milton Friedman, "The Role of Government in Education," in *Economics and the Public Interest*, ed. Robert A. Solo (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1955).

21. EdChoice collects participation data, fiscal data, and other information from each private educational choice program in the country. This data collection occurs on an ongoing basis.
22. “School Choice in America,” EdChoice, last modified Aug. 22, 2016, <http://www.edchoice.org/school-choice/school-choice-in-america>.
23. Friedman Foundation, *ABCs of School Choice*, p. 41.
24. See note 7 above.
25. Leslie Hiner, “BRIEF: School Choice in the States May 2015,” EdChoice blog, June 3, 2015, <https://www.edchoice.org/blog/brief-school-choice-in-the-states-may-2015>; Michael Chartier, “Everything You Need to Know About Nevada’s Universal ESA Bill,” EdChoice blog, May 29, 2015, <https://www.edchoice.org/blog/everything-you-need-to-know-about-nevadas-universal-esa-bill>.
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30. The scatterplot charts in this section exclude a likely voter poll that we conducted in Virginia in 2009 and a registered voter poll that we conducted earlier the same year in the District of Columbia.
31. See note 15 above.
32. Some caution is warranted when comparing the state poll results to each other. The fieldwork of the state polls occurred at different times over the past six years. The timing of state polls can be sensitive to legislative sessions or political campaigns that may highlight issues or policies in K–12 education. Question ordering can change slightly from one poll to the next. Comparisons are only suggestive and impressionistic.
33. I am especially grateful for Neala Swaminatha’s excellent research assistance for this particular phase of the project.
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38. The eight political science journals (and databases) we searched were the following: *American Journal of Political Science* (JSTOR: 1973–2014; Wiley: 2003–2016); *American Political Science Review* (JSTOR: 1906–2012; Cambridge: 2010–2015); *Journal of Politics* (JSTOR 1939–2015); *Legislative Studies Quarterly* (JSTOR 1976–2010; Wiley: 2002–2016); *Social Science Quarterly* (JSTOR 1968–2010, Wiley 2001–2016); *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* (JSTOR: 2001–2012; ProQuest: 2002–2016); *American Politics Research*, formerly *American Politics Quarterly* (Sage 1973–2016 [didn’t have full access to all abstracts or articles]); *Political Research Quarterly / Western Politics Quarterly* (JSTOR: 1993–2014, Sage: 1948–2016).
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46. We do not know for certain, but we speculate that House leadership in New Hampshire encouraged callbacks to participate in the survey. Over a short period of time we had received approximately 80 callbacks from New Hampshire legislators.
47. We randomly selected 23 of the 81 New Hampshire state legislators to be included in the Study Sample.
48. It should be noted that there are 7,383 total seats in the 50 U.S. state legislatures. The difference between our sample and the total available seats (difference = 15) is most likely explained by seat vacancies.
49. More details about the search process and coding of acquired expressions are available on request.
50. By using statistical t-tests, we are at least 95 percent confident of any noted significant differences when comparing subgroups to the study sample average or between two or more subgroups. Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of sampling error based on the unweighted sample size obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with relatively small sample sizes (for example, $n \leq 100$). When we refer to subgroup sample sizes in the narrative and tables, those numbers reflect the unweighted number of interviews.
51. We use statistical t-tests to compare the means of two populations/subgroups to see if they are different from each other.
52. The terms "Net Promoter," "NPS," and "Net Promoter Score" are registered trademarks of Satmetrix Systems, Inc., Bain & Company, and Fred Reichheld.
53. Author's calculations; National Conference of State Legislatures, *2015 State and Legislative Partisan Composition* (Washington, DC: National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015), http://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/Elections/Legis_Control_2015_Feb4_11am.pdf; "Legislator Demographics," National Conference of State Legislatures, accessed May 17, 2016, <http://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures/who-we-elect-an-interactive-graphic.aspx>.
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55. Also see Appendix 5 to compare the Study Sample's interview counts by state with sample list counts by state.
56. Lindsey M. Burke and Jarrett Stepman, "Breaking Down Blaine Amendments' Indefensible Barrier to Education Choice," *Journal of School Choice: International Research and Reform* 8, no. 4 (2014), doi:10.1080/15582159.2014.973783.
57. Explicit subgroup comparisons/differences are statistically significant with 95 percent confidence, unless otherwise noted.
58. For terms regarding the two age groups: "young legislators" reflect respondents who are age 18 to 54; "senior legislators" are age 55 and older.
59. All percentages in this section reflect percentages out of the proportion of legislators where we code a specific response to this question. (Item N = 240) For approximately the first half of the survey fieldwork, we did not follow up for a specific response when the initial open response was coded as "Other/Something Else," and we recognized that we needed to further follow up in order to obtain a specific response to the open question.
60. A few responses have been edited slightly for comprehension or to omit any potential self-identifiers.
61. Frederick F. Reichheld, "The One Number You Need to Grow," *Harvard Business Review* 81, no. 12 (Dec. 2003), pp. 46–54, <https://hbr.org/2003/12/the-one-number-you-need-to-grow>.
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63. SurveyMonkey provides useful articles that show how Net Promoter Score can be calculated and weighs the pro's and con's of using the method. See "Net Promoter® Score Calculation," SurveyMonkey, accessed Aug. 31, 2016, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/net-promoter-score-calculation>; "NPS Pros and Cons: Why Use NPS?," SurveyMonkey, accessed Aug. 31, 2016, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/nps-pros-cons-why-use-nps>.
64. For a wide range of resources that discusses the Net Promoter Score (or System), see "Recommended Reading," Bain & Company, accessed Aug. 31, 2016, <http://www.netpromotersystem.com/resources/recommended-reading.aspx>.
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68. Some author expectations were informed by this study's literature review as well as my working as a state director for about three years for the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice. From late 2006 to 2009 I had the chance to travel to nearly half the country's state capitals. Visits often entailed meeting with legislators, professional staffers, policy wonks, or educational choice advocates. Since 2010 I have been paying attention to state legislative politics and policymaking at a further distance.

