

VOTING ON CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS IN  
LOUISIANA 1960 - 1972

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APPROVAL SHEET

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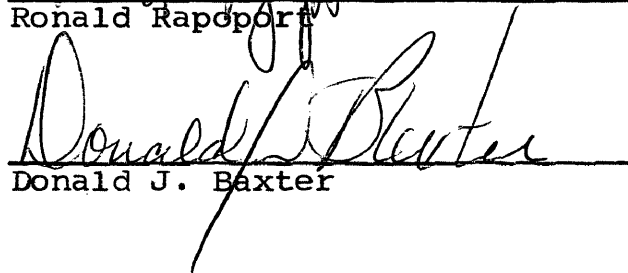
  
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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to test hypotheses concerning referenda voting. The analysis is based on 334 constitutional amendments submitted to the Louisiana electorate between 1960 and 1972.

More people vote for candidates than vote on constitutional amendments. Amendments at the top of the ballot receive a greater total vote than do those at the bottom. The reading difficulty of an amendment does not appear to affect its total vote. Controversial amendments and those affecting large numbers of people receive more votes than might be expected on the basis of ballot alone.

The relationship between total vote and the vote to approve remains unclear. Amendments at the top of the ballot are not adopted more frequently than those at the bottom.

Survey data would make it possible to learn more about referenda voting.

VOTING ON CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS IN  
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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to learn something about referenda voting. Specifically, we will try to determine whether certain characteristics of referenda affect the total vote or the vote to "approve." In this first chapter we will briefly discuss the place of referenda research in political science and argue for more research on referenda. We will locate our analysis within the broad area of referenda research and discuss the data and the limitations of this study.

### A. Background

It is clearly beyond the scope of this paper to review all of the literature on referenda voting. The history of referenda is briefly summarized in Smith (1935: 1-30) and in Butler and Ranney (1978: 3-21). In this section we will comment on the place of referenda research in political science and identify some of the important topics in the literature.

Referenda have been somewhat outside the mainstream of voting research. Political scientists have, in general, been preoccupied with presidential elections. In comparison, they have devoted much less attention

to congressional elections and even less to state and local elections. Less work has been done on referenda than on any of these major categories of elections.

The relative neglect of referenda voting is unfortunate. Research on referenda voting could contribute to our knowledge of political behavior. "Tentative and partial exploration of the historical record suggests that 12,000-15,000 propositions have been voted upon in statewide elections during the twentieth century alone" (Clubb and Traugott, 1972: 137). It has been estimated that there are ten to fifteen thousand state and local referenda each year in the United States (Hamilton, 1970). Table 1 shows the total number of state referenda for selected years.

It is possible that research on referenda could help us learn more about public opinion and the importance of issues in elections.

In a sense, the vote on the various ballot questions gives a clearer idea of what the public is thinking about specific issues than does the vote for individual candidates. This is true because candidates must take stands on many issues, and it is frequently difficult to determine which specific issue the voter considers most important. When the electorate votes on public issues on its state's ballot, it has the option of saying yes or no on that question, thus giving a very accurate reading on that single proposal (Plotkin, 1977: 111).

Referenda are rather unsophisticated as survey research instruments. Even so, investigations into the relationship between votes on a referendum (or several referenda) and votes for candidates might provide clues as to the

TABLE 1  
Statewide Referenda in Selected Years

<u>Year</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Passed</u>	<u>Percent Passed</u>
1932	Smith, 1935: 33	220	118	41.3%
1934	Smith, 1935: 75	149	87	58.0
1963	Bone, 1968: 126	59	40	71.4
1964	Bone, 1968: 126	283	200	72.4
1965	Bone, 1968: 126	120	86	72.6
1966	Bone, 1968: 126	374	297	79.4
1968*	Clubb and Traugott, 1972: 141	320	233	72.8

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\* General election only.

relative importance of party identification, candidate images and issues in elections.

Finally, referenda deserve more attention because of their importance in the development of public policy. Unlike a public opinion poll, a referendum "counts." The result of a referendum is a decision on a proposed policy. Not very much is known about the broader impact of referenda on politics and public policy (but see Butler and Ranney, 1978; Williams, 1976; Wenner and Wenner, 1978).

To summarize, voting on referenda is a neglected area of political research. This is unfortunate because it is a frequent form of political behavior that ties together public opinion, issue voting and policy development.

The types of referenda that have received substantial scholarly attention include school taxes and bond issues (for a proposition inventory see Piele and Hall, 1973; see also Hamilton and Cohen, 1974; Keith and Braitto, 1974 and Boss, 1976), flouridation (Crain, et al., 1969; Gamson, 1961; Hahn, 1965), open or fair housing (Wolfinger and Greenstein, 1968; Hahn, 1968; Casstevens, 1965, 1967), city-county consolidation (Marando, 1973; Norton, 1963; Hawkins, 1966, 1967, 1968; Marando and Whitley, 1972; Marando and Wannamaker, 1972; Henderson and Rosenbaum, 1973; Watson and Romani, 1961; Schmandt et al., 1961), and the European Common Market (Brier and Hill, 1977;

Bristow, 1976; Butler and Kitzinger, 1976; Leleu, 1976; Sarlvik et al., 1976; Valen, 1976; King, 1976).

Our analysis fits best with what might be labeled the "single state" studies. Typically, these studies try to reach conclusions about a large number of measures over a long period. As a result, referenda voting has not been investigated in states which have only a few referenda per election. Our analysis does nothing to correct this problem but we do recognize that it exists and encourage research in a greater number of states. States that have been investigated include California (Cottrell, 1939; Key and Crouch, 1939; Crouch, 1950; Radabaugh, 1961; Mueller, 1969; Lee, 1978), Michigan (Pollock, 1940), Ohio (Lieberman, 1972), Oklahoma (Kirkpatrick et al., 1977; Hanson, 1966), Oregon (Schumacher, 1932; LaPalombara, 1950) and Washington (Bone and Benedict, 1975).

Dependent variables in this literature include participation (or its opposite, abstention or "fall-off"), support or success. The independent variables have included both characteristics of elections and characteristics of referenda. Election variables include type of election (presidential, midterm, special, primary), turnout and the number of propositions. Referenda variables include type of referendum (initiated, legislative, bond issue and others), subject and ballot position.

One of the most frequently repeated findings in the referenda literature is that more people vote for candidates than on referenda. The number of voters casting ballots on referenda is routinely investigated. Usually the referenda vote is compared with the vote for one or more public offices. Examples from the literature are shown in Table 2.

We expect our data to show lower total votes on referenda than for public offices. We are interested in explaining variation in total vote and in approval among the referenda in the same election. There are many characteristics of referenda that could conceivably affect total vote or approval. Our analysis is limited to ballot position, reading difficulty and subject.

Ballot position has been found to be important in candidate elections. It has generally been found that candidates appearing earlier in a list receive more votes than they otherwise might have (Bain and Hecock, 1957; White, 1950; Mueller, 1970, 1969; Upton and Brook, 1975; Robson and Walsh, 1974; Taebel, 1975).

