

Southern Illinois University Carbondale
Paul Simon Public Policy Institute White Paper:
The 2012 Simon Poll on Ethics and Reform in Illinois
September 27, 2012

I. Introduction

Since Fall 2008 the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale has conducted an annual statewide poll. Simon Polls cover topics such as the budget deficit, state spending and taxation, vote intention, and political reform in Illinois.

The 2012 Simon Poll focuses primarily on the ethical climate and political reform in Illinois. We don't need a survey to show that there exists an ethics problem and a need for reform in Illinois. With our two most recent ex-governors in federal prison, our status as the butt of late-night comics' jokes, and even academic studies showing Illinois among the most corrupt states in the nation,¹ the question is not whether there is a problem, but what is its extent, and what ought to be done.

The Institute is accustomed to asking Illinois voters about ethics and reform issues, beginning with its inaugural statewide poll in 2008, when it asked about such issues as recall of statewide officials and reforming judicial elections. Subsequent surveys have repeatedly brought up other reform issues, such as term limits, campaign contribution limits, and reforming the legislative redistricting process.

In 2012, in the context of the Simon Institute symposium, "What's in the Water in Illinois?", focused on ethics and reform in the state, the current survey dedicates most of its substantive questions to these issues. Is Illinois more corrupt than other states? What systemic reforms to our politics will voters support? And, in some instances, can we demonstrate whether support for political reform has been growing over time?

For answers to these questions, the Institute surveyed 1,261 registered voters across the state, September 4 through 10, resulting in a statistical margin for error of plus or minus 2.77

¹ Simpson, Dick, James Nowlan, Thomas J. Gradel, Melissa Mouritsen Zmuda, David Sterrett, and Douglas Cantor. 2012. "Chicago and Illinois: Leading the Pack in Corruption. Anti-Corruption Report Number 5." University of Illinois at Chicago Department of Political Science and Institute for Government and Public Affairs.

percentage points. The questionnaire was available in both English and Spanish, and the sample included both land lines and cell phones. The Simon Institute developed the questionnaire, and phone interviews were administered by Customer Research International of San Marcos, Texas, which reports no Illinois political clients. The Institute paid for the project out of non-state funds from its endowment.

II. Illinois: A Culture of Corruption?

What do Illinoisans think about the level of corruption in their state? It is possible that other states with at least informal reputations for corruption—say New Jersey or Louisiana—may have greater instances of dirty dealing. Maybe Illinois citizens feel all states are a little corrupt. Perhaps Illinoisans believe their state’s reputation is well deserved.

As it turns out, about six in ten registered voters in the 2012 Simon Poll (58 percent) said Illinois’ state government is more corrupt than governments in other states. A little over a third (36.6 percent) said it was about the same as in other states. Virtually no one (2.1 percent) thought Illinois was less corrupt than other states.

The survey went on to ask respondents whether they thought local government in their city or area of the state was more corrupt, less corrupt, or about the same as governments in other parts of Illinois: the plurality (41.6 percent) thought their local governments were about the same as those in other parts of Illinois. Not quite one in five (18.7 percent) thought their local governments were more corrupt, and a little over a third (35.8 percent) thought their local government was less corrupt.

- Chicago residents were much more likely than average to say their local government was more corrupt (41.2 percent) than other governments in the state, compared with 16.9 percent in the Chicago suburbs and 7.5 percent downstate.

Government is not the lone target of citizens’ disapproval. More than six respondents in ten (62.3 percent) agreed that corruption is widespread in Illinois business.

- Black (73.4 percent) and Hispanic respondents (65.9 percent) were more likely than whites (57.6 percent) to say corruption in Illinois business is widespread
- Respondents in households with incomes lower than \$50,000 (70.8 percent) were also more likely than average to say corruption in Illinois business is widespread.

However, more than three-fourths (76.8 percent) of respondents agreed that corruption in Illinois government was widespread.

- Republicans were more likely than Democrats to agree that corruption was widespread in Illinois government (85.7 percent to 70.8 percent). Whites (78.2 percent) were more likely to see widespread corruption in government than were blacks (72.2 percent) or Hispanics (65.9 percent).

