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EDUCATION, MEDIA COVERAGE, AND BALLOT ROLL-OFF: EVIDENCE FROM
THREE BALLOT MEASURES IN MISSISSIPPI

By
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A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

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Abstract

Ballot roll-off is an issue that continues to plague American society, leaving thousands of ballots incomplete every election cycle. In my research, I investigate what influences the likelihood of voters rolling off on three ballot measures in the 2020 Mississippi elections. I hypothesize that educational attainment and newspaper coverage in voters' counties will have an impact on ballot roll-off. I observe previous research on the influences of ballot roll-off, and I combine the data I collected for voter turnout in Mississippi in 2020 and newspaper coverage of ballot measures from six sources to evaluate the influence of each of these factors individually and as variables in a regression analysis. My research finds that educational attainment is a better predictor of ballot roll-off than newspaper coverage. In my discussion and conclusion, I examine what these results mean for roll-off on ballot measures in Mississippi and possible limitations of my research.

Keywords: Mississippi, ballot roll-off, educational attainment, ballot structure, ballot measure

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List of Abbreviations

BM1	Ballot Measure 1
BM2	Ballot Measure 2
BM3	Ballot Measure 3
FKGL	Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level
ASL	Average sentence length
ASW	Average number of syllables per word

Introduction

American democracy relies on the participation of voters to utilize and protect the freedoms to which they are entitled. While every voter is given equal protection under the law, not all elections on ballots are given equal priority in the eyes of the public. Year after year millions of Americans show up to the voting booth, but fail to fully complete their ballots. This choice to not vote in every race on the ballot is more commonly referred to as ballot roll-off. If voters are choosing to vote for president, but abstaining from other races on the ballot, they are “rolling-off.” For decades political scientists and campaign strategists have attempted to find solutions to down ballot voter participation, but roll-off is a much more nuanced issue than most people imagine.

The structure and frequency of elections in America are seen as part of the reason why roll-off is such a problem. A fully participatory voting system depends on “a high turnout of citizens who vote at every opportunity and for every office” (Wattenberg, et al., p. 235, 2000). Voter turnout levels in the United States fall far below other democracies globally, and presidential elections have on average 30% more participation than local elections (Teixeira, 1992). Americans are asked to vote so frequently that they often choose to participate in the presidential election cycles because it feels the most important, but a large portion of these voters are neglecting local election years with races that have far more impact on their everyday lives than the president does.

Some researchers have argued that voter fatigue is the greatest influence on ballot roll-off, but newer data argues a different, more optimistic point. Perhaps voters do care about these smaller elections, but choose to abstain from

voting in elections where they do not know enough about candidates or an issue rather than make an uninformed decision (Wattenberg, et al., 2000). This notion is especially important when considering participation on ballot measures, which are commonly non-partisan initiatives and propositions that ask voters to make a policy decision.

My research aims to examine what resources and influences without overt partisan cues help voters make informed decisions at the ballot box. If we are able to better understand what motivates voters to stay on the ballot, there is a possibility of reducing ballot roll-off.

First, I contextualize the three ballot measures Mississippians were asked to vote on in 2020. Next, based on prior research on ballot roll-off, I build my argument that education, information environments, and ballot structure all can influence voters' behavior. Next, I will elaborate on my data collection and methodology. I then present my findings on the influence of educational attainment and information availability, as measured by newspaper coverage, on ballot roll-off in 2020 for Mississippians. Lastly, I discuss what the implications of these findings mean for future ballot measures in Mississippi and some possible limitations to my research.

The purpose of my research is to not only give a better understanding to the influence of ballot roll-off on the performance of ballot measures, but also to fill a gap in the literature specifically regarding Mississippi. While the state had record high turnout in the 2020 elections, the participation in elections cannot be solely reliant on extremely contentious national races. Moreover, in states like

Mississippi where one party heavily dominates elected office, ballot measures give voters an active role in deciding new policies and laws compared to their typical passive participation through the election of lawmakers. Ballot measures put the decision making power directly in the hands of voters, especially in a state like Mississippi where citizen proposed initiatives cannot be blocked from the ballot, which I will discuss more in my contextualization section.

Contextualization of Ballot Measures

During the 2020 election, the State of Mississippi had three statewide ballot initiatives presented to the public. The first ballot initiative, formally named Ballot Measure 1 - Initiated by Petition and Alternative by Legislature (Ballot Measure 1 or BM1), addressed the potential legalization of medical marijuana for patients with debilitating medical conditions. Currently, 36 states in the United States, as well as the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, have approved comprehensive medical marijuana programs (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2022). The campaign to get Initiative 65 on the ballot was led by Medical Marijuana 2020, consisting of a steering committee and campaign team. This bipartisan campaign relied on the leadership of experts in the legal and medical fields to bolster their message, and they were able to employ grassroots campaigning to collect the amount of signatures needed to secure a spot on the ballot in the 2020 election (Pender, 2019).

Ballot Measure 1

Ballot Measure 1 encompasses two measures, Initiative Measure No. 65 and Alternative Measure No. 65 A. Initiative Measure No. 65 is an indirect

initiated constitutional amendment, which is a constitutional amendment proposed by citizens. This amendment has to reach the number of required signatures before it is submitted to the Mississippi State Legislature for consideration. The Legislature has four options in voting on the measure, but none of them can prevent the measure from going to the ballot. They can approve the measure, ignore the measure, reject the measure without providing for an alternative measure, or approve an alternative amendment to be placed on the ballot as a competing measure. If the legislature chooses to propose an alternative measure, it will appear on the ballot alongside the original measure as a competing measure. Mississippi is one of two states that utilizes an indirect initiative amendment process. Initiative Measure No. 65, as it appeared on the ballot for voters, reads as follows:

“Initiative Measure No. 65, Should Mississippi allow qualified patients with debilitating medical conditions, as certified by Mississippi licensed physicians, to use medical marijuana?”

Legislative Budget Office Fiscal Analysis for Initiative 65:

The overall cost to Mississippi for the first year is estimated to be \$11,068,150.

The anticipated expenses for the first year to implement a medical marijuana program is \$24,068,150 (Plants – seeds to Sale: \$5,000,000; Licensing, Monitoring, Inspection: \$16,220,150; and Cost to Collect Revenue: \$2,848,000).

The anticipated revenue is \$13,000,000 (User ID Cards: \$2,500,000; Commercial Licenses: \$500,000 and sales fee at 7 percent: \$10,000,000).

The anticipated expenses for years following the first for a medical marijuana program is \$15,338,000 (Plants – seeds to Sale: \$5,000,000; Licensing, Monitoring, Inspection: \$8,756,000; and Cost to Collect Revenue: \$1,582,000). The anticipated revenue is \$26,000,000 (User ID Cards: \$5,000,000; Commercial Licenses: \$1,000,000 and sales fee at 7 percent: \$20,000,000). The overall annual revenue is anticipated to be \$10,662,000, all of which must be used to support the state marijuana program.”

