Supplemental Appendix: 2014 County Council Survey in South Carolina

This county council survey was conducted as the first effort of the polling center at the Institute for Leadership and Public Policy (ILPP). The reason for choosing this was to allow the polling to connect to policy within the state, and it is our long-term goal to establish the ILPP as the premiere center for research and polling on state-level politics (South Carolina and throughout the South).

As such, the goal of the short survey was to get a sense of how county council members felt about the nature of state-county relations in South Carolina. The survey was kept relatively short, with the goal that it could be completed in 10 minutes, and the content was intended to hit some of the major issues without delving into too much detail. We believe that this survey accomplished this, and it is our hope to improve on this version, add/edit questions accordingly, refine our methods for contacting all members, and creating a time series of changing elite-level opinions about county governance. If all goes according to plan, the next installment will take place in either 2016 or 2018, depending on time and resources.

The __-question survey was formed as an online survey through the SNAP program; it was made web-ready by Institutional Research at Coastal Carolina University (specifically Molly French). We were provided a link, which was then sent to all county council members who served in a county that provided emails for every member. Three reminders were sent out, with the link, to ensure that it was not overlooked by members. It was live from approximately February 1st to March 28th.

For those counties where a county clerk email was provided, but incomplete emails were provided for the council members, the link was sent to the county clerk, who was then asked to distribute it to members (with the notification that it could be printed out, and that all surveys could be provided in paper format if requested). We also attempted to follow-up these emails with at least one additional email, plus phone calls to the county clerks. This version of the survey was live for the same period as noted in the previous paragraph.

For those counties where no email information was provided, we attempted to contact county clerks via telephone (often, these websites had little contact information otherwise). A number of them did return our calls and asked for the surveys, and these were sent together, with self-addressed stamped envelopes, to those counties where e-mail was not used. Given the variety of hurdles in doing this, and the resource limitations faced, we believe that this was a quality, mixed approach to reaching the various counties without providing greater or lesser incentives to participate.

Through these efforts, we had a response rate of 24.2% of all county council members. While a higher number would have been better, this percentage is not uncommon for elite and/or web-based surveys. Critically, the responses came from a variety of counties, in different parts of the state, and with different demographic backgrounds. Thus, it is not overtly biased towards any one type of county.
**The survey was written, edited, and analyzed by Dr. Adam Chamberlain, Assistant Professor of Politics, Coastal Carolina University. He was aided by Dylan Ramsey, a student research assistant, who helped send out the survey, contact county clerks, and write/edit the survey. For more information, please contact Adam Chamberlain at achamber@coastal.edu, with the subject line “2014 County Council Survey.”**