In every Institute poll since 2008, fewer than one Illinois voter in five has said they thought the State of Illinois was headed in the right direction. While there are other contributing issues—

such as the budget deficit, the public pension shortfall, and others—it is reasonable to assume that Illinois’ perceived culture of corruption is contributing to Illinoisans’ dim view of their own state.

III. Trust in Elections

If something is wrong with our political system or those who inhabit it, the voters are supposed to be able to fix the system—or replace the miscreants—through fair and open elections. But what if the people within a system perceived as corrupt don’t trust the electoral system?

According to the 2008 Gallup World Survey,² 47 percent of Americans have faith in the honesty of their elections, compared with the 42 percent average across the 134 countries surveyed.

More than half of Illinoisans in our survey (56 percent) said they had confidence in the honesty of U.S. elections—about the same level of confidence reported by Austrian or French respondents to the Gallup World Survey.

However, when asked about their confidence in Illinois elections, somewhat fewer (50.4 percent) had confidence in their home-state elections’ honesty. This is about the same level of confidence reported by Iranians or Czechs in the Gallup survey.

- Republicans (60.7 percent) were more likely to say they do not have confidence in the honesty of Illinois’ elections than were Democrats (31.9 percent) and Independents (55.6 percent).
- Similarly, voters Downstate were more likely to say they do not have confidence in the honesty of Illinois’ elections (50.7 percent) than were voters in Chicago (40.0 percent) or in the Chicago suburbs (43.3 percent).

IV. Conflict of Interest and Lobbying

Perhaps the easiest path to corruption—or the perception of corruption—in political life stems from the conflict of interest between an officeholder’s official actions and his or her private gain. We asked respondents a series of questions about financial disclosure, the explicit prohibition against actions most likely to lead to a conflict, and about “revolving door” provisions, which would impose a time restriction on retired legislators before they could return to the Capitol as lobbyists.

² Rheaul, Magali, and Brett Pelham, Gallup World Survey, 2008. “Worldwide, Views Diverge About Honesty of Elections: Election honesty more widespread in countries with higher well-being” <http://www.gallup.com/poll/111691/Worldwide-Views-Diverge-About-Honesty-Elections.aspx>

Candidate Financial Disclosure

Financial disclosure is a popular reform proposal. Even among those who oppose campaign contribution limits, disclosure is offered up as the way to keep politicians and their contributors transparent, if not honest.

We offered a number of areas in which financial or conflict-of-interest disclosure might be mandated in Illinois (See Table 1). Most, if not all of them, seem common-sense disclosures of political candidates, yet none are fully in place in Illinois. The disclosure proposals were uniformly popular among Illinois voters in the current survey. In only one area—disclosing that a legislator has another job or source of income—did fewer than half say it was “very important” to know this. Even so, three-fourths (74.9 percent) said it was very or somewhat important to have this disclosed.

**TABLE 1:
IMPORTANCE OF VARIOUS DISCLOSURE ITEMS**

How important to know if a candidate:	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not at all Important	Other/ DK
Receives loans on terms better than what is available to the public	77.6%	14.2%	3.6%	2.5%	2.1%
Is a lobbyist or is related to a lobbyist	66.2%	20.1%	5.6%	4.6%	3.5%
Owns real estate or investments that may benefit from government projects or regulations	74.6%	17.8%	3.3%	2.9%	1.3%
Is a leader in an organization that may receive tax dollars	64.5%	24.9%	4.2%	3.7%	2.7%
Annually releases his or her personal income tax returns	54.5%	24.6%	10.7%	9.3%	1.0%
Has another job or other sources of income	45.7%	29.2%	15.4%	8.0%	1.7%
Has disclosed the list of clients a legislator serves as part of the legislator’s private business	52.4%	29.7%	6.4%	4.9%	6.5%
Was reported to the State Legislative Ethics Committee for alleged ethics violations	84.9%	10.3%	2.1%	1.2%	1.5%

Receiving the highest percentage of “very important” responses (84.9 percent) was knowing whether a candidate was reported to the State Legislative Ethics Committee for alleged ethics violations. Under current law, the Legislative Inspector General is required to report the *number* of alleged violations statewide, but not the *names* of alleged violators.

Three-fourths (77.6 percent) thought it was very important to know if an elected official or candidate receives loans on terms better than those available to the public, and if a candidate

owns real estate or investments that could benefit from government projects or regulations (74.6 percent).

