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# Virginia Voters and Governmental Power: Evaluations of Federal and State Performance

STEPHEN J. FARNSWORTH

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**ABSTRACT** An analysis using a 2013 survey of 1,004 Virginia residents reveals that one's overall feelings about the federal government are tied closely to assessments of President Obama and Governor McDonnell with pro-Obama and anti-McDonnell respondents notably less critical of Washington. The reverse pattern applies to assessments of the state government. Partisanship and ideology are also factors, with Democrats favoring Washington over Richmond and the Republicans preferring Richmond. The Virginia findings are consistent with national research regarding the key role that partisan identification and assessments of top political figures play in citizen assessments of national and state government authority.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the United States, the federal government and the state governments experience periods of increasing and decreasing influence over policymaking as well as times of waxing and waning citizen affections. Over the past two decades, conditions seem to have been improving for state governments on both counts. Leaders of both political parties have treated citizen feelings about state governments as a significant force in national politics.

For the Republicans, a revived federalism movement started with Newt Gingrich's "Contract with America," and its focus on decentralized governmental authority. That initiative helped the G.O.P. take over both the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate in the 1994 midterm elections (Gingrich 1995; Jacobson 1997). In 1996, Bob Dole frequently cited the Tenth Amendment and promoted its "reserved" state powers clause during his presidential campaign (Harris 1997). The election of Barack Obama in 2008 triggered a revived hostility to the national government among many Republicans, a perspective that intensified as the new president sought to pass a major health care initiative (Barstow 2010; Urbina 2009). More recently, conservative Republicans responded with the Tea Party movement, an organization committed to reducing the national government's authority over citizens (Armev and Kibbe 2010; Skocpol and Williamson 2012).

Republicans have not been the only voices for a more modest national government. Even Democratic President Bill Clinton, who once proposed the government run a comprehensive national health-care program, sought to seal his reelection in 1996 by accepting Republican plans to turn over to the states much of the control over the nation's welfare policy (Skocpol

1997; Weissert and Schram 1996). Obama's Affordable Care Act likewise involved a significant amount of authority for state governments, both in creation of health insurance exchanges by state governments and the expansion of Medicaid programs at the state level (Sinclair 2012).

Favoring federalism appears to be a prudent political strategy, because public opinion polls and in-depth interviews with citizens have long shown considerable public enthusiasm for state governments and discontent with the federal government (Craig 1993; Farnsworth 1999a, 1999b; Patterson, Ripley and Quinlan 1992; Roeder 1994). In addition, state capitals are often seen as the means to constrain excesses in Washington (Soroka 2014; Weingast 1995). But, politically speaking, Republicans seemed to gain more from this approach than do Democrats, whose bona fides as advocates for a smaller national government are highly suspect, to say the least (Campbell 2012; Farnsworth 2002, 2003a, 2003b; Skocpol and Williamson 2012).

This study will examine the citizen frustration with both the national and state governments. It does so through the use of a telephone survey of 1,004 Virginians designed to focus on feelings relating to federalism. The paper seeks to determine what factors best explain public views in Virginia concerning the federal government and the state government.

## PERSPECTIVES ON FEDERAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS

The considerable public dissatisfaction with the government in Washington has long been a staple of political science research (Citrin, 1996; Craig 1996; Easton and Dennis 1969; Farnsworth 2001, 2002, 2003a; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995; Mann and Ornstein 2012). In fact, policymakers continue to debate

the issue of reducing national government authority in the discussion of federal policies like health care (Skocpol and Williamson 2012).