Reading difficulty can be seen as somewhat related to ballot format in candidate elections. Rusk (1970) argued that the introduction of the Australian ballot led to an increase in split-ticket voting. Campbell et al. (1964: 148-149) found that voters in states with a straight ticket option were more likely to vote a straight ticket. Walker concluded

TABLE 2

## Selected Participation Findings

<u>State &amp; Time</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>Questions</u>	<u>Participation</u>
California, 1960-1976	Lee, 1978: 108	initiatives	more than 90%
California, 1960-1968	Scott and Nathan, 1970: 324	measure with least partic.	76% to 86% of the vote for president or governor*
Michigan, 1910-1939	Pollock, 1940: 24	initiatives & referenda	83% of vote for governor or supt. of public instr.
Ohio, 1951-1969	Lieberman, 1972: 359n	constitutional questions	"about four fifths"
Oklahoma, 1955-1965	Hanson, 1966: 269	direct legisla- tion (all) (General elections)	85%
Oregon, 1902-1930	Schumacher, 1932: 245	initiative & referenda	less than 73%*
South Carolina, 1968	Clubb and Traugott, 1972: 141	measure with greatest total vote	30.5% of vote for pres.
Utah, 1968	"	same	93.5% "
44 states	"	same	69.6% " "

\*Converted from "fall-off" or "drop-off."

that poorly educated voters, who are presumably also the most apathetic, marginal participants, are the ones most directly affected by complicated ballots. Those with the lowest sense of involvement and personal political efficacy are most likely to neglect possible choices or leave portions of the ballot blank (1966: 462).

In our analysis we will measure complexity with reading difficulty and try to determine the relationships between complexity and total vote and between complexity and support.

Referenda subject is closely related to issues in candidate elections. Our examination is severely limited by the referenda in our data. We will try to determine whether voters are more interested in some subjects than others and whether there are general tendencies to support measures on certain subjects.

#### B. Data

This paper extends referenda research to one more state. Between 1960 and 1972, 340 constitutional amendments were submitted to Louisiana voters in presidential, midterm and state office elections (spring of presidential years). Election turnout, mean participation and mean support are shown in Table 3. Our analysis will be limited to the four presidential elections (1960, 1964, 1968, 1972), the three midterm elections (1962, 1966, 1970) and the 1972 state elections. There were 334 amendments (or 98.2% of the total) submitted in these eight elections.<sup>1</sup>

Table 3

Louisiana Elections, 1960-1972:  
 Number of Referenda, Turnout,  
 Mean Participation and Mean Support

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Referenda</u>	<u>Turnout*</u>	<u>Mean Partic. (st.dev.)</u>	<u>Mean Support (st.dev.)</u>
1960 (s)	1	28.4%	23.3% --	75.4 --
1960	55	44.5	45.7 (5.07)	49.8 (13.83)
1962	48	22.6	63.2 (8.37)	50.3 (15.16)
1964 (s)	3	41.1	40.3 (1.3)	56.1 ( 8.69)
1964	41	47.3	47.3 (4.99)	51.0 (13.95)
1966	45	32.3	66.2 (9.95)	61.6 (14.56)
1968 (s)	2	23.0	37.7 (1.39)	51.7 ( 7.52)
1968	50	54.8	42.3 (3.45)	47.0 (11.31)
1970	53	19.6	85.2 (8.6)	32.5 ( 8.12)
1972 (s)	12	49.7	48.6 (4.5)	47.7 (13.15)
1972	30	44.3	58.9 (5.45)	41.1 ( 7.64)

---

\*Greatest total vote in the election as a percentage of the voting age population.

This paper has additional limitations. We use only statewide votes. We have no data on public attitudes, campaign spending, media coverage, press, political party or politician endorsements or any of the many other factors that might affect referenda voting. However, we think this can be a useful and informative analysis. We will examine the effects of some referenda characteristics on participation and approval. As a result of our investigation we may be able to corroborate or challenge earlier findings.

### C. Outline

In the second chapter we will discuss our first dependent variable, participation. Briefly, this is the total vote on a referendum as a percentage of the turnout in the election. At least initially, we are assuming that the offices at stake in the election determine turnout. Participation, then, ignores non-voters (those who stay home) and represents the sum of the votes to "approve" and the votes to "reject" as a percentage of the number of people who come to the polls. In the main part of the second chapter we will investigate the effects of ballot position, reading difficulty and subject category on participation.

In the third chapter we will treat approval as the dependent variable. We will use the same independent

variables used in the second chapter as well as participation.

In the fourth chapter we will summarize the results of our analysis and offer suggestions for further research.

## NOTE TO CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup>Referenda data were obtained from State of Louisiana, Report of the Secretary of State for the biennia ending December 31, 1960, 1962, 1964, 1966, 1968, 1970 and 1972.

A few referenda could not be included in the entire analysis. One was ordered not to be counted, some could not be classified and an apparent printer's error eliminated two others. Percentages are based on included cases.

The voting age population estimates for Novembers of election years are from U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports: Population Estimates, Series P-25, No. 185 (Washington, October 1958), p. 3 and from U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports: Population Estimates and Projections, Series P-25, No. 626 (Washington, May 1976), p. 10. Voting age populations for state elections were interpolated.

CHAPTER II  
PARTICIPATION

Political scientists have long been interested in the causes and consequences of citizen participation in political activity. Voting in elections is the most common act of political participation and the most often researched. It is frequently thought that the number and characteristics of the voters who turnout will affect the outcome of an election. In this chapter we will try to determine whether certain characteristics of referenda affect the number of people who cast a vote. In the next chapter we will examine the relationship between participation and approval.

The dependent variable is the total vote on a referendum as a percentage of the estimated turnout in the election. Turnout is estimated by using the total vote for the office (or the referendum as in 1966 and 1970) with the greatest total vote in the election.

Other researchers have measured participation in roughly the same way. An alternative is to use the number (or percent) of voters who do not vote on the referendum. This is the opposite of participation and is often referred to as "fall-off," "drop-off," or

"abstention." Either way, the general idea has been to determine the level of voter interest in referenda as compared to candidates.

The mean participation for each Louisiana election is shown in Table 3. With only one exception (1972), participation in the Louisiana elections is lower than in six of the seven states shown in Table 2. Clearly, Louisiana follows the general pattern of fewer votes on referenda than for candidates. It is also clear (from Table 3) that mean participation is much greater in low turnout midterm elections than in "high" turnout presidential and state elections. According to Thomas (1968), midterm voters, though few in number, may be better informed and thus more likely to vote on referenda. Averaging participation or aggregating referenda across elections would be misleading. We will investigate the relationships between the independent variables and participation within each election.

Our first independent variable is ballot position. We want to determine whether referenda appearing at the top of the list receive a greater total vote than those at the bottom. In other words, we expect a negative relationship between ballot position and participation. If such a relationship exists, it may suggest that the referenda electorate becomes increasingly different from nonvoters and office-only voters. Clubb and Traugott

used the Survey Research Center's 1968 National Election Study data to compare nonvoters, office-only voters and referenda voters. Virtually all of the referenda voters had also voted for President and U. S. Representative.

Referenda voting was even more closely associated with income, education, and subjective social status than was voting in partisan races. The referenda electorate was more predominantly white, affluent, better-educated, and of higher subjective social class than was the partisan electorate. Few referenda voters considered themselves political independents; high levels of political interest and information and of confidence in government and personal capacity to influence the political process were further characteristics of the referenda electorate. Thus referenda voters appear as a small, well-informed, well-politicized, and, in some respects, elite segment of the total electorate (Clubb and Traugott, 1972: 165).

Without survey data we cannot say what groups of people begin voting on referenda and then stop. However, a strong negative relationship may suggest that the electorate on the last referendum is even more different from the population than the electorate on the first referendum.

Clubb and Traugott also looked at the relationship between ballot position and participation.

As might be expected, the length of the ballot apparently affected participation on referenda. Among the forty-four states that included state-wide referenda on the ballot, the average number of referenda was seven, with a maximum of fifty and a minimum of one. Voter participation was inversely related to ballot position, with referenda appearing relatively later in the ballot receiving, on the average, a lower total vote than referenda that preceded them (1972: 143).

