

Title:

Voter Turnout in Concurrent Votes

Abstract:

This paper studies voter turnout in concurrent votes. We develop a theoretical model that incorporates proposition salience and two types of voting costs. The first type are fixed costs of going to the polls that have to be paid only once per voting day. The second type are information costs that have to be paid for each vote separately. Our model explains how the net benefit of concurrent votes, defined as salience minus information costs, enters a voter's utility function and thereby affects turnout and selective abstention. We test our model predictions using data on concurrent propositions in Switzerland from 1981-2016. Our results suggest that both the proposition with the highest net benefit and the sum of the net benefits of all concurrent propositions are important determinants of the individual turnout decision. We also find that a proposition's net benefit explains variation in selective abstention.