Academics who have studied state governments have focused on two areas of comparison between the federal government and the state governments: efficiency and responsiveness. Linda Bennett and Stephen Bennett (1990) wrote that increasing the power of state governments is a natural path for a federal government to follow when Washington is being criticized for poor performance. In addition, increasing the power of state government for some programs may be a more efficient use of resources because states are closer to the points of service delivery (Herbers 1987; Rivlin 1992). The presence of citizen initiative in roughly half the states also creates at least the perception of greater state responsiveness in those jurisdictions, particular in comparison to more distant federal authorities (Arceneaux 2002). But critics doubt that state governments, which they are seen as more parochial, are more capable than federal authorities, particularly given term limits affecting some state legislatures (Kaase and Newton 1995; Kousser 2005; Wallin 1996). Along these same lines, recent research has revealed that state government performance suffers from a “democratic deficit” where policy outcomes frequently are not congruent with public preferences (Lax and Phillips 2012).

Of course, as V.O. Key (1949) once observed, one’s feelings about one’s own state government may depend on factors that vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Affinity for the different governments, in other words, may take quite different forms and have different impacts in different states. A general pattern of state policy responsiveness can be found in a variety of issue areas, including abortion, civil rights, civic culture, economic policy, and welfare (Arceneaux 2002; Berry and Berry 1992, 1994; Erikson, Wright and McIver 1993; Hill 1994; Hill, Leighley, and Hinton-Andersson 1995; Lascher, Hagen, and Rochlin 1996; Lax and Phillips 2009, 2012; Rice and Sumberg 1997; Wetstein and Albritton 1995). In addition, examinations of state voting patterns suggest a decoupling of federal and state political evaluations in many elections over the years (Atkeson and Partin 1995; Niemi, Stanley and Vogel 1995; Rozell 2014; Stein 1990).

Federalism and its consequences for public opinion are important areas for academic inquiry in large part because of the emphasis politicians have long placed on the idea of reducing the power of Washington. The large Republican electoral surge of 2010 and the Tea Party movement’s continued prominence into Obama’s second term suggest the need to reexamine feelings about state power and their consequences for public opinion in the current context.

Similar questions to those used here have been asked in some years of the American National Election Studies. In 1996, for example, 48 percent of respondents said they had the least faith and confidence in the federal government, as compared to 34 percent who selected the local level and 19 percent who objected most to state government. The lack of enthusiasm for the federal government in that survey was roughly comparable

to that of the mid-1970s, when trust fell greatly in the wake of the war in Vietnam and the Watergate scandal (Farnsworth 1999b).

The idea of enhancing state governmental authority found a ready audience among the ANES respondents in 1996, the last time (prior to the contemporary Tea Party movement) when a substantial anti-national government wave emerged in the US. When citizens were asked about where they placed the greatest confidence in the 1996 survey, the states finished first with 37 percent, as compared to 33 percent for local governments and 30 percent for the federal government. The state governments were much more highly regarded in 1996 than they had been two decades earlier, as the controversial “states’ rights” legacy of racial discrimination faded from public consciousness for many with the passage of time. In addition, the increasing accountability and professionalization of state governments since the Jim Crow era may have triggered changing--though not always positive--feelings about state government (Beyle 1993; Jewell 1982; Squire 1993).

Unfortunately, the questions are not routinely asked in the ANES, so a contemporary national comparison with the 2013 Virginia results is not available.

Virginia has long been a particularly strong voice for state prerogatives vis-à-vis the national government (cf., Atkinson 2006; Skocpol and Williamson 2012), and is therefore an idea place from which to examine public opinion regarding a revived federalism. Indeed, the recent volatility in the state’s politics – the state went from reliably red in presidential elections as recently as 2004 to a bluish shade of purple in 2008 and 2012 – only emphasizes the utility of study focusing of political views of national and state power in the Old Dominion (Rozell 2014).

So how might these apparent public feelings of federal frustration and state satisfaction translate into citizen orientations? Partisanship and ideology are often keys to public opinion formation, as are one’s age, race, income, education, political trust, political efficacy, and views about the government’s perceived competence (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). All are considered in the analysis below.

## HYPOTHESES

Three hypotheses are presented here:

H1: Higher levels of political efficacy, perceived governmental competence, liberalism, and Democratic partisanship will lead to more positive evaluations of the federal government.