However, the correlations reported by Clubb and Traugott ( $r = -.48$  for all 44 states and  $-.30$  with Louisiana

(N = 50) excluded) may underestimate the strength of the relationship when the number of referenda is large.

First, when all states are thrown together the number of referenda with low ballot positions far exceeds the number with high ballot positions. In 1968 there were 44 referenda in the first position but only one in the fiftieth position. The average of seven suggests that there were many more high position referenda than low position referenda.

Second, the level of participation varies across states. When the total vote on the referendum with the greatest total vote is expressed as a percentage of the vote for president, participation ranges from a low of 30.5% in South Carolina to a high of 93.3% in Utah (Clubb and Traugott, 1972: 141).

We can illustrate these points and test our hypothesis with the Louisiana data. In our illustration, the eleven elections (see Table 3) with different numbers of referenda can substitute for states. Further, the high participation midterm elections can take the place of high participation states (such as Utah) and the remaining elections can take the place of low participation states. In spite of the large number of referenda in most of the elections, the correlation between ballot position and participation is even lower (-.25) than that Clubb and Traugott obtained after excluding Louisiana as a deviant case. If we exclude the four state elections

with one, two, three and 12 referenda (and thus decrease the percentage of low position referenda), the correlation increases (-.34) and becomes greater than Clubb and Traugott's without Louisiana.

If we look at the correlations within each of the eight elections with the greatest number of referenda (see Table 4) we see a much stronger relationship. All of the general elections with large numbers of referenda show very high correlations in the expected direction. The 1972 state election is less of a deviant case than it appears. With one extreme outlier removed the correlation is much stronger (-.55) and significant. (We will consider the outliers in all of the elections in more detail later.)

The hypothesized negative relationship between ballot position and participation does exist in the Louisiana elections. We can further explore the relationship by looking at regression equations for each election (see Table 5). The intercepts have been adjusted to estimate participation on the first referendum. The slope coefficients estimate the change in participation for each change in ballot position. For example, the equation for 1962 estimates a decrease in participation of .56% for each downward change in ballot position. In the seven general elections, the estimated effect of one change in ballot position ranges from a low of -.21% in 1968 to a high of -.67% in 1966.

Table 4

Simple Correlations between Ballot  
Position and Participation

<u>Year</u> <u>(N)</u>	<u>r</u>
1960 (54)	-.92
1962 (48)	-.93
1964 (41)	-.95
1966 (45)	-.89
1968 (50)	-.90
1970 (53)	-.90
1972 (state) (12)	n.s.*
1972 (30)	-.92

---

\*Others significant to .001 level.

TABLE 5  
 Regression with Participation  
 and Ballot Position

<u>Year</u> <u>(N)</u>	<u>A*</u> <u>(t)</u>	<u>B</u> <u>(t)</u>	<u>R<sup>2</sup></u>
1960 (54)	53.4 (95.0)	-.29 (-16.39)	.84
1962 (48)	76.3 (85.5)	-.56 (-17.44)	.87
1964 (41)	55.2 (116.2)	-.40 (-20.03)	.91
1966 (45)	81.01 (58.03)	-.67 (-12.62)	.79
1968 (50)	47.49 (111.99)	-.21 (-14.72)	.82
1970 (53)	98.29 (95.27)	-.50 (-15.06)	.82
1972 (state) (12)	49.00 (16.74)	-.07 (-.017)	.003
1972 (30)	84.95 (84.95)	-.57 (-12.72)	.85

\*The intercept has been adjusted to estimate Y when X = 1.  
 If X (position) = 0 there would be no referenda.

The extent to which the voters at the bottom of a list of referenda differ from the voters at the top cannot be determined with our data. Further, we cannot simply assume that the relationship found in Louisiana also exists in other states. The data do suggest however, that the position of a referendum on the ballot is important in determining the number of votes cast.

Our second independent variable is reading difficulty. We want to determine whether more obscure referenda receive fewer votes than do more comprehensible referenda in the same election. We expect a negative relationship between reading difficulty and participation. Such a relationship would suggest that less educated people abstain on the more complex referenda but vote on the simpler ones.

We use two measures of reading difficulty. The first is simply the number of words. The second is an adapted version of Gunning's (1968) Fog Index (explained in the note)<sup>1</sup>. The Fog Index roughly approximates school-grade level of reading difficulty. "Copy with a Fog Index of 13 [college freshman] or more runs the danger of being ignored or misunderstood" (Gunning, 1968: 39).

Unfortunately, our effort to measure reading difficulty probably suffers from unreliability. As Table 6 shows, the mean number of words and the mean Fog Index tend to increase from 1960 to 1972. Although it is possible that referenda became more difficult over the

TABLE 6  
Reading Difficulty by Election

<u>Year</u> <u>(N)</u>	<u>N of Words</u> <u>(st. dev.)</u>	<u>Fog Index</u> <u>(st. dev.)</u>
1960 (55)	39.16 (20.21)	23.15 ( 8.31)
1962 (48)	40.21 (18.6 )	24.04 ( 6.52)
1964 (39)	42.66 (23.36)	24.68 (10.36)
1966 (45)	53.36 (30.34)	26.98 ( 6.97)
1968 (50)	55.94 (35.20)	25.82 ( 7.75)
1970 (53)	58.85 (28.65)	26.93 ( 8.65)
1972 (state) (12)	99.92 (129.06)	30.75 ( 7.61)
1972 (30)	63.37 (32.23)	29.33 ( 9.31)

period, we suspect that at least part of the increase is the result of measurement problems. However, we are more interested in comparing referenda within elections than across elections. We will proceed in spite of our imprecise measurements of reading difficulty.

The expected negative relationship between reading difficulty and participation does not appear in our data (see Table 7). Among the simple correlations, only four are negative and these are not significant. The only significant simple correlations (1962 and 1970) suggest a positive relationship between reading difficulty and participation. When ballot position is controlled, there are six negative correlations but, again, none are significant. The 1970 correlations are no longer significant and the only significant correlations suggest a positive relationship.

The data are inconclusive. They do not support our expectation of a negative relationship. However, the data are not persuasive enough for us to accept the idea of a positive relationship between reading difficulty and participation. We can only speculate as to why the expected negative relationship did not appear. It may be that people who skip a difficult question do not come back and vote on other, easier questions. In order for a negative relationship to appear many voters would have to skip the difficult questions and vote on the easier ones. They would have to read each question and then

TABLE 7

Correlations between Reading  
Difficulty and Participation

Year (N)	Simple		Partial (Ballot Position Controlled)	
	N of Words (s)	Fog Index (s)	N of Words (s)	Fog Index (s)
1960 (54)	.02 (.436)	.05 (.369)	.25 (.036)	.33 (.008)
1962 (48)	.24 (.053)	.28 (.027)	.28 (.030)	.21 (.074)
1964 (39)	.01 (.479)	.10 (.269)	.02 (.441)	.08 (.310)
1966 (45)	.08 (.305)	.16 (.146)	-.14 (.187)	-.12 (.213)
1968 (50)	-.14 (.159)	.04 (.386)	-.03 (.421)	-.03 (.416)
1970 (53)	.31 (.01)	.29 (.02)	.02 (.449)	.07 (.306)
1972 (state) (12)	-.18 (.293)	-.27 (.195)	-.22 (.261)	-.28 (.199)
1972 (30)	-.09 (.323)	.10 (.299)	.25 (.094)	.19 (.162)

decide whether or not to vote on it. Given the large numbers of questions it seems unlikely that many voters would do this.

