

Editor's Introduction, Winter 2024

We begin with Matthew Lesenyie's original, experimental research about political advertising. The literature in this area is vast, including many experimental studies. However, this work commonly presents voters with limited cues and situations divorced from real world contexts. Lesenyie examines how the interactions among endorsements from real newspapers, campaign finance disclosures, and one-sided political advertisements affect support for actual California ballot propositions. Among other findings, Lesenyie determines that exposure to a credible newspaper endorsement significantly diminishes the impact of opposing political advertising. Lesenyie's study significantly expands our understanding of campaign effects.

Next, we present a series of eight articles about budgetary politics and policy in the western states during the past year. Most of these articles represent significantly updated, revised, and expanded versions of papers presented at the last Western Political Science Association meeting. We are grateful for the continued support from the Association for this research.

The budget articles demonstrate the diversity of fiscal situations facing the states, following the end of a huge infusion of federal funds during the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Several states, such as New Mexico and Wyoming, remained in strong fiscal positions through 2023. California is notable for facing the prospect of a large budget deficit to be addressed in the present calendar year. This variance is attributable to such factors as widely divergent revenue bases: New Mexico and Wyoming rely heavily on revenues from taxing extractive industries which have been booming in the most recent years but not before that. By contrast, California relies heavily on income and capital gains taxes which are also highly volatile but do not generally follow the same pattern.

We also see some common themes across states. Places as different as Hawaii, Montana, Oregon, and Washington faced affordable housing challenges that state governments struggled to address in the budgetary process. The numerous references to affordable housing and homelessness in the California article underscore the critical importance of those related issues in the Golden State. Multiple states have tried different approaches to addressing such issues, opening the possibility for cross-state learning. Some familiar political conflicts also cross state lines, such as battles between the interests of the large, urban areas and rural areas (Portland vs. the rest of Oregon; Greater Puget Sound vs. the rest of Washington). Alaska's ongoing experiment with ranked choice voting raises the question of whether electoral reforms might help address such conflicts.

In short, there are interesting lessons that may be drawn from comparing how states approach the perennial challenge of producing a budget.

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