69. See note 15 above.

70. Arianna Skibell, "What Arne Duncan Did to American Education and Whether It Will Last," *Hechinger Report*, Oct. 3, 2015, <http://hechingerreport.org/what-arne-duncan-did-to-american-education-and-whether-it-will-last>; Rebecca Klein, "How These 15 Celebrities Are Helping Shape Our Future," *Huffington Post*, Mar. 5, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/04/celebrities-open-schools_n_4893141.html.

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74. To learn more about social network theory in the context of education reform, see Alan J. Daly, ed., *Social Network Theory and Educational Change* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2010).

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productive-than-congress. Also see Reid Wilson, "State Legislatures Are Very, Very Busy," *Washington Post*, Sept. 29, 2014, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/govbeat/wp/2014/09/29/state-legislatures-are-very-very-busy>. Using NCSL's bill tracking database only for the purpose of picking up bills relating to ESAs, school vouchers, and charter schools, we see a total of 119 educational choice bills have been introduced in the current biennium (2015-2016): 36 bills in 16 states in 2016; 83 bills in 28 states in 2015. And that represents just a slice (6%) of the total number of education bills (1,894) filed during this two-year period. "Education Bill Tracking Database," National Conference of State Legislatures, accessed Aug. 17, 2016, <http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/education-bill-tracking-database.aspx>.

76. Earlier I noted Legerstee's recent study has shown to validate the construct as a reliable measure of affective commitment, person-organization fit, and intent to leave an organization. A limitation here is the cross-sectional use of NPS. The NPS measure is intended to be a tracking measure over time. We have attempted an adapted NPS construct and baseline that measures those commitment, person-organization fit, and intent to leave dimensions for a career or profession. Important questions that we are unable to address are: To what extent can the state legislator NPS improve over time? And how can this be done? We will return to those questions shortly. For additional background, see "The Employee Net Promoter System," Bain & Company, accessed Aug. 31, 2016, <http://www.netpromotersystem.com/about/employee-engagement.aspx>; John O'Connor, "What Is a 'Good' Employee Net Promoter Score?," *Deep-Insight* (blog), Sept. 15, 2015, <http://blog.deep-insight.com/what-is-a-good-employee-net-promoter-score>; "Three Types of Net Promoter Scores," Bain & Company, accessed Aug. 31, 2016, <http://www.netpromotersystem.com/about/three-types-of-scores.aspx>; "eNPS: Your Secret Weapon for Measuring and Boosting Employee Engagement," Any Perk blog, June 12, 2014, <https://anyperk.com/blog/enps-your-secret-weapon-for-measuring-and-boosting-employee-engagement>. For a general overview of eNPS, see "eNPS - The Employee Net Promoter Score," Friday Feedback, accessed Aug. 31, 2016, <https://www.fridayfeedback.com/enps-employee-net-promoter-score>.