H2: Lower levels of perceived national governmental competence, efficacy, liberalism, and Democratic partisanship concerning the federal government will lead to more positive evaluations of one’s state government.

H3: Lower levels of perceived state governmental competence will lead to lower evaluations of one state’s government.

Taken together, these hypotheses propose that support for

the federal government and one's own state government can be explained largely through two key avenues: individual background measures and evaluations of the federal and state governments.

## DATA AND MEASURES

At the center of this analysis are two questions asked of 1,004 adult Virginia residents in March 2013 that mirror the federalism questions asked in the 1996 ANES. The first of these questions asked the interviewees to identify the level of government in which they have the most faith and confidence; the second question asked the respondent to say which level inspires the least faith and confidence. The survey was conducted March 20-24, 2013 by Princeton Survey Research Associates International using landlines (502 respondents) and cellphone (502 respondents). The survey was sponsored by the University of Mary Washington's Center for Leadership and Media Studies. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is plus/minus 3.5 percentage points. Statistical results of the survey were weighted to correct for known demographic discrepancies, and the results in this paper are based on the weighted results. Question wordings are found in the Appendix.

As expected, the federal government fares poorly in comparison with the state and local governments. As shown in Table 1, Virginia respondents said they had the most faith and confidence in their local governments, with 46 percent selecting this option. State government was ranked highest by 28 percent, with 26 percent selecting the national government. The survey was conducted shortly before the *Washington Post* reported about widespread ethical problems involving Gov. Bob McDonnell (R), his wife and other members of his family. Federal prosecutors subsequently charged McDonnell and his wife with corruption, doing so shortly after the governor left office in January 2014 (Leonnig and Helderman 2014). Had the allegations been released before the survey was conducted, the results might have been different.

By an overwhelming margin, Virginia respondents were most critical of the national government, with 63 percent saying

*Table 1: Evaluations of Levels of Government: Most and Least Faith and Confidence*

### MOST

We find that people differ in how much faith and confidence they have in various levels of government in this country... Do you have the most faith and confidence in [RANDOMIZE: (the national government), (the government of this state), or in (the local government around here)]?

Federal	26%
State	28%
Local	46%

### LEAST

In which of those levels of government do you have the LEAST faith and confidence? [IF NECESSARY, READ AND RANDOMIZE IN SAME ORDER AS PREVIOUS QUESTION: (the national government), (the government of this state), or in (the local government around here)?]

Federal	63%
State	20%
Local	18%

Source: UMW Survey of Virginians, March 2013 (N=1004)

Note: Percentages may not all add up to 100 because of rounding.

they had the least faith and confidence in Washington. Twenty percent said that they had the least confidence in the state government, and 18 percent viewed the local government as the least reliable.

## RESULTS

Table 2 demonstrates that there are distinct racial differences in feelings about the different levels of government in Virginia. White respondents were far more critical of the government in Washington, with 70.5 percent saying that they were most critical of the federal government. In contrast 42.7 percent of African Americans and 38.8 percent of Latinos said they were most troubled by the national government. For African Americans, the national government was the most negatively reviewed, while for Latinos one's local government was seen as the most problematic. The fact that the state government was not the most negatively view level of government by African Americans speaks volumes about the changing nature of Virginia politics since the days of "massive resistance" (cf., Rozell 2014). The high level of antipathy for the local governments among Latino residents may stem from the controversial policies in some jurisdictions – most notably those of immigrant-rich Prince William County -- regarding heightened police scrutiny of Latino residents (Constable and Bahrampour 2013). The differences in government evaluations among these groups are statistically significant.