Two-thirds thought it was very important to know if a legislator or candidate was a lobbyist or related to a lobbyist (66.2 percent), or if a candidate was a leader in an organization that may receive tax dollars (64.5 percent).

And on an issue that is newsworthy at both the national and state levels, more than half (54.5 percent) thought it was very important, and another quarter (24.6 percent) thought it was somewhat important to know if a candidate annually releases his or her personal income tax returns.

Conflict of Interest Prohibitions

Illinois voters surveyed also were in favor of a trio of proposals aimed at curbing legislators' potential conflicts of interest. Strongly favored by more than half (55.4 percent) of respondents was a proposal to ban legislators from voting on bills that would result in substantial personal profits for them. Six in ten (62.8 percent) at least somewhat favored this proposal.

Half (50.5 percent) strongly favored, and six in ten (61.7 percent) at least somewhat favored a proposal to ban legislators from having business contracts with the state.

Though still favored by a majority (56.0 percent strongly/somewhat favor), feelings seemed more mixed for a proposal to ban legislators from working as a public employee while serving in the legislature. Not quite four in ten (38.6 percent) strongly favored this proposal.

“Revolving Door” and Lobbying Policies

A longtime concern of government reformers has been the so-called “revolving door” between government officials, particularly elected officials, and business interests' lobbying activities. Reformers fear that legislators may perform favors for business interests while in office, prior to leaving politics for lucrative private-sector employment as lobbyists. Illinois is one of just 15 states that have no policy on how long legislators must be out of office before they can legally lobby their former colleagues.³ What currently passes for a revolving-door statute states that no public employee can go to work for a private firm within a year of his or her participation in awarding a state contract worth \$25,000 or more to that firm.⁴

All of our neighboring, contiguous states have some sort of waiting period applied to elected officials. For example, Indiana has a one-year lobbying restriction on former legislators. Wisconsin has a one-year restriction on former executive officeholders. Missouri and Kentucky have a one-year restriction on former executives, legislators, and staff who had decision-making capacity. Iowa has a two-year waiting period for former legislators, executive officeholders, and staff.⁵

³ Holman, Craig, and Prateek Reddy, 2011, “Revolving Door Restrictions by State.” *Public Citizen*

⁴ Chapman and Cutler LLC, *Public Finance* newsletter, March 2004

⁵ Craig and Reddy, 2011.

A one-year revolving door policy was overwhelmingly popular with Illinois voters surveyed, even when paired against a credible argument opposing such prohibitions. More than two-thirds (68.5 percent) agreed that, “To reduce the likelihood or the perception of corruption, or trading votes for money, politicians should be prohibited from lobbying their former colleagues for one year after leaving office.” Just a quarter (25.1 percent) chose the statement that, “Organizations hire former legislators for their expertise in the lawmaking process. Contacting governmental officials is a constitutional right for anyone and should not be regulated—even for former elected officials.”

Gifts from Lobbyists

Illinois public ethics laws prohibit officeholders, as well as all state employees, from accepting gifts offered by “prohibited sources” who could benefit from that employee’s official actions. State employees, including officeholders, can only accept \$75 worth of food and drink at official functions in any one day, and can only accept up to \$100 worth of gifts in any one year.

We asked the Illinois voters in our sample, in an open-ended format, what was a reasonable dollar-figure limit on the amount elected officials could receive from lobbyists. The modal answer was “\$0” (22.2 percent), and the next-most frequent answer was \$100 (16.5 percent). Almost two-thirds (64.3 percent) of those with an opinion on the matter named a figure of \$100 or less (including those who said \$0 and those who said \$100).

V. Electoral and Process Reforms

For a number of years the Simon Poll has asked registered Illinois voters their thoughts on electoral reforms, most of which have been favored by large majorities (See Table 2).

Term Limits

Legislative term limits have long been a popular response to perceived corruption or inaction in politics. Almost eight in ten (78.7 percent) favor, and more than half (54.0 percent) strongly favor a proposal to limit state representatives to five consecutive terms and state senators to three consecutive terms.

- Groups even more likely than average to strongly favor term limits were college-educated voters (59.5 percent), self-described conservatives (61.8 percent), Republicans (63.3 percent), and those between 51 and 65 (60.2 percent).