Alternative Measure No. 65 A was the alternative amendment that the State Legislature chose to place as a competing measure on the ballot. The alternative measure reads as follows:

“**Alternative Measure No. 65 A**, Shall Mississippi establish a program to allow the medical use of marijuana products by qualified persons with debilitating medical conditions?

Legislative Budget Office Fiscal Analysis for Initiative 65A:

The cost or revenue impact associated with this initiative is undeterminable.”

Ballot Measure 1 had a two step voting process, which required voters to vote for approval of either measure or against both. This was the only initiative on the ballot with a two step voting process, and it reads as follows:

“**VOTE FOR APPROVAL OF EITHER, OR AGAINST BOTH**

FOR APPROVAL OF EITHER Initiative Measure No. 65 OR Alternative Measure No. 65A

AGAINST BOTH Initiative Measure No. 65 and Alternative Measure No. 65A

AND VOTE FOR ONE

FOR Initiative Measure No. 65

FOR Alternative Measure No. 65A”

Ballot Measure 2

Ballot Measure 2 was a constitutional amendment that was proposed by the legislature. If approved, this measure would remove the requirement that a candidate for state office or governor must receive the most votes out of the majority of the state’s House of Representatives districts, of which there are 122, which served as Mississippi’s own form of an electoral college. It would also completely remove the House of Representatives from the run-off process if neither candidate in the general election receives a majority, and it would rather require the winner of state office or gubernatorial elections to receive a majority of the votes to win. In a situation where a run-off is necessary, the election would be held between the two highest voter earners, and whichever candidate receives the majority of the votes in the run-off would be declared the winner.

Ballot Measure 2 came about because of a federal lawsuit filed against former Secretary of State Delbert Hosemann on May 30, 2019 by four Mississippians and backed by the National Redistricting Foundation (Kay, 2019). These plaintiffs pursued a preliminary injunction to prohibit the enforcement of this law in the 2019 gubernatorial elections. The Southern District Court of

Mississippi heard the case, and Chief District Judge Daniel P. Jordan III ruled on November 1, 2019 that while the electoral vote requirement was probably unconstitutional, it was “simply too late to make a change” in the election rules merely days before voters came to the polls to avoid voter confusion (*McLemore v. Hosemann*, 2019). The preliminary injunction was denied, and on December 13, 2019, the court stayed litigation related to the election requirements so the legislature would have a chance to remove the constitutional requirement in the 2020 legislative session. If an amendment were to be written and fail in the legislature, then the court would resume litigation and reach a resolution before the 2023 election cycle.

An amendment was introduced to the Mississippi legislature as House Concurrent Resolution 47 by Representative Jim Beckett (R-District 23) on February 17, 2020 (Gabriel, 2020). This constitutional amendment was adopted by the House in a vote of 109-6 on June 28, and the Senate then approved the amendment with a vote of 49-2 on June 29, 2020. The amendment was adopted as Ballot Measure 2. Ballot Measure 2 reads as follows:

“Ballot Measure 2 - House Concurrent Resolution No. 47

This amendment provides that to be elected Governor, or to any other statewide office, a candidate must receive a majority of the votes in the general election. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes, then a runoff election shall be held as provided by general law. The requirement of receiving the most votes in a majority of Mississippi House of Representatives is removed.”

Ballot Measure 3

Ballot Measure 3 was a legislatively referred state statute, meaning that the legislature voted to place this issue on the ballot for voters to decide on it. Ballot Measure 3 pertained to Mississippi’s goal of a new state flag, and voters were given the opportunity to vote for or against the new official design. The language for Ballot Measure 3 is as follows:

“Ballot Measure 3 - House Bill 1796 - Flag Referendum

Please vote ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ on whether the following design shall be the official Mississippi State Flag.”



The battle for a new state flag has been a persistent struggle for Mississippians lobbying to change from the symbol that adorned the Confederate battle flag. However, the legislature did not take up this highly controversial issue until the summer of 2020. In the midst of a pandemic, this summer was a time of racial reckoning in the United States. After the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd, the Black Lives Matter movement took center

stage across the country, helping catalyze changes in the legal system and in the private sector (Hathaway, 2021; Michener, 2020; Wood and Hudson, 2021; Simpkins, 2021). Organizations were being called on by the public to take a stance on the systemic injustices black Americans were experiencing, and entities such as the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) and the Southeastern Conference (SEC) took stances against Mississippi's state flag. The SEC began this push when Commissioner Greg Sankey released a statement threatening to not host any conference championships in Mississippi until the state flag changed. He stated, "It is past time for change to be made to the flag of the State of Mississippi. Our students deserve an opportunity to learn and compete in environments that are inclusive and welcoming to all. In the event there is no change, there will be consideration of precluding Southeastern Conference championship events from being conducted in the State of Mississippi until the flag is changed" (SEC, 2020). This statement was released via Twitter.

A day later on June 19, 2020, NCAA president Mark Emmert declared, "There is no place in college athletics or the world for symbols or acts of discrimination and oppression. We must continually evaluate ways to protect and enhance the championship experience for college athletes. Expanding the Confederate flag policy to all championships is an important step by the NCAA to further provide a quality experience for all participants and fans" (NCAA, 2020; Horka, 2020). The previous Confederate flag policy of the NCAA "barred the awarding of sites determined in advance of a championship in states that displayed the Confederate flag," but an exception to this rule existed because if a

college or university “earned the right” to host a championship game based on its ranking or tournament seed, which counts as a non-predetermined award, then the team was allowed to host (NCAA, 2020; Horka, 2020). The expansion of this policy threatened collegiate athletics at every institution of higher learning in the state of Mississippi.

The potential loss of revenue and jobs was enough to convince the state legislature to take action, and the legislature passed House Bill 1796, which retired the former official state flag and established a commission to redesign the Mississippi state flag (Mississippi Department of Archives & History, 2020). Governor Tate Reeves signed the bill on June 30, 2020, and the former state flag was taken down from the state capitol on July 1, 2020. The nine member commission took submissions from the public, which led to the consideration of thousands of flag designs. Through a series of commission and public votes, the commission eventually chose the “New Magnolia Flag,” pictured above (Mississippi Department of Archives & History, 2020). Ballot Measure 3 was the final step in this process requiring public approval to have the flag formally accepted as the official flag.

Literature Review

To better understand the current state of ballot roll-off information, I conducted a literature review. While the data available on ballot roll-off and its causes is growing, this phenomenon has been studied at lower rates than other voting influences in part because of an assumption that roll-off is most likely to occur in unimportant races and for issues that voters already show minimal

interest before arriving at the voting booth (Burnham, 1965). Previous research has examined many factors as potential causes of roll-off, such as race, education, and issue salience (Bullock and Dunn, 1996; Feig, 2007 & 2009; Vanderleeuw and Liu, 2002). Additionally, there is a wealth of research on the influence of newspapers in communities and trust placed in local media sources (Miller et. al, 2012). While I chose to focus mainly on education and newspaper coverage, there are specific categories of research that give a great deal of information into why these two factors might be particularly important. Below, I break down the existing literature into three categories: (1) education and language complexity, (2) the information environment, and (3) ballot structure.

