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978-1-107-08457-5 - Morality at the Ballot: Direct Democracy and Political Engagement in the United States

Daniel R. Biggers

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Morality at the Ballot

Across the United States, there is wide variation in opportunities for citizens to craft legislation through the process of direct democracy. Previous studies suggest that an active role in policy making can spark political interest and engagement, encouraging individuals, who would otherwise abstain from voting, to turn out. Daniel R. Biggers challenges this contention, testing a new theoretical framework that details the exact circumstances under which any proposition might increase participation. *Morality at the Ballot* reveals that the ability of direct democracy to increase turnout is significantly more limited than currently thought, and that the propositions that do affect participation are restricted to a small subset of ballot issues that include morality policy. Biggers uses these morality propositions to demonstrate the conditions necessary for direct democracy to influence turnout, affect who votes, and shape electoral and policy outcomes. The investigation provides significant insights into the consequences of deciding policy via the ballot and expanding the role for citizens in the political process.

Daniel R. Biggers is a postdoctoral associate at the Center for the Study of American Politics and the Institution for Social and Policy Studies at Yale University. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in the *American Journal of Political Science*, *Political Behavior* and *American Politics Research*. His dissertation, which served as the basis for this book, was a co-recipient of the Christopher Z. Mooney Dissertation Award, awarded by the State Politics and Policy Section of the American Political Science Association (APSA) for the best dissertation in the field.

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DANIEL R. BIGGERS

Yale University



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To Jenny, my inspiration

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