Leadership Term Limits

Less drastic is a proposal to limit how long legislators can serve in leadership positions, such as Speaker of the House or President of the Senate. This has been just as popular in the three years we have been testing it; this year more than half (53.8 percent) strongly favor and another quarter (24.1 percent) somewhat favor legislative leadership term limits.

- Especially likely to strongly favor leadership term limits were, as before, the college-educated (57.0 percent), conservatives (59.3 percent), and Republicans (60.0 percent), as well as self-described independent voters (59.4 percent).

Table 2
Illinois Reform Proposals 2010 - 2012

Would you favor or oppose a proposal to:	2010	2011	2012
Limit how long state legislators could serve. It would limit state representatives to five consecutive two-year terms and state senators to three consecutive four-year terms:			
Strongly Favor	57.3%	54.4%	54.1%
Somewhat favor	22.7%	20.6%	24.6%
Somewhat oppose	7.7%	8.5%	8.6%
Strongly Oppose	7.1%	10.9%	8.8%
Other/Don't know	5.2%	5.6%	3.9%
A proposal to limit how long legislators could serve in leadership positions – such as speaker of the House or President of the Senate – before they stepped down to let other legislators lead.			
Strongly favor	NA	NA	53.8%
Somewhat favor	NA	NA	24.1%
Somewhat oppose	NA	NA	8.6%
Strongly oppose	NA	NA	7.4%
Other/Don't know	NA	NA	6.1%
Limit the amount of campaign money that party leaders can redistribute to other candidates:			
Strongly Favor	43.6%	40.5%	42.8%
Somewhat Favor	21.4%	20.9%	19.3%
Somewhat Oppose	12.4%	11.2%	12.7%
Strongly Oppose	13.0%	17.1%	16.7%
Other/Don't know	9.6%	10.3%	8.4%
Change the primary-election process in Illinois so that voters do not have to publicly declare which party's ballot they have chosen:			
Strongly Favor	62.2%	58.3%	56.0%
Somewhat Favor	13.2%	13.5%	14.0%
Somewhat Oppose	7.6%	6.8%	9.0%
Strongly Oppose	10.1%	13.1%	13.6%
Other/Don't know	6.9%	8.3%	7.4%

Limits on Campaign Cash Transfers

Six in ten voters surveyed support limiting the amount of money that party leaders can transfer to other candidates in the general election, as they did in the 2010 and 2011 Simon Polls. Four in ten (42.8 percent) strongly favor this reform proposal.

- Interestingly, though Chicago Democrats lead both the Senate and the House of Representatives, respondents in Chicago and Democrats in our sample support limits on leadership cash transfers at the same levels as the total sample. Republicans were more likely than average to favor leadership term limits.

Anonymous Primary Ballot

More than half (56.0 percent) strongly favor and another one in seven (14.0 percent) somewhat favor a proposal to change the primary election process so that voters do not have to publicly declare which party's ballot they have chosen. This is down slightly, if not significantly, from the 2010 and 2011 Simon Polls.

- Especially likely to strongly favor primary-ballot reform were, not surprisingly, independent voters (70.7 percent) and self-described moderates (62.2 percent).

Citizens United and Campaign Contribution Limits

The Institute asked about the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision for the first time in the 2012 poll. Interviewers told respondents that "the U.S. Supreme Court decided that corporations and unions can spend unlimited amounts of money to directly support or oppose political candidates. Before the ruling, corporations and unions could not." They were asked whether and to what extent they favored or opposed the ruling.

Two-thirds (66.5) of Illinois voters surveyed said they opposed the ruling, more than half (52.1 percent) strongly opposed it. One in four (25.4 percent) either strongly or somewhat favored the *Citizens United* Ruling.

- Most likely to strongly oppose the *Citizens United* decision were college-educated respondents (59.5 percent) and liberals (63.0 percent).
- Strong opposition was higher in Chicago (57.5 percent) than in its suburbs (51.6 percent) or downstate (49.5 percent).
- As one might guess, Republicans (32.2 percent strongly/ somewhat favor) and self-described conservatives (30.7 percent) were more likely than average to favor the Court's decision. Among Democrats, 12.5 percent strongly or somewhat favored the *Citizens United* decision, and among independents, 19.8% favored the decision.