Education and Language Complexity

Education and voter turnout have long been associated with one another. While there is some skepticism about whether this is a causal relationship (Green, 2005; Sondheimer, 2006), research repeatedly shows that there are numerous paths for education to directly cause higher voter turnout. Education is influential in helping potential voters navigate the voter registration process, and educated voters have higher beliefs in citizenship and political efficacy, so they feel more confident participating in a process where they believe their vote matters (Green and Sondheimer, 2009). Additionally, research finds that “Increased educational attainment expands one’s social network and thus likelihood of participating in community and political endeavors” (Green and Sondheimer, 2009). If we are operating under the pretense that educated individuals have higher interest and political efficacy, then people with higher levels of education will have more

politically involved people in their social networks and are more likely to be targeted in political campaign messaging and outreach (Rolfe, 2004). Thus, educational attainment does not only have individual impacts on one's voting participation but also on the environments these people belong to. Education allows these individuals to become catalysts for change and political involvement in their own communities, and I assume that educational attainment levels across Mississippi will reflect similar findings to this research.

Language complexity directly relates to education because if ballot measures are overly complex, voters may choose to abstain from voting on critical issues. A study done by Shauna Reilly and Sean Richey gave insightful information into the importance of language complexity for ballot roll-off. Because of the often legalistic and vague language used on ballot questions, these authors believed that questions with higher readability scores would have higher roll-off because voters do not engage with issues that cannot be comprehended at the ballot box.

These authors pulled over 1,200 state ballot questions from 1997 to 2007 and evaluated them through a code for readability scoring. The authors utilized previous research on both ballot length and survey responses to gain a better understanding of how document length can lead to significant nonresponse biases (Brockington, 2003; Subar et al. 2001). The authors hypothesized that the lower readability (more difficult language) will have a higher roll-off because voters cannot understand these questions and will simply not answer them. The dependent variable in this study was roll-off, which was calculated by “the

percent of the difference in vote from the top office on the ballot to the individual ballot measures” (Reilly and Richey, p. 3, 2011).

The primary independent variable accounted for the readability for state-level individual ballot measures within the aforementioned time range. The authors chose to employ the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level to indicate the years of education necessary to read and comprehend passages. The United States military determined that this measure is an accurate measure of readability by means of large-scale randomized testing (Kincaid et al., 1975). The study calculated that the average difficulty of the collected ballot measures was 17, which is more years of education than a college graduate would earn. The authors deduce that voter turnout will be difficult to change when only 22.5% of Americans could understand these ballot propositions based on 2020 Census Educational Attainment data (U.S. Census, 2020).

These findings are important when considering that just over half of Mississippians have a high school diploma, so many Mississippians do not come close to the educational levels needed to understand ballot measures. I will explain more about the exact formula and my own results from the FKGL in my Data and Methods section.

The Information Environment

When discussing voting and voter engagement, JG Matsusaka’s information theory of voting is cited often. This theory is defined in two parts: first, most citizens are predisposed to vote; however, they abstain from voting because they are unable to evaluate the candidates (Matsusaka, 1995). This theory

has been important in voting research because not only does it emphasize the importance of information sources in relation to voter engagement, but it also allows researchers to understand that voters would rather not vote on an issue or in a particular race at all than cast an ignorant vote. It lends understanding to the decision that goes into ballot abstention, and in turn, ballot roll-off because we can assume that voters more often do not know enough about an issue to vote instead of assuming the roll-off was accidental. Lack of information can be mitigated by voters leaning on credible advisors in policy areas, whether those be political parties or local leaders, and creating “information shortcuts” (Karp, 1998; Lupia and Matsusaka, 2004; Lupia, 1994). Newspapers can be an effective tool in cultivating information shortcuts in an age with ever increasing amounts of information.

For decades, newspapers have been a cornerstone of information sourcing about our democracy, and this still rings true today even in a heavily technological information age. In 2011, the Pew Research Center investigated local news consumption patterns across various population density areas. The report found that newspapers are more likely to be a heavily relied upon source in small town and rural communities while suburban and urban residents consume mobile sources at higher rates, including the websites of local newspapers which now have more digital interactions than print subscribers (Mitchell et al., 2016). Regardless of these differences, reported interest in local news was extremely high, with two-thirds of respondents saying they “[follow] local news closely even when nothing important is happening” (Miller et al., p. 1, 2012).

Newspapers are understood as knowledgeable and trustworthy sources, and this is reinforced by 62% of respondents in a 2016 Gallup poll having some or a great deal of confidence in newspapers as an American institution (Saad, 2016).

Ballot Structure

Ballot structure plays an important role in voters' engagement in elections. In the United States, there are two types of ballots most commonly used, office-block ballots and party-column ballots. Office-block ballots list elections by race, and candidates are listed on the ballot in alphabetical or a randomized order. These ballots sometimes can also have candidates listed with or without their party affiliation. Party-column ballots have candidates listed under the party with which they run, and these types of ballots can allow voters to cast a ballot for all candidates in one party with a single check mark. It is important to note that voters can vote for candidates in more than one party but only have the option for a one-check-all vote on party-column ballots. Only seven states in the U.S. still use party-column options: Alabama, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Michigan, Nevada, South Carolina, and Indiana (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2021). Indiana has only one exception to this structure, which is that party-column ballots are not allowed in at-large elections.

While straight-ticket voting can occur on both types of ballot, voters engage in straight-ticket voting at higher levels on the party-column ballots (Walker, 1966). Additionally, straight-ticket voting promotes less roll-off in down ballot offices, but there are higher levels of roll-off on ballot measures specifically when straight-ticket options are available in an election (Feig, 2009; Kimball and

Kropf, 2008). This means that without partisan cues on ballot measures, voters choose to not vote on these measures that can often directly decide the laws and governmental procedures where they live. Previous research has also found that African-American voters are more likely to roll-off than white voters (Bullock and Dunn, 1996; Nichols and Strizek, 1995; Reilly and Richey, 2011), but this research is found to be partially inaccurate when discussing straight-ticket voting, where African-American voters are twice as likely to utilize a straight ticket option when it is offered (Feig, 2009).

Mississippi is an office-block ballot state, so I was interested in learning more about how this research would tie into my own research on state election outcomes. Another important component of ballot structure is the content of the ballot measures. Ballot measures are often placed at the bottom of the ballot in the order they are presented and approved. These measures are placed on the ballot in an objective manner, but not all ballot measures are created equal. Previous researchers have found that social issues, such as medical marijuana or same-sex marriage, receive much more attention from society and in turn have higher turnout than governmental housekeeping or tax codes (Damore and Nicholson, 2014; Magleby, 1984). This premise is important in my research because BM1 and BM3 are both considered social issues even though BM3 was also related to official government changes. Based on research, I anticipate higher participation rates on BM1 and BM3 because of their more socially relevant topics, and BM1 might have an advantage by being first in order of the ballot measures.

