We thank Professor Weinstein for engaging with our op-ed and the underlying research paper. Interpreting a null finding is always challenging. He has given us much to think about, and we are in broad agreement with him on one point. His criticisms of the paper, however, do not reflect exposure to relevant literature--literature that makes our results less surprising and our methods more defensible than Professor Weinstein believes.

As an antecedent to constituency opinion mattering to legislative decision-making, legislators first need to correctly know what policies their constituents support. Since Miller and Stokes (1963), scholars have empirically studied whether elected officials know what policies their constituents want. Recent work in political science has found that there are systematic biases in elite perceptions that suggest many state legislators and congressional staffers do not have an accurate assessment of their constituents' views on several key issues. Broockman and Skovron (2018) map surveys of state legislators to existing survey data of constituents to conclude that politicians systematically misperceive their constituents' preferences. They do this by comparing estimates of public opinion in state legislative districts to perceptions of public opinion supplied in a survey of 1,803 candidates for state legislator in which the legislative candidates were asked to guess what percentage of their constituents supported a number of different policies. For example, they find that 84% of the public supports background checks for gun purchases while the legislative candidates *believe* that only 48% of constituents support background checks. This type of elite misperception of public opinion holds across a number of policy issues and empirical strategies.

It also holds across different types of political elites. Hertel-Fernandez, Mildenberger and Stokes (2019) administer surveys on Congressional staff and come to the same conclusion. With these previous results in mind, our results are not nearly so surprising as Professor Weinstein found them. Despite all of the "poring over polls and studying focus groups" that Professor Weinstein believes takes place in American politics, much recent work suggests that elected officials substantially misperceive what their constituents want. The polling that does take place in American politics either is frequently devoid of any issue content (horserace polling) or is devised to develop messages to distract and manipulate the mass public, as documented in Druckman and Jacobs (2015). Contrary to Professor Weinstein's description, our results are far from "bizarre," given the state of the literature.

Professor Weinstein raises four further issues with our study.

First, Professor Weinstein argues that state legislators would have been well-advised to ignore our data because it was not sufficiently credible. He writes that the "lack of any reported standard error reduced credibility." While it is possible that the legislators would have believed our data more had we provided standard errors and additional technical details, we erred on the side of simplicity given our belief that state legislators are, as a group, unlikely to be statistically

sophisticated. (Note, however, that we did offer details on the District Pulse website about the origins of the estimates.) We are not aware of any evidence attesting to statistical sophistication on legislators' part. It must also be emphasized that the estimates were provided to legislators only after they had logged on to the website, not beforehand. Legislators' concerns about the absence of standard errors may have affected their subsequent accuracy, but likely did not affect their decision to access the information in the first place. All that having been said, our design could be replicated and we would welcome further work showing whether the provision of standard errors increases the credibility of our data, thereby leading elected officials to be more aware of public opinion.

Professor Weinstein goes on to argue that perhaps the information wasn't believed because we, as the senders, were not credible. Despite our university affiliations, we were still strangers to these state legislators. This is plausible and testable in future work (e.g., by randomly assigning the source of the information to have an in-state university affiliation vs. out-of-state university affiliation vs. no university affiliation). However, if credibility were the concern, we might expect that, after our op-ed was published in *The New York Times*, a number of legislators would become aware of a new source of information about their constituents' policy preferences. To our surprise, after publication of our article, only one state legislator reached out to receive access to her district's data. While only speculative, this is additional evidence consistent with legislators being largely uninterested in learning their constituents' policy preferences.

Second, Professor Weinstein objects to our use of deception to understand legislators. We want to be clear that our study received IRB approval and that all of the information provided to legislators was accurate. We did not deceive legislators by providing them incorrect information about their constituents' preferences. Where Professor Weinstein objects is that our communications with legislators did not fully reveal to them the intent of our study. This is quite common in the study of legislators (e.g., Butler and Nickerson 2011; White, Nathan, and Faller 2015). Scholars would know far less about legislators if such approaches were not used. We simply do not agree that scientists should avoid using deception to evaluate political representatives, even and especially if they anticipate representatives to engage in deceptive behaviors themselves (as Professor Weinstein does). In our case, fully disclosing the purpose of the study would have limited not only our capacity to make scientific judgments, but also to evaluate elected representatives. Science, not to mention the prospect of holding elected officials accountable in democracy, would be harmed.

Third, Professor Weinstein argues that our null finding is under-powered. We wish that our study had a larger sample size. However, even given our limited sample size, we do believe that our study is sufficiently well-powered to demonstrate that this null is normatively and politically meaningful for both the question of the compliance rate and the analysis of the survey responses. As we discuss on p. 7, our study was powered for a minimal detectable effect of a 7 percentage

point reduction in misperceptions, where the baseline degree of misperception was 18 percentage points in the control condition. Throughout the paper, we attempted to be fully transparent about our statistical power and how this is a limitation of our study.

Finally, Professor Weinstein finds it inappropriate that we published an op-ed based on a working paper because it has not been subject to peer review. As frequent readers of this blog will know, peer review is hardly a mark of quality (for example, see "When does peer review make no damn sense?"). We share this belief, and appreciate that Professor Weinstein engaged with our work despite its status as a working paper.

All that having been said, we are in broad agreement with Professor Weinstein on one point. We do not know with certainty why legislators were disinterested and unaffected by the data we provided. We only believe that the explanation we put forth is parsimonious and consistent with our results. How current elected legislators make decisions and who they are responsive to, if not their average constituent, is a fundamental question to understanding the functioning of American democracy. While there are flaws in any study, our results suggest that elected officials are neither aware of, nor particularly interested in, the public policy preferences of their average constituent, a finding that is consistent with much (but not all) recent work. We find this normatively concerning and deserving of further inquiry. Given the importance of the topic, hopefully our study is not the final word. We look forward to replications and extensions of this work.