Interviewers read respondents a pair of statements about campaign contribution limits and disclosure of contributions, and found them essentially tied on whether contribution limits ought to be enforced, or abandoned in favor of stronger disclosure rules.

About half (46.0 percent) agreed that "Limits on campaign contributions are necessary to prohibit corruption and maintain the confidence of the public in politics. Complete disclosure of contributions is important, but it is not enough."

Slightly more (49.2 percent) chose the statement that "Contribution limits do not work. Money always finds a way to influence politics. The best way to ensure the integrity of politics and maintain the confidence of the public is to eliminate contribution limits and to require complete, immediate disclosure of all contributions."

- Among those most likely to say contribution limits are necessary were the college-educated (53.8 percent), self-described liberals (53.9 percent), and respondents in households with incomes above \$100,000 (52.0 percent).
- Among those most likely to favor disclosure requirements over contribution limits were the high-school-educated (57.4 percent), conservatives, (55.6 percent), political independents (56.6 percent), and respondents in households with incomes below \$50,000 (54.2 percent).

VI. Redistricting Reforms

The legislative redistricting process, in Illinois as in other states, has been criticized as letting the politicians pick their voters, rather than the voters picking their politicians. When representatives have districts drawn for them that are noncompetitive in their favor, the criticism goes, they are less likely to feel the need to be responsive to their constituents. Further, when districts are drawn “safe Republican” or “safe Democrat,” incumbents may be more likely to be challenged from their own parties’ ideological extremes than from a centrist candidate of the other party, thus further polarizing our politics and making compromise less likely.

Since 2009, the Institute has been asking Illinois voters their views about the redistricting process. In the redistricting that occurred after the 2000 census, the legislative remap panel deadlocked into a tie. The tiebreaking process—as ridiculous as it sounds to the layman—is to pull one party’s name randomly from a hat. The winning party’s map then passes. As before, we asked respondents whether and to what extent they approved or disapproved of this process.

Nearly three-quarters (73.5 percent) of respondents in our 2012 poll said they disapproved of this tiebreaking process; 54 percent of them strongly disapproved.

One proposal that the Simon Institute has supported would, in the case of a partisan tie on the remap panel, have the Supreme Court add a neutral member to the panel (See Table 3). Three-fourths (74.8 percent) either strongly or somewhat approved of this solution. Note that while the overall percentage favoring the “neutral member” reform hasn’t changed much, the percentage *strongly* favoring it has more than doubled from the numbers in 2009 and 2010.

Table 3:
Add Neutral Person to Break Ties on Redistricting Panel

Response	2009	2010	2011	2012
Strongly Favor	19.3%	19.0%	35.8%	42.0%
Favor	53.6%	48.3%	34.3%	32.8%
Oppose	13.0%	12.6%	9.5%	8.4%
Strongly Oppose	4.8%	7.3%	7.1%	8.7%
Other/Don’t know	9.4%	12.8%	13.3%	8.0%

A more comprehensive reform—one that has been included in Institute polling since 2010—would be to take the mapmaking away from the legislature and give it to an independent commission (See Table 4). The legislature would then vote up or down on the resulting map.

Seven in ten (70.2 percent) respondents in our 2012 survey favored this proposal—38.1 percent of them strongly.

Table 4
Constitutional Amendment for Independent Remap Panel

Response	2010	2011	2012
Strongly Favor	13.3%	31.8%	38.1%
Favor	40.2%	33.2%	32.1%
Oppose	19.5%	11.7%	9.9%
Strongly Oppose	7.6%	7.4%	9.3%
Other/Don't know	19.4%	15.9%	10.5%

VII. Influence of Interest Groups

It turns out, as expected, that Illinoisans see widespread corruption in both government and business in Illinois. Further, respondents to this survey tended to think that corruption was worse in Illinois than in other states. This raises the question of who benefits from this perceived corruption in government. In other words, what parties receive outsized influence from the so-called corrupt system? (See Table 5)