Data and Methods

Four sources of data were collected to analyze ballot roll-off in my research. I utilized election results at both the county and state levels to collect voter turnout data for the 2020 elections in Mississippi. Then, I examined six newspapers in the state, and I used key search terms to analyze the levels of press coverage each ballot measure received in local newspapers. I also obtained education attainment levels for populations over 25 years old in every county in Mississippi. Lastly, I used a readability analysis to determine the language complexity of each ballot measure. In collecting this information, I hypothesize that education levels will be the largest indication of ballot roll-off in Mississippi, but that high levels of news coverage around ballot measures will also play an important role in influencing voters to participate down the ballot.

Voting Data Collection

The baseline data used for this research is the election data from the Mississippi Secretary of State's Office. The 2020 election proved to be a high voter one turnout in the United States, with almost 158.4 million ballots cast across the country. A total of 1,313,894 ballots were cast for the presidential election in Mississippi, and 1,311,497 votes were entered in the battle between incumbent U.S. Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith and former United States Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy. With respect to the ballot measures, 1,191,038 Mississippians voted on Ballot Measure 1, with 1,040,283 of those voters also casting their votes on Ballot Measure 1A. Ballot Measure 2 received 1,242,102 votes total, and Ballot Measure 3 secured the most votes, with a total of 1,293,440

votes. From just these raw numbers, it was apparent that ballot roll-off was common at the ballot box in Mississippi in 2020. There are many ways to explain the variation between election results, and I am interested in specifically examining education levels of Mississippians, media attention via newspaper coverage, and readability of the three ballot measures to determine why Mississippians submitted their ballots before casting votes for every ballot measure.

Newspaper Data Collection

I chose to examine six newspapers in the state of Mississippi. Five of these newspapers were local publications, and the sixth publication was the *Clarion Ledger*, the largest statewide newspaper. *The Clarion Ledger* served as the baseline of news coverage for every county in the state because not every county has a regular newspaper circulation, so this statewide newspaper would be the closest source of local news for these news deserts. The other five newspapers were selected based off of the most populated counties in Mississippi, and these newspapers were assumed to have a reach to their surrounding counties as well. I chose the *Madison County Journal* for Madison, Rankin, and Hinds counties. The *Tupelo Daily Journal* covered Lee, Pontotoc, Union, Itawamba, and Prentiss counties. The *DeSoto Times-Tribune* reached DeSoto, Tate, and Marshall counties. *The Sun Herald* served as the newspaper for Jackson, Harrison, and Hancock counties, and the *Meridian Star* covered Lauderdale, Newton, Kemper, and Clarke counties.

I followed the same research process for each of these newspapers, utilizing their online databases to search previously run stories for key words. Additionally, I removed any syndicated columns I found since these pieces were not unique to a single newspaper publication. Lastly, if searches of different key terms yielded the same articles, I only counted those articles once even though they appeared in more than one search.

For each search, I set a date range from January 1, 2020 to November 3, 2020, which was election day. While some publications had stories related to this topic outside of that range, the immediate coverage of these issues during an election year was more prevalent. For BM1, I searched three key terms in separate turns to yield the results for each newspaper. I first searched for articles pertaining to “marijuana,” and I pulled all of the articles related to the medical marijuana debate, including opinion pieces. For my second search, I input “Initiative 65,” the official name of the initiative on the ballot and the name used on all promotional and educational material of the campaign in favor of medical marijuana (Medical Marijuana 2020). For my third term search, I used “Ballot Measure 1.” I had three key terms for BM2 as well, and they were “run-off election,” “gubernatorial,” and “Ballot Measure 2.” Finally, for BM3, I only used two key search terms because I wanted to focus on the process of selecting a new state flag and the coverage of this issue as much as possible. The two terms searched in each newspaper database were “state flag” and “Ballot Measure 3.” I included every article leading up to the changing of the state flag in 2020 in my results, many of which detailed the legislative process for changing the flag and

the societal consequences placed on the state if the Confederate flag remained a part of the state flag. These articles provided important context in the build up to the flag vote, and all of these context points could potentially influence voters' priorities of ballot issues.

These searches revealed that there were far more articles surrounding BM1 and BM3 than BM2, which does not come as a surprise given that the former measures both deal with social issues while BM2 is a constitutional amendment, which might be seen as less salient to the general public. Once I had collected all of the article totals on each ballot measure, I added the five local newspaper results into their respective counties. I then calculated the average news coverage on each ballot measure from these numbers to create a comparison point between the coverage and voter engagement on down ballot measures. My newspaper findings are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1
Average Newspaper Articles of Each Ballot Measure Across MS Counties

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
BM1 News	82	11.9024 4	4.484843	10	26
BM2 News	82	5.09756 1	.2985461	5	6
BM3 News	82	24.2317 1	16.26881	18	77

Educational Attainment Levels

To analyze education attainment levels in Mississippi, I collected data from the U.S. Census Bureau Social Explorer Five Year Estimates (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). This data broke down education levels for adults 25 or older in Mississippi into three categories: less than high school, high school diploma, and Bachelor's degree or higher. Of the nearly 1.9 million adult Mississippians, 62.5% have a high school diploma, which falls far below the national average of 90% of adults (U.S. Census, 2017). Table 2 depicts the variations across education levels in each county, and it also reveals the average percentages of adults in each county that have either no high school diploma or a Bachelor's degree or higher. I chose to use the percentage of the population without a high school diploma in the analyses presented below because this represented people who were statistically already less likely to vote and would be less likely to have the same level of political engagement as their more educated peers. Moreover, the data created a more even comparison of counties above and below the mean education level than a comparison based on college education would have.

Table 2
Average education levels in Mississippi (U.S. Census, 2021)

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
No high school diploma	82	18.9%	5.304134	8.3%	39.5%
Bachelor's degree or higher	82	17.5%	7.448612	3.2%	48.4%

Language Complexity and Readability Measures

To analyze the language readability for these three ballot measures, I chose to employ the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level, which indicates the number of years of education necessary to read and comprehend the passage, and this measure is the main gauge of readability for linguists. To calculate the FKGL, I had to calculate both the average sentence length (ASL) and the average number syllables per word (ASW) and then multiply these both by constants to arrive at the United States grade level needed for the public to read these questions as they appear on the ballot (Reilly and Richey, 2011). The formula is $(.39 \times ASL) + (11.8 \times ASW) - 15.59$. If a measure has a score of 7, that means someone who can read at a 7th grade level could read and understand the passage, and the same applies for higher scores indicating how many years of education must be completed to comprehend the passage.

Through these calculations, I was able to discover that the FKGL of BM1 was a level 22.2, BM2 was a level 10.9, and BM3 was a level 5.46. BM1 having the noticeably most difficult level is compatible with the complexity of both the wording of the initiative as well as the syntax. Given that BM1 was an indirect initiated constitutional amendment with a competing alternative measure proposed by the legislature, the measure is much longer than an easily comprehensible measure, like BM3. BM1 is much more complicated than what was observed in previous research, with the maximum difficulty recorded previously at a level of 18.3 (Reilly and Richey, 2011). Additionally, the necessity for the economic impact analysis of both Initiative 65 and 65A further

complicates the measure by testing voters' reading comprehension with the necessity of understanding the economic evaluation.