The data in the preceding section suggested a strong negative relationship between participation and ballot position. In general, a question receives fewer votes than the question before it. The steady decline in the number of voters may mean that people reach a certain level of frustration or fatigue and stop voting. Reading difficulty may contribute to frustration and an especially difficult question may "cause" large numbers of voters to give up and stop voting. Reading difficulty is less likely to be important if there has been an intensive campaign. Wolfinger and Greenstein (1968) showed that a campaign taught voters how to express their opinions on a complex initiative. More research is needed to determine the effect of reading difficulty on referenda participation.

Our third independent variable is referenda subject. Voters in other states have been found to be more interested in some subjects than others. In Washington, moral issues and business-versus-labor questions attract more voters than referenda on public service and finance. Government structure and reform attract even fewer votes (Bone and Benedict, 1975: 340). Hanson concluded that Oklahoma voters were more interested in questions on "social mores" and were more likely to vote on referenda

dealing with race, women's suffrage and prohibition than on other subjects (1966: 270).

The narrow range of subjects in the data limits our investigation. All referenda in this study are constitutional amendments placed on the ballot by the legislature. None dealt with nuclear power, gay rights or returnable bottles. We do not have data on the controversy generated by the referenda in this study. The large number of referenda made the development of useful subject categories difficult. Many amendments could be placed in several categories no matter how the categories were defined. Attempts to create subject groups narrow enough to be useful and with sufficient referenda for analysis proved unsuccessful.

It is possible to examine referenda dealing with taxes and referenda dealing with parishes or other local governments. Taxes are familiar to most voters and we might expect tax questions to attract more voters. The amendments proposed increases or decreases in either state or parish taxes. Generally, the state decrease amendments proposed an exemption from an existing tax. Some of the exemptions (agricultural airplanes, fishing boats) could only have been important to very small groups of people. The local increase amendments usually authorized a governing body to levy a strictly limited tax for a specific purpose. The data are shown in Table 8.

TABLE 8

Mean Participation on Tax and Non-Tax  
Referenda by Year of Election

Year (N)	Tax				Non-Tax
	<u>State Increase</u>	<u>State Decrease</u>	<u>Local Increase</u>	<u>Local Decrease</u>	
1960 (54)		47.9 (6)	43.3 (4)		45.6 (44)
1962 (48)		61.6 (4)	69.8 (1)	67.6 (2)	63.0 (41)
1964 (39)		53.3 (2)	42.9 (6)		47.9 (31)
1966 (45)		60.3 (1)	65.2 (2)		66.4 (42)
1968 (50)		49.1 (3)	40.9 (2)		41.9 (45)
1970 (51)		76.0 (1)	84.5 (8)		86.0 (42)
1972 (state) (12)			47.3 (2)	45.6 (1)	49.3 (9)
1972 (30)	68.3 (1)	63.8 (2)	57.0 (7)		58.6 (20)

Three points should be made before attempting to draw conclusions. First, the small number of tax measures in each election suggests caution. A single controversial tax question may be responsible for the difference between the tax and non-tax means. Second, measures dealing with taxes in specific parishes seem unlikely to generate special interest in the rest of the state. Third, the non-tax categories have large numbers of low ballot position referenda which may tend to artificially reduce the mean.

In general, the differences in mean participation between tax and non-tax referenda are not extreme. With regard to state taxes, the years 1960, 1964, 1968 and 1972 support the hypothesis that participation is greater on tax referenda than on non-tax referenda. Interestingly, these are all presidential elections and the three midterm elections show lower participation on tax measures than on others. Whether this is the result of some significant relationship between turnout, participation and taxes or an accident of particular referenda in higher or lower ballot positions is not clear.

With the exception of 1962, local tax referenda receive fewer votes than non-tax measures. It seems likely, though, that participation on local measures would be much greater in the affected parishes.

Many of the amendments concerned specific (named) cities, parishes or special districts. Because they affect fewer people we would expect participation to be lower on local amendments than on statewide measures.

It seems unlikely that people in other parts of the state would become especially interested in the affairs of a particular parish. The only exception may be New Orleans/Orleans Parish. This is the largest city in the state and thus may attract special attention. The data are shown in Table 9.

In six of the eight elections mean participation in the statewide category is greater than in either of the local categories. We are not able to explain the 1962 and 1970 elections in which the New Orleans referenda averaged greater participation than the statewide referenda. There may have been unusual or especially salient urban-rural conflicts to stimulate voter interest. In seven elections the mean participation for the New Orleans category exceeds the mean for "other places." Part of this is surely due to New Orleans's large population. How much special attention (that other parishes do not get) it receives from out-state cannot be determined with our data.

Our examination of tax and local amendments has not been especially helpful in determining what subjects interest Louisiana voters. In order to isolate specific referenda that received especially high participation we will look at the outliers from the equations reported in Table 5. We will be looking at referenda that received greater participation than could have been estimated from ballot position alone. We did not use any strict

TABLE 9

Mean Participation on State and Local  
Referenda by Year of Election

<u>Year</u> <u>Year</u> <u>(N)</u>	<u>Statewide</u>	<u>New Orleans/ Orleans Par.</u>	<u>Other Places</u>
1960 (53)	47.7 (30)	42.3 (6)	43.8 (17)
1962 (48)	63.8 (33)	67.8 (6)	58.3 (9)
1964 (39)	48.9 (26)	45.2 (6)	43.9 (7)
1966 (44)	71.8 (24)	65.7 (7)	57.1 (13)
1968 (48)	43.4 (31)	40.7 (7)	39.9 (10)
1970 (51)	82.8 (23)	91.8 (17)	81.7 (11)
1972 (state) (12)	50.0 (7)	47.1 (2)	46.5 (3)
1972 (30)	61.1 (19)	56.3 (3)	52.3 (8)

rule in deciding what to count as an outlier. We simply "eyeballed it." Tables in the appendix compare residuals of the excluded outliers with the next largest residuals, and compare mean participation, correlations and percent variance explained before and after the exclusion. The outliers are summarized in Table 10.

It is difficult to make sense of this group of referenda. We must be careful not to group them too closely. We cannot determine how much of the "excess" participation on these referenda was due to voter interest in these subjects and how much was the result of especially dull referenda on the same ballot. In other words, we do not know if these questions would have been outliers in other years with other measures on the ballot.

Veterans and taxes seem to have generated greater than average interest. Local government and New Orleans are also represented. The amendment allowing the governor to serve two terms may have turned into a vote of confidence in the incumbent governor. In any case, the governor is probably familiar (especially to midterm voters) and two terms are easy to understand. The stadium measure may have had something to do with getting or keeping a professional football franchise in New Orleans. The stadium issue was controversial and highly publicized.

We do not have the background data necessary to explain why participation was especially great on each of these amendments. We have speculated but votes cannot

TABLE 10

## Abstracts of Outliers

<u>Year</u>	<u>Position (residual)</u>	<u>Abstract</u>
1960	8 (8.93)	Pertaining to Sabine River Authority and dedication of special ad valorem tax.
	32 (4.29)	Tax exemption on agricultural implements.
1962	4 (7.29)	Relative to highways. Financing of construction, maintenance, improvement of highways, bridges, over- and under-passes and tunnels.
	23 (5.77)	Authorize New Orleans to levy annual special tax of $\frac{1}{2}$ mill on the dollar for general municipal purposes.
	26 (5.30)	Authorize Sewerage and Water Board to fix rates charged private customers.
1964	1 (3.13)	Establish code of ethics for governmental affairs.
	5 (4.16)	Exempt from Public Service Commission regulation the direct sale of natural gas to industrial users for use in manufacturing.
	33 (3.03)	Authorize the legislature to permit parishes to create industrial areas.
1966	1 (19.0)	Qualifications for governor and allow two consecutive terms.
	10 (14.1)	Create Stadium and Exposition District and proscribe its powers and duties.
1968	13 (4.12)	Provide five-year homestead exemption to veterans who served more than six months in the Vietnam combat area.
	14 (4.51)	Provide an additional five-year homestead exemption to veterans and extend to veterans of Vietnam.
	15 (4.46)	Provide five-year homestead exemption to widows of Armed Forces members killed in the line of duty since the beginning of the Korean conflict, in peacetime or in Vietnam.