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80. We observed the widest, significant gap between two subgroups based on a demographic variable (Party ID) on the school voucher question with description. This computation may be replicated easily with the corresponding survey data table available on request.

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Paul DiPerna is Vice President of Research and Innovation for EdChoice, formerly the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice. Paul's research interests include surveys and polling on K–12 education and school choice reforms. He has developed and reported more than 30 state and national surveys. Paul oversees the research projects either produced or commissioned by the organization. EdChoice has published more than 80 reports, papers, and briefs under his leadership.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A number of people made significant contributions during the course of this survey project.

I am deeply thankful to the team at Braun Research, who assisted in project development, and for their excellent work in conducting the interviews and collecting the data. I appreciate the time and commitments from Paul Braun, Cynthia Miller, Rich Kuchinsky, Shayne Poole, Jay Schliesmann, and Dave Oshman. I'm also thankful to Neala Swaminatha, who worked so diligently collecting background information and data on each of the legislator respondents in our survey dataset. She also provided invaluable assistance for the project's literature review. Drew Catt provided exceptional data and note verification, as well as other assistance throughout the project. Marty Lueken gave incredibly helpful comments in his review and during the late stages of writing. Katie Brooks and Jennifer Wagner read through different versions of the manuscript, and their suggestions and copy editing have been a tremendous benefit. Drew Vessely and Jacob Vinson have done a superb job with graphic design. I also want to thank Patrick Byrne, our organization's board chairman, who first introduced me to the Net Promoter Score concept.

Reviewers of earlier versions of this report offered incredibly valuable feedback for making improvements. That group included Josh Cunningham, Rob Daves, Brian Kisida, and Robert Maranto. Ashley Kirsinger of the AAPOR Transparency Initiative reviewed the survey methods and specifications, and her helpful comments made those sections more clear. Two others offered very useful insights and suggestions in early phases of this study and the writing. Alex Bolton reviewed the survey questionnaire and made a number of useful observations and suggestions. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 16th Annual State Politics and Policy Conference in Dallas on May 19–21, 2016. Jamie Monogan, the paper's discussant, offered very helpful ideas and insightful feedback.

I am sincerely grateful to the state legislators who agreed to participate in our telephone interviews.

ABOUT THE SURVEY ORGANIZATION

Braun Research, Inc.

The Braun Research network of companies, founded in 1995, combined employ 42 full-time and more than 157 part-time employees engaged in data collection via telephone, and internet for various survey research firms, government and advertising agencies, local community organizations, local and national business groups, foundations, universities and academic entities, as well as religious organizations. In 20 years, Braun Research has conducted almost 10,000 research projects by telephone, internet, and mail worldwide.

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The work we accomplish for other research firms requires us to perform all work up to standards required by the various research organizations where we enjoy membership and in some cases participate actively. Paul Braun is recognized as a leader in the field by colleagues who asked him to serve on these committees. For example Paul Braun is a member of the MRA/CMOR committees on response rate improvement and in launching a seal of quality for the industry. He has served as President of the New Jersey Chapter of AAPOR, and he is currently serving on AMEC in North America.

Braun Research is a well-respected firm employing techniques and standards approved by various survey research academic organizations and other affiliations including those with whom Braun is an active member, including AAPOR (The American Association for Public Opinion Research) and MRA/CMOR (Market Research Association/Council on Marketing and Opinion Research) and CASRO (Council on American Survey Research Organizations).

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The author welcomes any and all questions related to methods and findings.

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