

UCSD government experts receive funding to study impact of voter initiatives on California budgetary process

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UC SAN DIEGO GOVERNMENT EXPERTS RECEIVE FUNDING TO STUDY IMPACT OF VOTER INITIATIVES ON CALIFORNIA BUDGETARY PROCESS

Three political scientists from the University of California, San Diego have received a research contract for \$140,000 from the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) to complete a study on voter initiatives and the California budgetary process.

Elizabeth Gerber, Arthur Lupia, and Mathew McCubbins of UCSD and Roderick Kiewiet, a professor at the California Institute of Technology, will investigate the state's electoral and legislative processes and identify the extent to which California's initiative process prevents lawmakers from adopting creative solutions to some of the state's most intractable problems.

"California policymakers face a unique set of mandates," said Arthur Lupia, an associate professor of political science at UCSD and a co-author of the study. "In the same way that the federal government uses its powers to impose mandates on states, California voters use their power through the initiative process to impose mandates on state government. In recent years, California voters have exercised this power in myriad new and creative ways. Together, these mandates appear to impose very severe constraints on legislators during budget negotiations."

According to Lupia, the cumulative result of these mandates can wreak havoc on the budgetary process. For example, at the same time that Proposition 13 limits the state's ability to collect revenues, Proposition 98 mandates that at least 40 percent of these funds be used for education. Some estimates indicate that between 70 and 90 percent of the state budget is affected by mandates. The number and scope of these requirements have caused many to question whether policymakers have lost the flexibility to respond to the changing political, economic, and social needs of the state.

In their study, the authors will develop a model that will enable them to predict how policymakers respond to common types of mandates, and how policy outcomes vary from the original intent of the mandate. The researchers will also identify politically feasible ways in which the initiative and budget processes could be improved.

"While all states are subject to federal and judicial mandates and many have initiative processes, California's situation poses some unique problems. Just to cite one example, California lawmakers are prevented from amending voter initiatives that are either badly-flawed or inconsistent with existing statutes no other state with the initiative process imposes such restrictions," explained Lupia.

The first working paper from the study is expected to be issued this June, with completion of the study expected in mid-1999.

Lupia and McCubbins, specialists in governmental decision making at the state and federal levels, are the authors of the new book, *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn*

What They Need to Know? (1988, Cambridge University Press). The book combines insights from political science, economics, and cognitive science to explain how citizens gather and use information to make political decisions.

The Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to nonpartisan research on economic, social, and political issues that affect the lives of Californians. PPIC was established in 1994 with an endowment from William R. Hewlett.

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