*Table 2: Cross Tabs: Race/Ethnicity and Least Favored Level of Government (in percentages)*

	FEDERAL	STATE	LOCAL
<b>White</b>	70.5	17	12.5
<b>African American</b>	42.7	30.4	26.9
<b>Latino</b>	38.8	17.9	43.3
<b>Total Percent</b>	62.2	19.8	17.9

N = 837

Chi-square significance = .000

Cramer's V = .214 (significance < .001)

Source: UMW Survey of Virginians, March 2013 (N=1004)

Note: Percentages may not all add up to 100 because of rounding.

Table 3 examines feelings about the different levels of government using the traditional seven-point party identification scale. As expected, all three Republican categories were overwhelmingly critical of the national government, with more than four out of five respondents in all three groups identifying the national government as the most problematic. Independents likewise were highly critical of the national government, falling just short of the 80 percent level. Nearly half of the Independent Democrats were most critical of the national government, and even the weak Democrats were more troubled by the national government (42 percent) than by either the state or the local levels. Only for the Strong Democrats did frustration with the state government (then under complete GOP control) exceed frustration with the national government. Clearly Virginia Republicans have been far more effective in channeling frustrations with government towards Washington. Virginia Democrats are not nearly as supportive of big government as Republicans are hostile to it.

**Table 3: Cross Tabs: Party Identification and Least Favored Level of Government (in percentages)**

	FEDERAL	STATE	LOCAL
<b>Strong Democratic</b>	32.7	36.8	30.5
<b>Weak Democratic</b>	42	27.3	30.7
<b>Independent Democratic</b>	49.6	25.2	25.2
<b>Independent</b>	79.7	15.3	5.1
<b>Independent Republican</b>	86.4	5.1	8.5
<b>Weak Republican</b>	80.2	12.3	7.4
<b>Strong Republican</b>	86.9	5.7	7.4
<b>Total Percent</b>	61.8	19.9	18.3

N = 880

Chi-square significance = .000

Cramer's V = .339 (significance < .001)

Source: UMW Survey of Virginians, March 2013 (N=1004)

Note: Percentages may not all add up to 100 because of rounding.

**Table 4: Logistic Regression Analyses: Least Faith and Confidence in the Federal Government**

VARIABLE NAME	b	WALD
Age	-0.01	2.34
Education	.21**	9.02
Latino	-0.13	0.09
African American	0.24	2.5
Party ID	.16*	4.69
Ideology	0.1	0.53
Tea Party	-0.19	0.23
US Direction	.76***	20.56
VA Direction	-.34*	4.84
Obama Approval	.84*	5.29
McDonnell Approval	-.92***	10.85
US Trust	.86***	13.64
VA Trust	-0.32	2.27
US Economy	0.02	0.04
Big Interests	-.91**	8.87
No Say	-0.04	0.17
No Care	0.07	0.46
Complex	0.06	0.52
Sex	0.29	1.49
N	556	
-2 Log Likelihood	479.498	
Cox/Snell r-square	0.382	
Nagelkerke	0.517	

**CLASSIFICATION: PREDICTED VS. OBSERVED PREFERENCE**

	Not Least	Least
Predicted	154	42
Observed	67	293
% Correct	69.6	87.6
<b>Total % Correct</b>	<b>80.4</b>	

Notes: \* p < .05 \*\* p < .01 \*\*\* p < .001. Cut value set at .431.

Table 4 contains the first of two logistic regressions testing the extent to which one's relative hostility to either the federal government or one's own state government can be predicted by demographic, partisan, and ideological measures, as well as by political attitudes. OLS regression is an improper statistical technique for dichotomous dependent variables (was the respondent the most hostile to the federal government or not, in this table, or to their own state government, in Table 5). While a straight-fitting OLS regression line does not fit logistic distributions, a related technique known as logistic regression provides regression coefficients like those found in OLS regression and, therefore, relatively easily interpreted results. One key difference between the two techniques is that the effectiveness of the overall model can be measured both by an r-square statistic and by the percentage of the cases predicted correctly. Logistic regression is also preferred to some other statistical methods (like probit) for analyzing relationships with dichotomies or dependent variables with only a few values because of its greater familiarity to many scholars. The remaining tables in the paper contain unstandardized coefficients (b), standardized coefficients (Wald), an r-square measure, and case-classification results.