These FKGL levels also reveal that two of the three ballot measures are above the average education levels of some voters. Some counties in Mississippi have a population where one-third of residents do not have a high school diploma, and while voters in this category are already less likely to turn out, they are more likely to roll off if they are less likely to comprehend what is on the ballot, which is applicable in the situations of both BM1 and BM2.

Findings

The first variable is voter participation in ballot measures in Mississippi. I had to first find out how much roll-off occurred by county, which was determined by taking the amount of votes cast for each ballot measure in each county as a percentage of the amount of votes cast for President in each county in 2020. Then, the voter turnout percentage on each ballot measure across all counties was totaled and averaged to find the mean amount of roll-off. This allowed a baseline of roll-off to which all other bivariate comparisons can be made. All ballot measures had relatively high voter engagement, as depicted in Table 3. This calculation found that BM3 had the lowest amount of roll-off with 98.2% of presidential voters also choosing to cast a vote on the fate of the Magnolia flag. BM1 had the highest amount of roll-off, but participation on this ballot initiative was still somewhat surprising with just under 11% of presidential voters rolling-off there. This level of roll-off is below the mean roll-off found on a 2018 analysis of newspaper endorsements on nonpartisan initiatives, which found that

the average roll-off on any given Florida ballot measures from 1978 to 2014 was 15.7% (Fahey et al, 2018).

Table 3

Average roll-off by ballot measure (mean percentage who voted for president that also voted for the ballot measure)

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Roll-off BM1	82	.8944484	.0322003	.7371537	.9530819
Roll-off BM2	82	.9386484	.0188561	.8668639	.9656583
Roll-off BM3	82	.9816998	.0096791	.9500848	.9955498

After calculating the average roll-off on each ballot measure across the state, I then analyzed how roll off varied in counties based on their educational attainment. I analyzed the roll-off in counties above and below the mean percentage of the county population without a high school diploma and sorted them into two sets of data. Table 4, Panel A depicts roll-off in counties that are above the mean percentage of people without a high school diploma, and while Panel B shows roll-off in counties that fell below the mean percentage without a high school diploma. This analysis confirmed my hypothesis that counties with a higher percentage of their population without a high school diploma would have higher rates of roll off, but the results are not extremely different. As expected, the highest percentage of roll-off in both groups was on BM1; however, there was only a 2.34 percentage point difference in roll-off between counties above and below the mean. This was intriguing because the complexity of BM1

made it difficult for most voters to understand, but voters chose to participate on this measure at similar rates regardless of education. The margins of difference between the two populations were even narrower down ballot measures, with the separation on roll-off on BM3 being less than one percentage point. These findings reinforced that people do not just stop voting at a certain point on the ballot, but instead may choose to vote only in elections that they understand or are passionate about.

Table 4

Average roll-off by ballot measure by county education levels (separate counties above/below mean)

Panel A

% without high school diploma above mean

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max
Roll-off BM1	40	.8824661	.0346266	.7371537	.95044
Roll-off BM2	40	.9325541	.0216491	.8668639	.9653935
Roll-off BM3	40	.9788244	.0113178	.9500848	.9946055

Panel B

% without high school diploma below mean

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Roll-off BM1	42	.9058602	.0251881	.8464346	.9530819
Roll-off BM2	42	.9444525	.0136334	.908657	.9656583
Roll-off BM3	42	.9844382	.0068914	.9621926	.9955498

I also evaluated the average roll-off across the three ballot measures by newspaper coverage. I sorted the newspaper data into groups according to the amount of articles collected in each county. Using the *Clarion Ledger* as a baseline for newspaper coverage, counties that only had the *Clarion Ledger* as its newspaper source were compared and averaged for their roll-off on each ballot measure, and counties that had other newspaper sources I collected were placed into another table. Over 75% of counties in my observation ended up having the *Clarion Ledger* as their only news source. There were slight differences in roll-off across these information levels, but it is not statistically significant. However, the highest voter roll-off for each of these analyses are in counties with the minimum newspaper coverage total.

Table 5
Panel A
Roll-off on BM1 by newspaper coverage

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Roll-off on BM1 in Counties with a Newspaper Coverage Total = 10 Articles	64	.8907715	.0324917	.7371537	.95044
Roll-off on BM1 in Counties with a Newspaper Coverage Total > 10 Articles	18	.9075221	.0282154	.8626162	.9530819

Panel B

Roll-off on BM2 by newspaper coverage

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Roll-off on BM2 in Counties with a Newspaper Coverage Total = 5 Articles	74	.9377991	.0190316	.8668639	.9653935
Roll-off on BM2 in Counties with a Newspaper Coverage Total > 5 Articles	8	.9465042	.0160897	.9170861	.9656583

Panel C

Roll-off on BM3 by newspaper coverage

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Roll-off BM3 in Counties with a Newspaper Coverage Total = 18 Articles	64	.9810607	.0100647	.9500848	.9946055
Roll-off BM3 in Counties with a Newspaper Coverage Total > 18 Articles	18	.9839721	.0079983	.9621926	.9955498

Regression Analysis

After completing these bivariate comparisons, I estimated a regression analysis, which provides a better understanding of the associations between

education and newspaper coverage and ballot roll-off because it simultaneously accounts for each association. For BM1, education is statistically significantly associated with roll-off ($p < .001$). For every one unit change in education, there is an approximately .003 unit shift in roll-off. More specifically, as the percentage of the county without a high school degree increases, roll-off is higher in relation to people being less likely to vote on BM1 than in the presidential race in counties with more people without a high school diploma. Newspaper coverage was not statistically significant ($p = .584$), so there is no substantially meaningful association between news coverage and roll-off on BM1.

BM2 yielded similar findings to BM1. Education was again found to be statistically significantly associated with roll-off ($p < .001$). There is approximately a .002 unit shift in roll-off for every one unit change in education. Again, if the percentage of the county without a high school diploma increases, roll-off is higher in relation to people being less likely to vote on BM2 than in the presidential race. However, roll-off is less likely on this ballot measure than on BM1. Newspaper coverage was not found to be statistically significant ($p = .535$), so there is no meaningful association between newspaper coverage and roll-off on BM2.

BM3 had the lowest amount of roll-off, and the results found in the regression analysis give some clarity on what influenced roll-off on this measure. Yet again, education is found to be significantly associated with roll-off ($p < .001$). For every one unit increase in the population without a high school diploma, roll-off will increase by .001 unit. Like the first two ballot measures, newspaper

coverage was not found to be statistically significantly associated with roll-off on BM3 ($p=0.739$), again implying that local newspaper coverage did not have the same effect that education did statistically. All of these results are presented in Table 6.