TABLE 5:
INFLUENCE OF INTEREST GROUPS

Group:	Too Much	Too Little	About Right	Other/ DK
Pro-choice groups	24.9%	17.3%	44.6%	13.2%
Gay rights groups	29.3%	18.1%	40.6%	12.0%
Pro-life groups	27.0%	18.3%	42.5%	12.2%
Business and industry organizations	29.3%	17.0%	40.4%	13.2%
Evangelical church groups	26.5%	15.4%	39.0%	19.1%
Private-sector labor unions	36.6%	16.8%	32.3%	14.3%
The Occupy Wall Street movement	34.0%	17.4%	27.6%	21.0%
The Tea Party movement	34.6%	15.9%	32.0%	17.5%
The Illinois Chamber of Commerce	15.6%	16.1%	47.8%	20.5%
The National Rifle Association	40.9%	16.4%	31.6%	11.0%
The Catholic Church	28.8%	13.2%	43.5%	14.5%
Public employee unions	36.3%	19.0%	32.5%	12.1%

Perhaps Illinois voters saw some high-profile interest groups as having too much influence in the system—in bending the apparatus of state government to their own ends. To try to get at that phenomenon we listed a dozen groups or institutions that have been in the news and that have tried to influence the government toward their positions. For each, we asked respondents whether they thought each group had too much influence in Illinois government, too little, or about the right amount.

The “too much influence” responses range from a low of 15.6 percent for the Illinois Chamber of Commerce (also note its higher-than-average “don’t know” response) to a high of 40.9 percent for the National Rifle Association. Not much jumps out at the reader in terms of patterns, with “about right” being the modal response in most categories. The Occupy Wall Street and Tea Party movements, for example, draw “too much” responses from about a third. Pro-choice and pro-life groups draw similar ratings to each other, with about a quarter saying each has too much influence.

Business and industry groups (29.3 percent)—as well as the aforementioned Illinois Chamber of Commerce—were less likely to be seen as having too much influence than were labor groups, whether public employee unions (36.3 percent) or private sector unions (36.6 percent).

VIII. An Ethics Scenario

University of Illinois political scientist Jim Nowlan has been posing an ethical scenario like this one to his classes:

Next, I want to get your thoughts on a scenario I’m going to read to you: Let’s say that you have a close relative who has just been arrested on a serious charge of driving under the influence of alcohol. He is in his first job out of college and cannot do his job without a driver’s license. His wife is pregnant with their first child.

Your relative has hired a veteran lawyer who says he knows his way around the courthouse. The lawyer says that if your relative provides him \$1000 in cash, in addition to his fee, he is confident that he can have the charge dismissed. Your young relative has asked for your advice. Would you tell him to accept or decline the lawyer’s offer?

**Table 6:
Ethics Scenario**

Response	Percent
Accept the lawyer’s offer	25.1%
Decline the lawyer’s offer	67.6%
Other/ Don’t know	7.2%

Absent some context, it is hard to draw conclusions from this exercise, other than to note that two-thirds of Illinois registered voters would advise their hypothetical young relative to do the ethical thing and decline the lawyer's offer. One in four would accept the offer.

- Responses on this item generally don't differ much from group to group, except to note that respondents under 35 are much more likely than average (43.3 percent) to say they would accept the offer. Those with high school educations or less (30.5 percent) were somewhat more likely than average to say they would accept the offer.

IX. Summary

In many ways, the 2012 Simon Poll on ethics and reform in Illinois raises as many questions as it answers. One question that it doesn't answer is the "real" extent of corruption or other ethical lapses in government, or in dealings between government and interest groups. To the extent unethical behavior necessarily goes on behind the scenes, we can't know its true prevalence. While we can measure instances in which a governmental official is "caught," do we assume the proportion of wrongdoers caught is consistent across states? Do we compare our state's level of "gotchas" per capita, per elected official, or against some other metric?

Of course that is beyond the scope of a survey and its summary report. What we can say is that Illinois voters *think* our state is more corrupt than others, and that they think corruption is widespread across business and government. Perception in this case is reality.

A second question raised is "What is to be done?" or, more cynically, "So what?"

Many of the reforms popular with respondents to this poll could be enacted by the legislature if it so chose. Perhaps it is unreasonable to expect a body that already may feel heavily regulated to impose more burdens upon itself.

And, for good or ill, Illinois' system of initiative and referendum is not as accessible to reformers as is a system like California's. Constitutional reforms such as legislative term limits or redistricting done by a commission, for example, would face a number of legal, procedural, and logistical hurdles before it reached the ballot.