With respect to the results relating to the federal government, one notices at first the powerful influence played by measures that relate to the federal government (US Trust, US Direction, Big Interests) and an assessment of President Obama. All operate in the expected direction, with more negative assessments of the national government on these measures leading to an increased likelihood of being most critical of Washington. As expected, party identification was also influential, with Republicans most negatively disposed toward the federal government, as hypothesized. There is also an explicit state dimension to this federal assessment. Critics of Gov. McDonnell and those upset about the direction of Virginia politics were less likely to identify the government in Washington as most problematic. Interestingly, several variables were not statistically significant, including variables for Latinos and African-Americans as well as a measure soliciting views on the Tea Party movement.

The federal model, which has a Cox/Snell r-square of .382, correctly predicts 80.4 percent of the cases: 87.6 percent of the cases where the federal government was least liked and 69.6 percent of the cases where Washington was not the least liked. (The cut value for this equation was set to .431, as 43.1 percent of the respondents in these equations listed either the state or local government as their least favorite.)

Table 5 uses the same independent variables to predict whether an individual was most hostile (or not) to his or her own state government. Although the state model has a higher overall prediction rate, 82.3 percent, this is a highly misleading statistic; the high percentage comes from the fact that the model does not effectively distinguish people relatively hostile to state governments from those more hostile to some other level of government. The Cox/Snell r-square reading of .214 demonstrates the limitations of the state model, as does a closer look at the classification pattern. The model classifies all but one of the state least liked cases incorrectly.

Even so, many of the same independent variables are influential in both the federal and state models. Strong Republicans, those who believe the US is headed in the wrong direction, and those who like McDonnell and dislike Obama are least likely to place Richmond at the bottom of the governmental pack. So did people who thought the federal government cared about ordinary citizens and was not too closely aligned with powerful influences.

Interestingly, ideology matters here, with liberals most likely to disapprove most strongly of the state government. (Ideology was not a significant predictor of feelings relating to the national government). Once again, variables for Latino and African American voters were not significant. Support for the Tea Party movement was also not relevant to feelings about state government.

How well do these same variables predict more positive assessments of the federal government? The answer is not

nearly as well. Table 6 provides the same variables as those in the previous tables, but now considering whether those variables predict whether respondents listed the federal government as the source of most faith and confidence (23.4 percent of the sample did so). Many of the same variables that provided evidence of a strong relationship in Table 4 also provided to be highly useful in the equation reported in Table 6, though of course the coefficients that were previously positive are now negative as one would expect. Once again, party ID, education, as assessments of the national economic performance were highly valuable for federal government assessments, and negative assessments of the Virginia's performance were also statistically significant. (Direct assessments of Republican Gov. McDonnell ceased to be statistically significant).

The total number of cases correctly classified for feelings about the federal government fell slightly from the results of Table 4. But the model didn't work nearly as well when positive

*Table 5: Logistic Regression Analyses: Least Faith and Confidence in State Government*

VARIABLE NAME	b	WALD
Age	0.004	0.22
Education	-0.12	2.3
Latino	0.08	0.3
African American	-0.06	0.16
Party ID	-0.02	0.06
Ideology	-.31*	4.3
Tea Party	-0.48	0.97
US Direction	-.52**	7.03
VA Direction	0.24	2.19
Obama Approval	-1.10*	4.93
McDonnell Approval	.96***	10.32
US Trust	-0.24	0.98
VA Trust	0.31	1.87
US Economy	-0.16	0.08
Big Interests	.74*	5.64
No Say	-0.05	0.2
No Care	.23*	3.84
Complex	-0.11	1.12
Sex	-0.13	0.24
<i>N</i>	556	
<i>-2 Log Likelihood</i>	389.084	
<i>Cox/Snell r-square</i>	0.214	
<i>Nagelkerke</i>	0.351	
<b>CLASSIFICATION: PREDICTED VS. OBSERVED PREFERENCE</b>		
	<i>Not Least</i>	<i>Least</i>
<i>Predicted</i>	456	99
<i>Observed</i>	0	1
<i>% Correct</i>	100	1.2
<b>Total % Correct</b>	82.3	