These results confirm my hypothesis that education will have an effect on ballot roll-off, but my hypothesis of the influence of newspaper and local information environments on roll-off was not supported. Figures 1 through 3 illustrate the associations between education, total # of news articles in a county, and roll-off on each ballot measure. These findings further support that education is a more important indicator of whether or not voters will continue down ballot or roll-off. While the local media can be important in ensuring voters comprehend issues enough to vote on them, it is impossible for these sources to compensate for the advantages education gives voters in both ballot comprehension and voter efficacy. Moreover, these results also lend credibility to the notion that newspaper coverage might help voters make a choice on a ballot issue, but it is not an influential factor in voters' decision to participate down ballot.

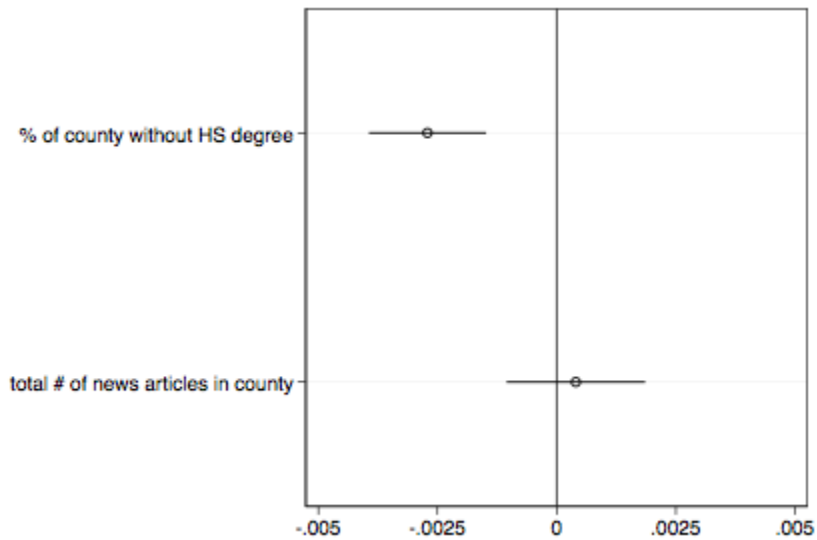
Table 6
The effect of education and newspaper coverage on ballot roll-off

Regression			
	Ballot Measure 1	Ballot Measure 2	Ballot Measure 3
% of county without high school diploma	-.0027 (.0006) $p<.001$	-.0021 (.0003) $p<.001$	-.001 (.0002) $p<.001$
Total number of news articles in	.0004 (.0007)	.0035 (.0057)	.00002 (.00006)

county	p= 0.584	p=0.535	p=0.739
Constant	.9409 (.0161) p<.001	.9608 (.0305) p<.001	1.0001 (.0038) p<.001
Number of Observations	82	82	82
R-squared	0.2117	0.3689	0.3051

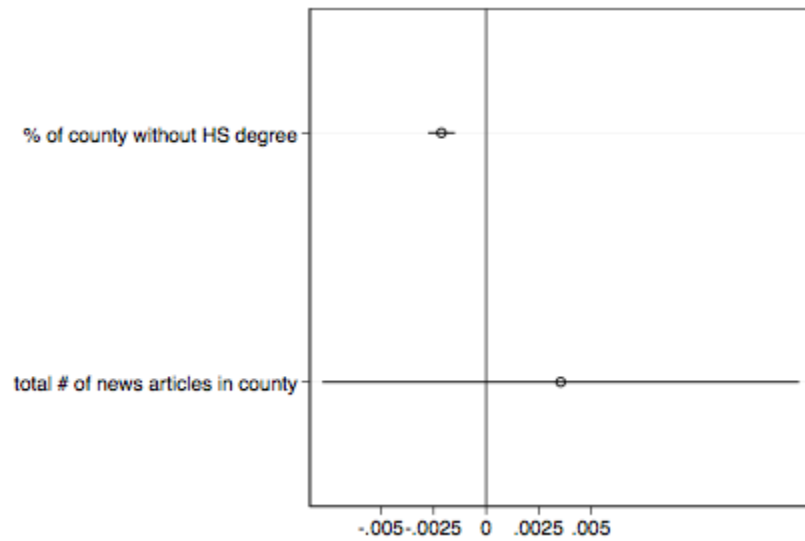
Note: Cell entries are coefficients from an OLS regression analysis with stand errors in parentheses.

Figure 1: Association between education, total # of news articles in a county, and roll-off on BM1



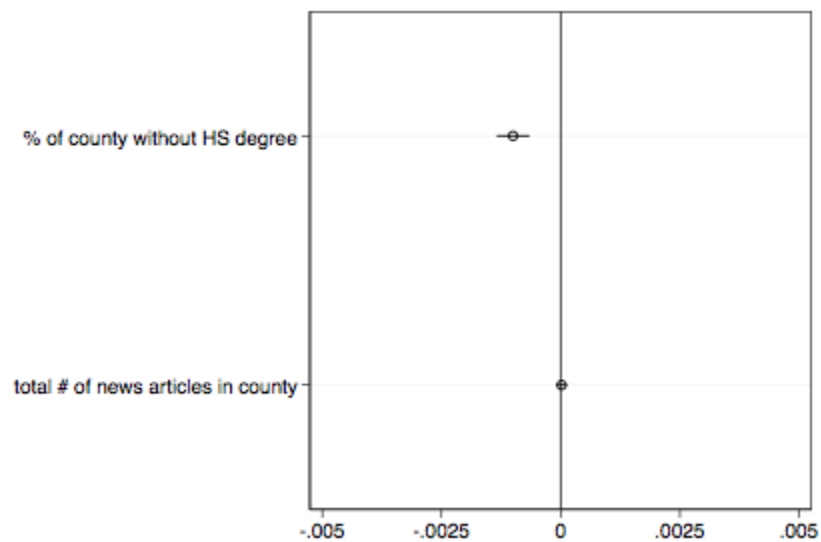
Note: Coefficients (with 95% confidence intervals) are from the OLS regression analysis reported in Table 6, column 1.

Figure 2: Association between education, total # of news articles in a county, and roll-off on BM2



Note: Coefficients (with 95% confidence intervals) are from the OLS regression analysis reported in Table 6, column 2.

Figure 3: Association between education, total # of news articles in a county, and roll-off on BM3



Note: Coefficients (with 95% confidence intervals) are from the OLS regression analysis reported in Table 6, column 3.