In the meantime, what we have done is shone a light on a problem—the perception of systemic corruption—and demonstrated the popularity of a number of proposed reforms. We hope the public policy community will continue the discussion. The Paul Simon Public Policy Institute will continue its examination of the problems and possible solutions to them.

Appendix:
The Simon Poll Fall 2012
Response Frequencies

1. First we would like to know what you think about the direction of the United States of America. Generally speaking, do you think things in our country are going in the right direction, or are they off track and heading in the wrong direction?

Right direction	41.6%
Wrong direction	49.6%
Other/Don't know	8.6%

2. And what about the direction of the State of Illinois? Generally speaking, are things in Illinois going in the right direction, or are they off track and heading in the wrong direction?

Right direction	19.6%
Wrong direction	69.9%
Other/Don't know	10.5%

3. And how are things going in your city or area of the state? In general, are things in your city or area going in the right direction, or are they off track and heading in the wrong direction?

Right direction	54.2%
Wrong direction	35.8%
Other/Don't know	10.1%

4. Regardless of what you think about the direction in your part of the state, tell us what you think about the overall quality of life in your area. Taking everything into account, would you say the overall quality of life in your area is...

Excellent	11.7%
Good	39.5%
Average	31.7%
Not so good	11.0%
Poor	6.1%

5. As you know, the US Presidential election will be held this coming November 6th. If the election were held today, who would you vote for, the Democrat, Barack Obama, the Republican, Mitt Romney, or someone else?

Vote Obama	45.8%
Lean Obama	1.3%
Undecided	3.1%
Lean Romney	4.9%
Vote Romney	28.9%
Someone else	8.9%
Other/Don't know	7.1%

6. Regarding Barack Obama, do you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of him?
- | | |
|----------------------|-------|
| Very Favorable | 28.3% |
| Somewhat Favorable | 25.4% |
| Neither | 6.3% |
| Somewhat Unfavorable | 13.5% |
| Very Unfavorable | 24.0% |
| Other/Don't know | 2.5% |
7. Regarding Mitt Romney, do you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of him?
- | | |
|----------------------|-------|
| Very Favorable | 12.6% |
| Somewhat Favorable | 26.1% |
| Neither | 10.1% |
| Somewhat Unfavorable | 20.6% |
| Very Unfavorable | 25.8% |
| Other/Don't know | 4.8% |
8. Now I would like for you to tell me how Governor Pat Quinn is doing his job. Do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the job Governor Quinn is doing?
- | | |
|---------------------|-------|
| Strongly Approve | 6.1% |
| Somewhat Approve | 36.1% |
| Neither | 2.9% |
| Somewhat Disapprove | 22.0% |
| Strongly Disapprove | 27.0% |
| Other/Don't know | 5.9% |
9. Next, I'd like for you to tell me how well President Obama is doing his job. Do you approve or disapprove of the job the President is doing?
- | | |
|---------------------|-------|
| Strongly Approve | 28.2% |
| Somewhat Approve | 27.4% |
| Neither | 2.1% |
| Somewhat Disapprove | 10.5% |
| Strongly Disapprove | 29.7% |
| Other/Don't know | 2.1% |
10. In general, in the US, do you have a confidence in the honesty of election?
- | | |
|------------------|-------|
| Yes | 56.0% |
| No | 39.0% |
| Other/Don't know | 5.0% |
11. In general, in Illinois, do you have confidence in the honesty of elections in Illinois?
- | | |
|------------------|-------|
| Yes | 50.4% |
| No | 45.0% |
| Other/Don't know | 4.7% |

We also are interested in your opinions on political reform in Illinois. I'm going to read you some proposals that some people have offered. For each, I'd like you to tell me if you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose that idea.

12. A proposal to ban legislators from voting on bills that would result in a substantial personal profit for the legislator?

Strongly Favor	55.4%
Somewhat Favor	7.4%
Somewhat Oppose	8.7%
Strongly Oppose	24.2%
Other	4.3%

13. A proposal to ban legislators from working as a public employee while serving in the legislature.

Strongly Favor	38.6%
Somewhat Favor	17.4%
Somewhat Oppose	15.0%
Strongly Oppose	19.9%
Other/Don't know	9.0%

14. A proposal to ban legislators from having business contracts with the state.

Strongly Favor	50.5%
Somewhat Favor	11.2%
Somewhat Oppose	10.4%
Strongly Oppose	22.7%
Other/Don't know	5.2%

15. A proposal to limit how long state legislators could serve. It would limit state representatives to five consecutive terms and state senators to three consecutive terms.