Notes: \* p < .05 \*\* p < .01 \*\*\* p < .001. Cut value set at .822.

*Table 6: Logistic Regression Analyses: Most Faith and Confidence in State Government*

VARIABLE NAME	b	WALD
Age	-0.01	1.71
Education	-.27***	10.52
Latino	0.05	0.01
African American	-0.15	0.93
Party ID	-.24**	7.41
Ideology	-0.21	1.9
Tea Party	0.39	0.48
US Direction	-.78***	14.81
VA Direction	.55***	10.88
Obama Approval	-0.6	1.41
McDonnell Approval	0.1	0.11
US Trust	-.82***	11.03
VA Trust	0.39	2.97
US Economy	-0.22	2.08
Big Interests	0.22	0.5
No Say	0.07	0.4
No Care	0.06	0.24
Complex	0.02	0.35
Sex	-0.36	1.76
<i>N</i>	559	
<i>-2 Log Likelihood</i>	378.945	
<i>Cox/Snell r-square</i>	0.307	
<i>Nagelkerke</i>	0.469	
<b>CLASSIFICATION: PREDICTED VS. OBSERVED PREFERENCE</b>		
	<i>Not Most</i>	<i>Most</i>
<i>Predicted</i>	416	105
<i>Observed</i>	6	17
<i>% Correct</i>	98.6	13.8
<b>Total % Correct</b>	79.6	

Notes: \* p < .05 \*\* p < .01 \*\*\* p < .001. Cut value set at .766.

assessments of Washington were involved: nearly all cases were categorized as not favoring the federal government, regardless of whether or not those respondents did favor the national government.

How well do these same variables predict more positive assessments of the state government in Richmond? Again the results for the positive assessments (Table 7) are weaker than the negative assessments analyzed in the companion Richmond-related results of Table 5. As expected, Republican partisan preferences, negative assessments of President Obama and positive feelings about the general direction of Virginia were key variables in this analysis. The total number of cases correctly classified in Table 7 fell slightly from the results of Table 5. But neither model showed much of an ability to distinguish those picking the state government as the most or least favorite level of government from those who placed another level of government in that category.

*Table 7: Logistic Regression Analyses: Most Faith and Confidence in State Government*

VARIABLE NAME	b	WALD
Age	0.01	2.42
Education	0.09	2
Latino	-0.06	0.16
African American	0.27	2.66
Party ID	.16*	4.68
Ideology	-0.13	0.97
Tea Party	0.23	0.49
US Direction	0.08	0.2
VA Direction	-.44***	10.25
Obama Approval	.82*	4.58
McDonnell Approval	-0.34	1.43
US Trust	0.02	0.01
VA Trust	-0.33	2.84
US Economy	0.002	0
Big Interests	-0.41	1.68
No Say	0.004	0.02
No Care	-0.13	1.65
Complex	-0.04	0.23
Sex	0.35	2.61
<i>N</i>	559	
<i>-2 Log Likelihood</i>	547.531	
<i>Cox/Snell r-square</i>	0.147	
<i>Nagelkerke</i>	0.213	
<b>CLASSIFICATION: PREDICTED VS. OBSERVED PREFERENCE</b>		
	<i>Not Least</i>	<i>Least</i>
<i>Predicted</i>	397	144
<i>Observed</i>	1	3
<i>% Correct</i>	99.8	1.8
<b>Total % Correct</b>	73.4	

Notes: \* p <.05 \*\* p <.01 \*\*\* p <.001. Cut value set at .744.