Discussion and Limitations

The variation of roll-off in these ballots measures is more complicated than some of the other research I previously examined. BM3 has the least amount of roll-off, which I was very surprised to see because it has been assumed that voters participate less the further down the ballot they get. Participation levels can be vastly different depending on the issue, and the measures on the Mississippi ballot were a mix of social issues and governmental issues. However, these findings reveal that social issues (BM1 and BM3) did not outperform governmental issues (BM2) across the board. This contradiction to current understanding of issue salience lies in BM1. BM1 covers an extremely favorable social issue in legalizing medical marijuana, with 91% of Americans agreeing that medical marijuana should be legalized (van Green, 2021), but voter turnout did not reflect this same zeal. While the medical marijuana ballot measure did pass, the complexity of the ballot measure is a conceivable reason that some voters would choose to just abstain from voting on the measure. Because the initiative had proposed medical marijuana be placed in the state's constitution, the language in the measure was composed of much more legal jargon than the average Mississippi voter encounters possibly in their lifetime. The legislature placed additional difficulties on this ballot measure by proposing an alternative measure. This alternative required the two step voting process, and this additional step further decreased the amount of votes cast either for or against medical marijuana as reflected in my calculations. While the approval threshold was met for BM1 to pass both in both stages, it is reasonable to assume that more voters would have participated had the measure been more comprehensible.

On the other hand, BM2 performed well without many Mississippians having an extensive prior knowledge of the run-off election clause as it stood in the Mississippi Constitution. The language on this ballot measure was much easier to comprehend than BM1, and the lower roll-off on the measure reinforces this.

BM3 was easily the most important topic to voters aside from the presidential election, and I believe this is partially due to the circumstances in which the measure arose. Mississippians had been waiting almost 20 years for another chance to vote on the fate of the old state flag, and new generations of voters were eligible to participate this time, some of which were not even in kindergarten when the original question was raised in 2001. The performance of whether BM3 raises the question of having more important or contentious ballot measures placed at the end of the ballot could potentially keep voters on the ballot longer than if it were the first item on the ballot. Future research could build upon my findings on these ballot measures by collecting qualitative data on voters' motivations for completing the ballot or rolling-off. Most importantly, my ballot roll-off data shows that voters do not just stop voting after one specified point on the ballot, but instead choose to skip races they know or care less about.

I expected newspaper coverage to be more significant in voters' decision to continue down ballot, and I thought especially in areas like Mississippi that might have rural populations whose local news is their main source of information that newspapers would be more influential. I think a shortcoming of my research was that I did not pull enough of a variance of newspapers across population

densities in Mississippi. The majority of the counties I examined for my newspaper data were suburban counties, and their classifications mean they are more likely to rely mainly on the internet (Miller, et al., 2012). While local newspapers' online presence is often a part of their consumption patterns, it is much more difficult to push local news sources to the forefront of such a crowded information environment. With more and more Americans relying upon the Internet and social media to be their main source of information, a complicated precedent arises for local politics. The Internet provides many opportunities for voters to obtain far more information than before in history, but this incredible amount of information has surpassed the limits of a human's ability to process it all (Alexander, et al., 2016). Voters might have the ability to be informed on as many topics as they choose, but they are just as ignorant on critical issues as generations before them if they are not able to sift through the millions of information sources that exist online to find the hyper specific sources that apply to their lives. However, this is a problem that not all Mississippi residents experience because of widespread barriers to broadband internet access. Future research could be done on the differences in issue saliency between Mississippians with broadband access and those without.

One of the limitations of my research is that I chose not to examine race as a predictor of participation on ballot measures. While there is previous data that would point to higher levels of roll-off among African-American voters, finding exact demographic breakdowns for the racial composition of Mississippians in the 2020 election would have been mere assumptions at best based on county

demographics. Additionally, there is already a great deal of research on ballot roll-off by race, and I wanted to focus on what potential influences exist across the board for roll-off. However, I would be remiss to not acknowledge the racial inequities in Mississippi that have created barriers to access for education, information, and voting that still impact a large portion of our state to this day.

Conclusion

Despite these limitations, my data reveals that education is a crucial indicator of voter roll-off. While some races and ballot issues might draw greater attention, educational attainment will allow researchers to predict what voters are most likely to roll-off. However, my research has also shown that issue salience can outweigh the negative impacts of ballot order. Voters are not just rolling off the ballot at a flat point, but instead they are choosing to participate in elections in which they can make an informed choice. Instead of nonpartisan elections on the ballot, ballot measures allow voters to have a direct impact on the laws that govern their lives, but they are only going to vote in these elections if they have the necessary understanding to do so. These three ballot measures were able to pass easily and help craft the immediate future of healthcare, fair elections, and reputation for the state of Mississippi, despite the complexities. The success of future ballot measures will be dependent on informing voters of their choices long before they arrive at their polling locations.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Higher education level counties (% bachelor degrees above mean)



Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Roll-off BM1	28	.8968601	.0414892	.7371537	.9530819
Roll-off BM2	28	.9433455	.0174554	.8973889	.9656583
Roll-off BM3	28	.9846229	.0078201	.9647275	.9955498

Low education level counties (% bachelor degrees below mean)

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Roll-off BM1	54	.8931979	.0265151	.814572	.95044
Roll-off BM2	54	.9362129	.0192477	.8668639	.9653935
Roll-off BM3	54	.9801841	.0102552	.9500848	.9912505

Appendix B

This is a common ballot, however, some offices will appear only in certain precincts which will apply to your districts.

OFFICIAL BALLOT		GENERAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ELECTION AUTAUGA COUNTY, ALABAMA NOVEMBER 3, 2020	
INSTRUCTIONS TO THE VOTER			
TO VOTE YOU MUST BLACKEN THE OVAL <input type="radio"/> COMPLETELY! <input checked="" type="radio"/> IF YOU SPOIL YOUR BALLOT, DO NOT ERASE, BUT ASK FOR A NEW BALLOT.			
STRAIGHT PARTY VOTING	FOR COURT OF CIVIL APPEALS JUDGE, PLACE NO. 1 (Vote for One)	FOR MEMBER, AUTAUGA COUNTY COMMISSION, DISTRICT NO. (Vote for One)	
<input type="radio"/> ALABAMA DEMOCRATIC PARTY 	<input type="radio"/> WILLIAM C. 'SIT' THOMPSON <small>Republican</small>	<input type="radio"/>	
<input type="radio"/> ALABAMA REPUBLICAN PARTY 	<input type="radio"/>		
FOR PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (Vote for One)	FOR COURT OF CIVIL APPEALS JUDGE, PLACE NO. 2 (Vote for One)	FOR AUTAUGA COUNTY REVENUE COMMISSIONER (Vote for One)	
<input type="radio"/> JOSEPH R. BIDEN KAMALA D. HARRIS <small>Democrat</small>	<input type="radio"/> MATT FRIDY <small>Republican</small>	<input type="radio"/> KATHY EVANS <small>Republican</small>	
<input type="radio"/> DONALD J. TRUMP MICHAEL R. PENCE <small>Republican</small>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<input type="radio"/> JO JORGENSEN JEREMY "Spiker" COHEN <small>Independent</small>	FOR COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS JUDGE, PLACE NO. 1 (Vote for One)	<input type="radio"/>	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> MARY WINDOM <small>Republican</small>		
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> BETH KELLUM <small>Republican</small>		
FOR UNITED STATES SENATOR (Vote for One)	FOR PRESIDENT, PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION (Vote for One)	<input type="radio"/>	
<input type="radio"/> DOUG JONES <small>Democrat</small>	<input type="radio"/> LAURA CASEY <small>Democrat</small>		
<input type="radio"/> TOMMY TUBERVILLE <small>Republican</small>	<input type="radio"/> TWINKLE ANDRESS CAVANAUGH <small>Republican</small>	<input type="radio"/>	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
FOR UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE, 3RD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT (Vote for One)	FOR MEMBER, STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION, DISTRICT NO. (Vote for One)	<input type="radio"/>	
<input type="radio"/> PHYLLIS HARVEY-HALL <small>Democrat</small>	<input type="radio"/>		
<input type="radio"/> BARRY MOORE <small>Republican</small>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
FOR ASSOCIATE JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT, PLACE NO. 1 (Vote for One)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<input type="radio"/> GREG SHAW <small>Republican</small>	<input type="radio"/>		
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
FOR ASSOCIATE JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT, PLACE NO. 2 (Vote for One)	<input type="radio"/>		
<input type="radio"/> BRAD MENDHEIM <small>Republican</small>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		