TABLE 10.

(Continued)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Position (residual)</u>	<u>Abstract</u>
1970	27 (10.1)	Create Lafayette Parish Charter Commission, authorize development of plan(s) of government for the county and submission to the people.
	29 (11.6)	Uniform maximum interest rate at which certain political subdivisions may issue bonds or other indebtedness.
1972 (st.)	8 (13.7)	Authorize bonds for payment of Vietnam veterans bonuses.
1972	1 (4.25)	Repeal state ad valorem property taxes, provide for payment from general fund for items previously covered by these taxes and to protect holders of bonds secured by these taxes.
	5 (3.11)	Repeal requirement that all real estate be valued at actual cash value, listed on the assessment rolls and submitted to the state tax commission.
	6 (3.49)	Authorize Orleans Levee District to levy a 2½ mill tax on immovable property in Orleans Parish and issue bonds secured by the tax.

tell us everything. To go further we would need information on the endorsements by news media and politicians and on the campaigns for and against. We would be especially interested in campaign expenditures and party positions. In general, it appears that measures affecting large numbers of people (such as taxpayers, veterans and their families or residents of New Orleans) or surrounded by controversy (the stadium, perhaps two terms and governmental ethics) are likely to receive greater participation than might be expected on the basis of ballot position alone.

In this chapter we have found that ballot position is strongly and negatively related to participation. We found no clear relationship between reading difficulty and participation. Controversial or broad amendments seem to attract more votes.

In the next chapter we attempt to examine referenda approval with the same independent variables used in this chapter as well as participation.

## NOTE TO CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup>The Fog Index is computed by adding the average sentence length in words and the percentage of hard words (those with three syllables or more but not including capitalized or simple compound words or verbs made three syllables by "ed" or "es") and multiplying the sum by the Fog Index factor (.4) (Gunning, 1968: 38-40).

Some adjustments were necessary in applying the Fog Index to the Louisiana amendments. Although the directions recommend that a passage of 100 words be used when computing average sentence length, most of the referenda did not have 100 words and were only one sentence. The number of words was substituted when there was only one sentence. Place names were not counted but hard words capitalized because they were included in the names of authorities, boards and districts were counted. Decimal places in the Fog Index were dropped.

## CHAPTER III

## APPROVAL

The purpose of this chapter is to determine whether certain characteristics of referenda are related to voter approval. We shall attempt to examine the relationships using aggregate election statistics for one state. The dependent variable in this chapter is the vote to approve the referendum as a percentage of the total vote on the measure. All of the referenda were proposals to change the constitution. However, a vote to approve was not necessarily liberal or progressive. We are only trying to determine whether certain conditions favor the affirmative or the negative.

Our first two independent variables, participation and ballot position are so closely related that we must consider them together. In chapter 2 we found that participation and ballot position were strongly and negatively related (see Tables 4 and 5). The lower an amendment appears on the ballot the fewer people vote on it. The severe negative collinearity will complicate our efforts to examine the relationships between these variables and approval.

Attempts to relate the number of voters and the level of approval or outcome have not always distinguished between turnout and participation as a percentage of turnout. Much of the research has dealt with local referenda. These are very frequently held alone and are wholly responsible for drawing voters to the polls. When a referendum is the only item on the ballot then no distinction need be made between turnout and participation as we have defined it. At the state level, referenda usually accompany an election for public offices. In most cases the offices being filled are responsible for attracting voters. Participation indicates the salience of a referendum or the amount of interest it has generated among the voters who turned out primarily to vote for candidates.

Turnout (as a percentage of the voting age population) is the same for all referenda within a given election. It can be used to compare several elections but not referenda within the same election. We know that turnout is much higher in presidential elections than in midterm elections. The characteristics of the group of voters who come to the polls are affected by the level of turnout and this may be important for referenda outcomes. Several authors have touched on this and we will come back to it very briefly later. For now, we are interested in participation as defined in chapter 2.

Horton and Thompson found that "voter turnout is generally higher for defeated than for passed referendums" (1962: 487-488). They argued that a high turnout includes a larger proportion of alienated people who tended to vote negatively on the proposals of community leaders. (The alienation argument is expanded by Stone, 1965 and summarized by Clubb and Traugott, 1972).

Piele and Hall reviewed the literature on school financial referenda and concluded that "the larger the turnout, the smaller the percentage of favorable votes cast in a school referendum" (1972: 64, 69). However, Shepard analyzed 470 referenda in 29 cities and concluded that

the nature of referendum outcomes--passage or defeat--does not appear to be related to turnout levels in the manner predicted by alienated voter models of referendum voting behavior. Unusually high levels of turnout do not increase the likelihood of referendum defeat (1975: 69).

On the state level, Clubb and Traugott (1972) showed with survey data that referenda voters are not those we generally think of as alienated.

There is no obvious expected relationship between participation and referenda approval at the state level. If high participation really does include a greater proportion of alienated voters who actually do vote negatively then the relationship might be negative. (The size of the alienated population is important.) However,

if the alienated either stay home or turnout but tend to ignore the referenda, there may be no relationship.

Our second independent variable is ballot position. We want to determine whether referenda appearing at the top of the list receive a greater percentage of favorable votes than do those at the bottom.

The California legislature

devoutly believes in the existence of a body of citizens who start out voting affirmatively on bond issues but turn to negativism as they move down the ballot viewing with mounting horror the extent of the proposed expenditures. Part of the reason for placing state bond issues at the top of the ballot is to catch the affirmative votes of these citizens before they turn sour (Mueller, 1969: 1208).

In 1957 the legislature acted on its belief.

Whereas previously the secretary of state decided which number to assign a proposition on the ballot, the code amendment prescribes a specific formula for the order in which measures must appear. The discretion was taken away from the secretary of state because of the belief that voters tend to approve measures appearing at the top of the ballot and to reject those near the bottom of the ballot, especially when the list is long. If the secretary could juggle the order of the propositions, he could influence the outcome of the vote-- or at least so ran the argument (Hyink et al., 1975: 128).

The California legislature then, expected a negative relationship between approval and ballot position. In other words, their hypothesis is that the favorable percentage declines as the position number increases. The legislators also suspect that measures at the top of the ballot are more likely to be approved than are those at the bottom.

Political scientists have not found support for these hypotheses. Pollock concluded that

. . . the figures do not attest any relation between the success of an issue and its place on the ballot. In other words, issues have been approved or rejected regardless of whether or not they were first or last on the ballot. Michigan voters do not participate well on issues far down on the ballot, but this does not mean that the issues so placed are uniformly rejected (1940: 48).

LaPalombara (1950: 95) found "no evidence for the assumption that the position on the ballot has influenced . . . the success or failure of proposals" in Oregon. Mueller (1969) found that only a small proportion of his sample of California ballots showed a switch from affirmative to negative voting. He also found a group of the same size who had done the opposite. Clubb and Traugott found

. . . little indication that the response to referenda that appeared relatively late in the ballot was more strongly negative than the response to those that appeared toward the beginning of the ballot (1972: 143).