Comparisons reveal that the “least favorite” results (Tables 4 and 5) were stronger than the “most favorite” results (Tables 6 and 7) for both levels of government. Clearly, when it comes to national and state governments negative assessments are more fully formed – and are more closely tied to the assessments of governments and government officials employed here – than positive assessments are.

## CONCLUSION

Why might the differences between predictions in the federal versus state comparisons be so dramatic? As expected, Republican Virginians seem committed mainly to a negative evaluation of the federal government. After all, Republican ideas of reducing federal power can be, and sometimes are, coupled with proposals to reduce state government authority as well. Along these same lines, Democrats are not all that positively disposed towards Washington either, though they are not nearly as hostile as Republicans are.

The results indicate that citizen evaluations about state government are largely ideological and partisan in orientation, though there is also an element of perceived performance shortcomings on the part of the federal government. The findings here much more strongly supported the link between the attitudinal measures and federal government feelings than any supposed link between those attitudinal measures and feelings about state governments.

The relative weakness of the state government models may be partially due to a media gap: there is far more news coming out of Washington than coming out of state capitals. The financial crises afflicting the mass media have led to significant reductions in the size of statehouse press bureaus over the past two decades (Graber and Dunaway 2015). In other words, citizens know a lot more about the shortcomings of the national government than they do about state government performance. As a result of knowing more about Washington, citizens can find more to feel negatively about (cf., Soroka 2014). Of course, the results here also demonstrate that negative news seems more salient than positive news, regardless of the level of government under consideration.

There are opportunities for further research on how feelings about the different orders of government are derived. Attempts to employ possible predictor measures for public views about state government have been hampered by this survey’s concentration on federal issues. Might more questions relating to state government efficacy predict levels of public feelings about state government? That seems likely, but this study cannot say.

Although reducing the totality of the national government’s functions may be popular rhetoric, one can wonder how desired that approach actually is by voters. Citizens continue to expect the federal government to provide a high level of public services, and elected officials at all levels rely on effective service delivery to help remain in the good graces of their constituents (Pew 2010).

One can also wonder whether citizens who dislike federal government power may also dislike state government power. The state questions used here, though consistent with previous questions asked by the ANES, may force respondents to choose which government they like the most even if they dislike them all intensely. To deal with this potential problem, future surveys might use thermometer measures or at least a five-point like-dislike scale to tap more precisely citizen orientations toward the different levels of governments.

This study, with its generalized comparison of federal versus state government power, might profitably be tested further in surveys of different state electorates. Distinct state political cultures could affect the results in ways not apparent in a study of Virginia residents. Another fruitful analysis could be the impact of public opinion about state governments on state elections.

This study is time-bound. As it happens, this survey was in the field a few weeks before the biggest political scandal in Virginia in decades was broken by the *Washington Post*. Further research into the changing nature of comparative evaluations of government and politics over time also should be an important part of future research. We do not know, for example, whether a revived states' rights doctrine will remain prominent in the minds of voters and candidates, even when a Democratic governor and a Democratic president preside in Richmond and Washington respectively.

## APPENDIX: SURVEY QUESTIONS

**MOST:** We find that people differ in how much faith and confidence they have in various levels of government in this country... Do you have the most faith and confidence in [RANDOMIZE: (the national government), (the government of this state), or in (the local government around here)]?

**LEAST:** In which of those levels of government do you have the LEAST faith and confidence? [IF NECESSARY, READ AND RANDOMIZE IN SAME ORDER AS Q9: (the national government), (the government of this state), or in (the local government around here)?]