Appendix C

<p>SAMPLE Official Election Ballot</p> <p>STATE OF MISSISSIPPI</p> <p>2020 General Election</p> <p>Tuesday, November 3, 2020</p>	
<p>TO VOTE: YOU MUST DARKEN THE OVAL (●) COMPLETELY USING A BLACK OR BLUE PEN.</p> <p>Do not use a red pen, felt tip pen or any type of pencil.</p> <p>Do not cross out or erase - If you make a mistake, you may request a new ballot.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">For United States President</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Vote for ONE</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Presidential Electors for Joseph R. Biden Jr. for President and Kamala D. Harris for Vice President Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Presidential Electors for Donald J. Trump for President and Michael R. Pence for Vice President Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Presidential Electors for Don Blankenship for President and William Mohr for Vice President American Constitution</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Presidential Electors for Brian Carroll for President and Amar Patel for Vice President American Solidarity</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Presidential Electors for Phil Collins for President and Bill Parker for Vice President Independent</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Presidential Electors for Howie Hawkins for President and Angela Nicote Walker for Vice President Green</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Presidential Electors for Jo Jorgensen for President and Jeremy 'Spike' Cohen for Vice President Libertarian</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Presidential Electors for Brock Pierce for President and Karla Ballard for Vice President Independent</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Presidential Electors for Kanye West for President and Michelle Tidball for Vice President Independent</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ <small>Write-in</small></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">For United States Senate</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Vote for ONE</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Mike Espy Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Cindy Hyde-Smith Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Jimmy L. Edwards Libertarian</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ <small>Write-in</small></p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">For US House Of Representatives 1st Congressional District</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Vote for ONE</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Antonia Ellason Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Trent Kelly Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ <small>Write-in</small></p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">For US House Of Representatives 2nd Congressional District</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Vote for ONE</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Brian Flowers Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Bennie G. Thompson Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ <small>Write-in</small></p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">For US House of Representatives 3rd Congressional District</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Vote for ONE</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Dorothy Dot Benford Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Michael Guest Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ <small>Write-in</small></p>
<p>TURN BALLOT OVER TO CONTINUE VOTING</p>	

**For US House Of Representatives
4th Congressional District
Vote for ONE**

Steven M. Palazzo Republican

Write-in

**SPECIAL NONPARTISAN JUDICIAL
ELECTION
For Circuit Court Judge
Circuit Court, District 08 Place 1
Vote for ONE**

Brian K. Burns Nonpartisan

Caleb E. May Nonpartisan

Write-in

**NONPARTISAN JUDICIAL ELECTION
For Supreme Court Justice
Supreme Court District 1(Central)
Position 1
Vote for ONE**

Kenny Griffis Nonpartisan

Latrice Westbrooks Nonpartisan

Write-in

**NONPARTISAN JUDICIAL ELECTION
For Supreme Court Justice
Supreme Court District 1(Central)
Position 2
Vote for ONE**

Leslie D. King Nonpartisan

Write-in

**NONPARTISAN JUDICIAL ELECTION
For Supreme Court Justice
Supreme Court District 2(Southern)
Position 3
Vote for ONE**

Mike Randolph Nonpartisan

Write-in

**NONPARTISAN JUDICIAL ELECTION
For Supreme Court Justice
Supreme Court District 3(Northern)
Position 3
Vote for ONE**

Josiah Dennis Coleman Nonpartisan

Percy L. Lynchard Nonpartisan

Write-in

TURN BALLOT OVER TO CONTINUE VOTING

**Statewide
Ballot Measure 1
Initiated by Petition and
Alternative by Legislature**

Initiative Measure No. 65. Should Mississippi allow qualified patients with debilitating medical conditions, as certified by Mississippi licensed physicians, to use medical marijuana?

Legislative Budget Office Fiscal Analysis for Initiative 65:

The overall cost to Mississippi for the first year is estimated to be \$11,068,150. The anticipated expenses for the first year to implement a medical marijuana program is \$24,068,150 (Plants - seeds to Sale: \$5,000,000; Licensing, Monitoring, Inspection: \$16,220,150; and Cost to Collect Revenue: \$2,848,000). The anticipated revenue is \$13,000,000 (User ID Cards: \$2,500,000; Commercial Licenses: \$500,000 and sales fee at 7 percent: \$10,000,000).

The anticipated expenses for years following the first for a medical marijuana program is \$15,338,000 (Plants - seeds to Sale: \$5,000,000; Licensing, Monitoring, Inspection: \$8,756,000; and Cost to Collect Revenue: \$1,582,000). The anticipated revenue is \$26,000,000 (User ID Cards: \$5,000,000; Commercial Licenses: \$1,000,000 and sales fee at 7 percent: \$20,000,000). The overall annual revenue is anticipated to be \$10,662,000, all of which must be used to support the state marijuana program.

Alternative Measure No. 65 A. Shall Mississippi establish a program to allow the medical use of marijuana products by qualified persons with debilitating medical conditions?

Legislative Budget Office Fiscal Analysis for Initiative 65A:

The cost or revenue impact associated with this initiative is undeterminable.

**VOTE FOR APPROVAL OF EITHER, OR
AGAINST BOTH**

- FOR APPROVAL OF EITHER Initiative Measure No. 65 OR Alternative Measure No. 65A
- AGAINST BOTH Initiative Measure No. 65 and Alternative Measure No. 65A

AND VOTE FOR ONE

- FOR Initiative Measure No. 65
- FOR Alternative Measure No. 65A

**Statewide
Ballot Measure 2
House Concurrent Resolution No. 47**

This amendment provides that to be elected Governor, or to any other statewide office, a candidate must receive a majority of the votes in the general election. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes, then a runoff election shall be held as provided by general law. The requirement of receiving the most votes in a majority of Mississippi House of Representative's districts is removed.

VOTE FOR ONE

- YES
- NO

**Statewide
Ballot Measure 3
House Bill 1796 - Flag Referendum**

Please vote 'Yes' or 'No' on whether the following design shall be the official Mississippi State Flag



- YES
- NO

END OF BALLOT