Pollock and LaPalombara dealt with states with few referenda in each election compared to California and Louisiana. Our second chapter suggests that the cross-state correlations used by Clubb and Traugott may not be the best way to investigate the relationship between position and approval.

While we do not have bond issues in our data, it seems possible that a negative relationship could appear if voters became annoyed, frustrated or tired of voting as they move down a long ballot and decided to express

their feelings by voting against everything. This does seem a little farfetched and Mueller found that "on items of low visibility, voters seem to have a tendency to avoid over a long stretch a pattern of behavior which is obviously uniform" (1969: 1208). There may be no relationship at all.

Table 11 presents regression equations for each election. The dependent variable is percent approval. The independent variables are participation and ballot position. The equations show the importance of each independent variable when the other is held constant. In the 1962, 1964 and 1970 equations neither participation nor ballot position is significantly related to approval. The percent of variance explained by the 1962 election is almost zero. For the other two elections the  $R^2$  is larger but the insignificant estimates suggest collinearity between the independent variables. Participation and ballot position have some combined effect on approval but it is not possible to determine the importance of each.

Two of the elections show mixed results. The 1966 election shows a significant negative relationship between ballot position and approval. For each position lower on the ballot approval declines .878 percent. The coefficient for participation is negative but not significant. The equation for the 1972 state election shows that participation is strongly related to approval. On

Table 11

Regression with Percent Approval,  
Participation, and Ballot Position

Year (N)	Intercept (t)	Slope Participation (t)	Slope Ballot Position (t)	R <sup>2</sup>
1960 (54)	-142.96 (-3.32)	3.53 (4.41)	1.127 (4.49)	.289
1962 (48)	26.81 (.48)	.386 (.535)	-.038 (-.088)	.061
1964 (41)	-40.22 (-.05)	1.807 (1.32)	.271 (.474)	.185
1966 (45)	128.93 (3.54)	-.711 (-1.60)	-.878 (-2.61)	.18
1968 (50)	163.07 (3.33)	-2.319 (-2.26)	-.711 (-2.93)	.167
1970 (53)	12.64 (.497)	.280 (1.09)	.149 (-1.04)	.321
1972 (state) (12)	-52.66 (-2.16)	2.232 (4.58)	-1.258 (-2.05)	.745
1972 (30)	-122.56 (-5.16)	2.519 (7.20)	.984 (4.54)	.752

the average, a one percentage point increase in participation is associated with an increase of 2.23 percentage points in approval. Ballot position is not significantly related to approval in this election. This is plausible when we remember that 12 is only a few referenda for Louisiana voters. However, the small number of referenda suggests several reasons for caution. First, the small number increases the importance of individual referenda. Second, we have no other elections with roughly the same number of referenda. Finally, 12 might be a large number of referenda in another state. The relationship could be quite different outside Louisiana.

In 1968 both independent variables are negatively related to percent approval. With ballot position held constant, an increase of one percentage point in participation reduces approval 2.3 percentage points on average. With participation held constant, each move down the ballot is associated with a .71 percentage point decline in approval. The variance explained is low (16.7%).

In 1960 and 1972 both independent variables are positively related to approval. In both of these elections, as in 1968, participation has a much greater effect on approval than does ballot position. The  $R^2$  is moderate in 1960 (.289) and quite strong in 1972 (.752).

Our results are not conclusive. In three of the elections (1962, 1964 and 1970) neither participation

nor ballot position had a statistically significant effect on approval. In one election (1966) ballot position was significantly related while participation was not. In the other four elections participation was much more strongly related than was ballot position (which was not significant in the 1972 state election). The directions of the effects appear to be determined by unknown variables specific to each election.

In order to test the hypothesis that referenda appearing early on the ballot are more likely to pass than are those appearing later, we divided the referenda in each election into two categories. The high category includes the first half of the referenda (the top of the ballot) and the low category includes the second half. Odd referenda were arbitrarily assigned to the low category. Table 12 shows the relationship between dichotomized ballot position and outcome. (In 1970 all measures failed.) The hypothesis can be rejected for six of the seven elections shown. Only in 1972 was there a significant relationship between outcome and position. For the most part, ballot position (as indicated) was not an important determinant of the outcome in Louisiana.

Our next independent variable is reading difficulty. We want to determine whether more obscure referenda receive a smaller percentage of favorable votes than do more comprehensible referenda. Several authors have reached similar conclusions about the relationship

Table 12

## Ballot Position and Outcome

	Position		Position	
	High % (N)	Low % (N)	High % (N)	Low % (N)
	<u>1960</u>		<u>1962</u>	
Pass	52 (14)	59 (16)	75 (18)	58 (14)
Fail	<u>48 (13)</u>	<u>41 (11)</u>	<u>25 (6)</u>	<u>42 (10)</u>
	100 27	100 27	100 (24)	100 (24)
	$X^2 = .3, df = 1, n.s.$		$X^2 = 1.5, df = 1, n.s.$	
	<u>1964</u>		<u>1966</u>	
Pass	60 (12)	43 (9)	86 (19)	70 (16)
Fail	<u>40 (8)</u>	<u>57 (12)</u>	<u>14 (3)</u>	<u>30 (7)</u>
	100 (20)	100 (21)	100 (22)	100 (23)
	$X^2 = 1.2, df = 1, n.s.$		$X^2 = 1.84, df = 1, n.s.$	
	<u>1968</u>		<u>1972 (state)</u>	
Pass	76 (19)	60 (15)	17 (1)	17 (1)
Fail	<u>24 (6)</u>	<u>40 (10)</u>	<u>83 (5)</u>	<u>83 (5)</u>
	100 (25)	100 (25)	100 (6)	100 (6)
	$X^2 = .83, df = 1, n.s.$			
	<u>1973</u>			
Pass	33 (5)	0 (0)		
Fail	<u>67 (10)</u>	<u>100 (15)</u>		
	100 (15)	100 (15)		
	$X^2 = 6.00, df = 1, s = .01$			

between voter doubt or uncertainty and approval.

Schumacher concluded that Oregon voters had accepted the advice "When in doubt, vote NO" (1932: 251).

MacDonald stated that

Highly technical questions are submitted to the electorate, as well as many non-technical measures of obscure purpose and uncertain result. Fortunately the voters have grown wary of such proposals. In self-defense they have generally adopted the maxim: "When in doubt, vote no!" (1955: 330).

Lutrin and Settle reported that

initiatives . . . may lose favor quickly if a skillfully managed or intense campaign promotes considerable doubt concerning their desirability. In short, the voters may reason, "If in doubt, vote no" (1975: 356).

Williams analyzed voting on nine rejected tax referenda in five states. "[P]olls revealed growing confusion and uncertainty as the campaign progressed and on election day most voters chose the evil they knew to one they did not" (1976: 32).

While in doubt is not exactly the same as reading difficulty, they are related. Voters unable to read a referendum are likely to be in doubt as to its meaning. The literature on doubt does not seem out of place here. We will assume that doubt or uncertainty among voters is increased with referenda reading difficulty. The literature suggests that the relationship between difficulty and support is negative.