**AGE:** Recorded in years.

**LATINO:** (1) Yes; (0) No.

**AFRICAN-AMERICAN:** (1) Yes; (0) No.

**EDUCATION:** What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received? [DO NOT READ] [INTERVIEWER NOTE: Enter code 3-HS grad if R completed training that did NOT count toward a degree] (1) Less than high school (Grades 1-8 or no formal schooling); (2) High school incomplete (Grades 9-11 or Grade 12 with NO diploma); (3) High school graduate (Grade 12 with diploma or GED certificate); (4) Some college, no degree (includes some community college); (5) Two year associate degree from a college or university; (6) Four year college or university degree/

Bachelor's degree (e.g., BS, BA, AB); (7) Some postgraduate or professional schooling, no postgraduate degree; (8) Postgraduate or professional degree, including master's, doctorate, medical or law degree (e.g., MA, MS, PhD, MD, JD).

**PARTY ID:** Traditional seven point party ID scale, ranging from Strong Democrats (1) to Strong Republicans (7)

**IDEOLOGY:** In general, would you describe your political views as (1) very liberal; (2) liberal; (3) moderate; (4) conservative; or (5) very conservative?

**TEA PARTY:** Do you consider yourself a part of the Tea Party movement? (1) Yes; (2) No.

**US DIRECTION:** Overall, would you say that things in the U.S. are headed more in the right direction or the wrong direction? (1) Right; (2) (volunteered) Mixed; (3) Wrong.

**VA DIRECTION:** Overall, would you say that things in the Commonwealth of Virginia are headed more in the right direction or the wrong direction? (1) Right; (2) (volunteered) Mixed; (3) Wrong.

**OBAMA APPROVAL:** Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president? [IF DEPENDS OR IF RESPONDENT IS UNSURE, PROBE ONCE WITH: Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president? IF STILL DEPENDS OR UNSURE ENTER AS UNSURE/DK] (1) Approve; (2) Disapprove

**MCDONNELL APPROVAL:** Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bob McDonnell is handling his job as governor? [IF DEPENDS OR IF RESPONDENT IS UNSURE, PROBE ONCE WITH: Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way Bob McDonnell is handling his job as governor? IF STILL DEPENDS OR UNSURE ENTER AS UNSURE/DK] (1) Approve; (2) Disapprove

**US TRUST:** How much of the time do you think you can trust the FEDERAL government to do what is right – (1) just about always, (2) most of the time, or (3) only some of the time? [4, volunteered response: “never.”]

**VA TRUST:** How much of the time do you think you can trust the STATE government to do what is right – (1) just about always, (2) most of the time, or (3) only some of the time? [4, volunteered response: “never.”]

**US ECONOMY:** Would you say that, over the past 12 months, the U.S. economy has [RANDOMIZE BLOCKS: (gotten worse, stayed the same or gotten better) / (gotten better, stayed the same or gotten worse)]? [IF BETTER/WORSE, PROBE: Would you say MUCH or SOMEWHAT (worse / better)?] (1) Much worse; (2) Somewhat worse; (3) Stayed the same; (4) Somewhat better; (5) Much better.

**BIG INTERESTS:** Would you say that government is pretty much run by (1) a few big interests looking out for themselves or (2) is it run for the benefit of all the people? [IF R ASKS WHAT

IS MEANT BY “GOVERNMENT,” READ: Please think about the national government.]

**NO SAY:** Now I’m going to read you a few statements about public life in this nation. Please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with them: “People like me don’t have any say about what the government does.” (1) Strongly agree; (2) Somewhat agree; (3) Neither agree nor disagree; (4) Somewhat disagree; (5) Strongly disagree.

**NO CARE:** “Public officials don’t care much about what people like me think.” (1) Strongly agree; (2) Somewhat agree; (3) Neither agree nor disagree; (4) Somewhat disagree; (5) Strongly disagree.

**COMPLEX:** “Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what’s going on.” (1) Strongly agree; (2) Somewhat agree; (3) Neither agree nor disagree; (4) Somewhat disagree; (5) Strongly disagree.

**SEX:** (1) Male; (2) Female

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