The simple and partial correlations are shown in Table 13. The (second order) partial correlations are

Table 13

Simple and Partial Correlations, Percent  
Approve and Reading Difficulty

Year (N)	<u>Simple</u>		<u>Partial</u> (Participation & Ballot Position Controlled)	
	N of Words (s)	Fog Index (s)	N of Words (s)	Fog Index (s)
1960 (54)	.22 (.052)	.29 (.016)	.10 (.236)	.14 (.16)
1962 (48)	.05 (.366)	.05 (.379)	-.01 (.486)	-.02 (.438)
1964 (41)	.21 (.094)	.32 (.021)	.23 (.08)	.30 (.03)
1966 (45)	.19 (.100)	.32 (.015)	.12 (.220)	.24 (.06)
1968 (50)	.10 (.235)	-.02 (.458)	.15 (.153)	-.05 (.379)
1970 (53)	.27 (.026)	.27 (.026)	.11 (.231)	.13 (.182)
1972 (s) (12)	-.12 (.356)	-.21 (.256)	-.28 (.217)	-.10 (.388)
1972 (30)	.13 (.240)	.14 (.23)	.14 (.234)	-.10 (.472)

included to show the relationship between reading difficulty and percent approve when the effects of ballot position and participation are controlled. The expected negative relationship simply does not appear in these data. Only a handful of the coefficients are significant and they are all positive.

As in the second chapter the expected relationship between our dependent variable and reading difficulty does not appear. We are not ready to accept a positive relationship between approval and difficulty. This would imply that many voters approved of more difficult measures while rejecting those they could more easily understand. This is not very plausible. Our data do not make possible an investigation of the relationship between voter knowledge and the direction of the vote. We suspect that many people voted (for and against) with little or no understanding of the proposals. In spite of the conclusions of other writers that uncertainty leads to negativism, we conclude that the way to look at this is with survey data. There is little we can do with the data we have.

Our consideration of referenda subject and approval is subject to the same limitations discussed in the second chapter. Further, there is no point in looking at the local referenda because a vote to approve does not mean the same thing on each referenda within the categories. We can look at the tax referenda. We can test the hypothesis that amendments proposing tax reductions will

receive a greater percentage of favorable votes than will non-tax referenda. We also might expect tax increase measures to receive a lower favorable percentage than non-tax measures. In addition to the cautions raised in chapter 2, it should be noted that we are ignoring the amount of the tax and the size of the affected population.

The data are shown in Table 14. It is difficult to draw conclusions about the local referenda. Why people vote one way or another on referenda that do not concern them cannot be determined with our data. Statewide returns on measures dealing with a particular parish include the votes of many people who will never have to pay the taxes. The amendments affecting the entire state are more interesting. In 1960, 1964, 1966 and 1972 the statewide tax reduction amendments received an average favorable vote greater than the average favorable vote for non-tax referenda. In 1962 and 1970 the tax reduction measures averaged or received a lower favorable percentage than did non-tax referenda. The one tax increase proposal received a much greater favorable vote than did the average non-tax referendum in the 1972 election.

We cannot draw any firm conclusions. There does appear to be a slight tendency for tax reduction amendments to receive a somewhat greater favorable vote. The small number of tax amendments suggests that we ought not to speculate much further.

Table 14  
 Mean Percent Approve on Tax and Non-Tax  
 Referenda by Year of Election

Year (N)	Tax				Non-Tax
	State Increase	State Decrease	Local Increase	Local Decrease	
1960 (54)		53.3 (6)	54.7 (4)		48.9 (44)
1962 (48)		35.9 (4)	61.6 (1)	63.2 (2)	50.8 (41)
1964 (39)		64.4 (2)	38.7 (6)		53.5 (31)
1966 (45)		69.7 (1)	67.5 (2)		61.2 (42)
1968 (50)		47.0 (3)	46.9 (2)		47.0 (45)
1970 (51)		18.9 (1)	34.0 (8)		32.7 (42)
1972 (state) (12)			38.8 (2)	39.1 (1)	50.7 (9)
1972 (30)	51.3 (1)	43.5 (2)	39.9 (7)		40.8 (20)

Finally, we would now like to shift our focus from individual referenda within elections to a brief comparison of elections themselves. We noted earlier that presidential elections attracted more voters to the polls than did midterm elections (see Table 3). A number of investigators have compared different types of elections in terms of referenda outcomes. Why the type of election should matter to individual voters is not clear. However, the level of turnout may have something to do with the composition of the group that will make the decisions on the referenda.

We can compare high and low turnout elections in order to see whether referenda are more likely to pass in one or the other. The literature does not give us much clue as to what to expect. In an analysis of state ballot propositions submitted between 1963 and 1967 Bone concluded that

. . . there is no evidence that, in the aggregate, ballot propositions fare any better in a presidential year when there is higher turnout than in midterm or odd year elections or vice versa (1968: 127).

Bone also pointed out that different states have found that measures are more likely to pass in both presidential and non-presidential elections (1968: 127). In Oklahoma and Oregon measures were more likely to pass at special elections than at general elections (Hanson, 1966: 265; Schumacher, 1932: 254). Ohio voters "show about the same willingness to support questions submitted in even

and odd numbered years" (Lieberman, 1972: 369). Washington referenda are more likely to pass in presidential elections than in midterm elections (Warren and Best, 1968: 545). The literature suggests that the relationship between turnout and outcome varies across states but does not suggest what might be expected in Louisiana.

Table 15 presents data comparing high and low turnout elections. Turnout is the greatest total vote (office or referendum) in the election as a percentage of the voting age population. In general, many more people turned out in the presidential elections and in the state election than in midterm elections. We would like to know whether this larger electorate is more or less likely to approve referenda.

The differences between the categories are not great. The average referendum received roughly the same percentage of favorable votes in each category. The percentage of referenda approved was slightly greater in high turnout elections (49.2) than in low turnout elections (45.9). One difference that does appear is the greater variability in mean percent approve. The high turnout category shows a high of 51.0 and a low of 41.1 while the low turnout elections range from 61.6 to 32.5. Whether this is due to the turnout differences or to aspects of specific elections cannot be determined with our data.

Our attempt to explain approval has not been especially successful. In four elections neither

Table 15

## Election Turnout and Outcome

<u>Year</u>	<u>Turnout</u>	<u>Mean Approve</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N Passed</u>	<u>Percent Passed</u>
A. High Turnout Elections					
1960	44.5	49.8	54	30	55.6
1964	47.3	51.0	41	21	51.2
1968	54.8	47.0	50	34	68.0
1972 (st.)	49.7	47.7	12	2	16.7
1972	<u>44.3</u>	<u>41.1</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>16.7</u>
Mean/All	48.1	47.4	187	92	49.2
B. Low Turnout Elections					
1962	22.6	50.3	48	32	66.7
1966	32.3	61.6	45	35	77.8
1970	<u>19.6</u>	<u>32.5</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
Mean/All	24.8	46.9	146	67	45.9

participation nor ballot position were related to percent approve. When these variables were related participation was more important. Referenda at the top of the ballot do not appear more likely to pass than those at the bottom. We did not find a clear relationship between approval and reading difficulty. Most of the correlation coefficients were insignificant. In some elections the tax reduction measures appear to receive greater average approval than did non-tax amendments. There do not appear to be great differences between high and low turnout elections in terms of mean approval or outcome. Perhaps the usefulness of this chapter is that it has tentatively eliminated some variables. In our final chapter we will summarize our findings briefly and suggest further research on determinants of referenda voting.

## CHAPTER IV

## CONCLUSION

We have examined referenda voting with state level aggregate data. There are limits to what can be done with aggregate data. We will need survey data in order to learn more about referenda voting. The national election studies of the Survey Research Center have contributed enormously to our knowledge of presidential voting. Work has also been done on gubernatorial and congressional elections. Clubb and Traugott (1972) used the 1968 election study to make a very important contribution to our knowledge of referenda voting. They showed that referenda voters differ in several important ways from office-only voters and from nonvoters. However, the national election studies do not include valid samples from individual states or ask respondents about specific propositions. At least two studies, Wolfinger and Greenstein (1968) and Lutrin and Settle (1975), have investigated referenda voting with survey data from state samples. This is a very promising direction for research. In this chapter we summarize some of our findings and suggest how research might be extended with survey data.

We would first point out that research could usefully be extended to new states and to a wider variety of ballot measures. Both Wolfinger and Greenstein and Lutrin and Settle deal with initiatives in California. In recent general elections over forty states have had referenda on ballot. There has been an unfortunate tendency to concentrate on initiatives. Berg (1979) indicates that there were 1252 initiatives between 1904 and 1978. If we use Clubb and Traugott's (1972) most conservative estimate of the number of statewide ballot measures in the twentieth century (12,000) and ignore the measures that have occurred since the article was written we still see that initiatives are only a small percentage of the state referenda. Initiatives frequently deal with controversial issues that the legislature has been unable or unwilling to resolve. Signature drives and campaigns may make initiatives more salient than measures placed on the ballot by the legislature. Survey data would make it possible to compare the salience of different types of referenda. We might also be able to learn whether attitudes toward groups sponsoring initiatives or toward the legislature are important in determining the vote.

As in other states, more people in Louisiana vote for candidates than on constitutional amendments. A large number of people vote for candidates but ignore the ballot measures. The proportion of the turnout

that behaves this way is greater in presidential elections than in midterm elections. Closely related to this is the strong negative relationship we found between ballot position and participation. The lower an item appears on the ballot the fewer people vote on it.

Our data do not make it possible to determine what type of people are "falling off" the ballot or why. However, we can speculate on the basis of research by Walker (1966) and Clubb and Traugott (1972). Walker found that those who failed to complete the ballot (for public offices) tended to be poorly educated and have a low sense of political efficacy. Clubb and Traugott found that referenda voters were better educated, more affluent and more efficacious than were office-only voters and nonvoters.

We suspect that the group of Louisiana voters who began voting at the top of the list of referenda was already unrepresentative of the voters in the election. Further, we suspect that toward the bottom of the list the group of voters was even more unrepresentative. Survey data could help determine how groups of voters differ.

We might also be able to learn whether the number and characteristics of the voters tend to affect the outcome of the referenda. An increase in participation had a positive effect on approval in three of the four elections in which the relationship was significant.

However, in four elections the relationship was not significant. When ballot position was dichotomized into high and low categories we found no significant relationship between ballot position and outcome in six of seven elections. Because of the strong relationship between participation and ballot position, the categories are also rough indicators of high and low participation. We have reason to believe that voters as a group may be different toward the end of the ballot but there may not be much difference in terms of outcome. Whether referenda voters have different attitudes and opinions is something that might be determined with survey data.

Better educated and highly motivated referenda voters make our findings on reading difficulty more understandable. We had expected reading difficulty to be negatively related to participation and approval. The expected relationships did not appear in our data. Lutrin and Settle (1972) and Wolfinger and Greenstein (1968) make clear that there are many sources from which voters may receive information about referenda. Both studies suggest that voters may become better informed as a result of a vigorous campaign. On highly salient issues, at least, voters may learn from the campaign how to express their opinions before going to the polls. On these issues the reading difficulty of the questions would be of only minor importance. When the issues are not salient a clear relationship between reading

difficulty and participation would be unlikely if the least educated and least interested do not even begin voting on the referenda. In a sense, the variance in education and interest is reduced before we get to the referenda. Survey data could help to clarify the importance of education and sources and amount of information for the decision to vote. Education and information may also affect the direction of the vote.

Election research based on survey data has attempted to determine the importance of party identification, candidate images and issues in determining the vote. To some extent each of these may be important in referenda voting. Using aggregate data, Thomas (1968) and Dykstra (1976) show that political parties can affect the outcome of a referendum if they take a position and make it known to the voters. Voters might also take cues from prominent officeholders (such as the governor) or from the press. Of course, much depends on the extent to which parties, politicians and the press take positions and attempt to put them across. Survey data would seem to be the most appropriate way to assess the importance of these potential determinants of the referenda vote.

The vast literature on issue voting, public opinion and ideology is relevant to research on referenda. Voters have been asked to decide many current and highly controversial questions. Recent referenda have dealt with nuclear power, busing, obscenity, gun control, bottle

bills, abortion, tax reduction, the death penalty, the right to work and others as controversial. There are, however, a great many less controversial, less salient and less publicized measures that may have important consequences for the operations and policies of state government. Constitutional amendments dealing with legislative compensation and the length and frequency of sessions must often be submitted to voters. Their collective decisions affect the performance and procedures of the legislature. Billions of dollars in bonds are submitted to voters for approval every year. These proposals are designed to raise money for highways, mass transportation, hospitals, colleges and other capital improvements. Depending on what happens at the polls, certain projects will or will not be built.

Empirical research has generally found that voters are not especially well informed about major national issues. Little is known about how voters make up their minds on the wide variety of complex proposals put before them. Survey data are necessary in order to learn more about how voters think about the issues that are presented to them and about how they arrive at decisions.

In addition to individual level research on referenda voting we should also remember that referenda are usually a part of the policy-making process. Initiatives, bond issues and, possibly, advisory referenda ("straw polls") may be more important from a policy perspective than are

most of the proposed amendments designed to modernize the constitution. The measures dealing with public policy do not suddenly arise and then disappear. They more than likely have a legislative history as a result of some problem or need. Initiatives are often bills that were unsuccessful in the legislature. If the measure is approved by the voters, there will be the same problems and difficulties with implementation as there are with other policies. Little is known about the impact of referenda on public policies. Apparently, we do not know if policies are different in states where bond issues must be approved by voters. The broader questions of public policy should not become lost in studies of voting. Eventually, we need to ask whether having referenda makes any difference in what governments do or in how they do it.

Referenda are a frequent and important link between public opinion and public policy in many American states. More research is needed to understand how individuals arrive at their votes and how the collective decision affects the lives of the people.

## APPENDIX

Table A

## Excluded and Next Largest Residuals

Year	Excluded*		Next Largest Residuals	
	<u>Position</u>	<u>Residual</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Residual</u>
1960	8	8.93	11	3.47
	32	4.29	55	3.46
			9	3.39
1962	4	7.29	14	4.79
	23	5.77		
	26	5.30		
1964	5	4.16	40	1.90
	1	3.13		
	33	3.03		
1966	1	19.0	38	4.13
	10	14.1		
1968	14	4.51	1	1.73
	15	4.46		
	13	4.12		
1970	29	11.6	24	5.86
	27	10.1	28	5.16
			25	5.13
1972 (st.)	8	13.7	1	2.82
1972	1	4.25	27	2.09
	6	3.49		
	5	3.11		

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\*These are the referenda shown in Table 10.

Table B

Mean Participation and the Relationship  
Between Ballot Position and Participation  
Before and After the  
Exclusion of Large Residuals

<u>Year</u>	Mean		Simple Correlation		R <sup>2</sup>	
	<u>Before</u>	<u>After</u>	<u>Before</u>	<u>After</u>	<u>Before</u>	<u>After</u>
1960	45.7	45.3	-.92	-.95	.838	.896
1962	63.2	62.6	-.93	-.94	.869	.892
1964	47.3	46.8	-.95	-.97	.911	.937
1966	66.2	64.9	-.89	-.94	.787	.891
1968	42.2	41.8	-.90	-.95	.819	.903
1970	85.2	84.8	-.90	-.93	.817	.873
1972 (st.)	48.6	47.4	-.05	-.55	.003	.301
1972	58.9	57.9	-.92	-.93	.853	.859

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