Strongly Favor	54.1%
Somewhat Favor	24.6%
Somewhat Oppose	8.6%
Strongly Oppose	8.8%
Other/Don't know	3.9%

16. A proposal to limit how long legislators could serve in leadership positions – such as speaker of the House or President of the Senate – before they stepped down to let other legislators lead.

Strongly favor	53.8%
Somewhat favor	24.1%
Somewhat oppose	8.6%
Strongly oppose	7.4%
Other/Don't know	6.1%

17. A proposal to limit the amount of campaign money that party leaders can transfer to other candidates in the general election.

Strongly favor	42.8%
Somewhat favor	19.3%
Somewhat oppose	12.7%
Strongly oppose	16.7%
Other/Don't know	8.4%

18. Would you favor or oppose a proposal to change the primary-election process in Illinois so that voters do not have to publicly declare which party's ballot they have chosen?

Strongly favor	56.0%
Somewhat favor	14.0%
Somewhat oppose	9.0%
Strongly oppose	13.6%
Other/Don't know	7.4%

19. Currently, when the political parties can't agree on a legislative redistricting plan, they end the stalemate by pulling a party's name out of a hat... Do you approve or disapprove of this tie-breaking process?

Strongly Approve	4.4%
Somewhat Approve	14.8%
Somewhat Disapprove	18.9%
Strongly Disapprove	54.6%
Other/Don't know	7.3%

20. One proposal for improving the state legislative redistricting process would have the Illinois Supreme Court add a neutral person to the redistricting panel in case of a partisan tie. Would you favor or oppose this proposal?

Strongly favor	42.0%
Somewhat favor	32.8%
Somewhat oppose	8.4%
Strongly oppose	8.7%
Other/Don't know	8.0%

21. Other people have proposed a constitutional amendment that would have legislative district maps created and recommended by a commission that is independent of the elected representatives. Would you favor or oppose this proposal?

Strongly favor	38.1%
Somewhat Favor	32.1%
Somewhat Oppose	9.9%
Strongly oppose	9.3%
Other/Don't know	10.5%

22. How important is it to you personally to know if an elected official or political candidate:
Has another job or other sources of income?

Very Important	45.7%
Somewhat important	29.2%
Not very important	15.4%
Not at all important	8.0%
Other/Don't know	1.7%

23. How important is it to you personally to know if an elected official or political candidate: Is a leader in an organization that may receive tax dollars?

Very Important	64.5%
Somewhat Important	24.9%
Not very Important	4.2%
Not at all Important	3.7%
Other/Don't know	2.7%

24. How important is it to you personally to know if an elected official or political candidate:
Owns real estate or investments that may benefit from government projects or regulations

Very Important	74.6%
Somewhat Important	17.8%
Not Very Important	3.3%
Not at all Important	2.9%
Other/Don't know	1.3%

25. How important is it to you personally to know if an elected official or political candidate:
Receives loans on terms better than what is available to the public?

Very Important	77.6%
Somewhat Important	14.2%
Not Very Important	3.6%
Not at all Important	2.5%
Other/Don't know	2.1%

26. How important is it to you personally to know if an elected official or political candidate: Is a lobbyist or is related to a lobbyist?

Very Important	66.2%
Somewhat Important	20.1%
Not Very Important	5.6%
Not at all Important	4.6%
Other/Don't know	3.5%

27. How important is it to you personally to know if an elected official or political candidate:
Annually releases his or her personal income tax returns?

Very Important	54.5%
Somewhat Important	24.6%
Not very Important	10.7%
Not at all Important	9.3%
Other/Don't know	1.0%

28. How important is it to you personally to know if an elected official or political candidate:
Has disclosed the list of clients a legislator serves as part of the legislator's private business?

Very Important	52.4%
Somewhat Important	29.7%
Not very Important	6.4%
Not at all Important	4.9%
Other/Don't know	6.5%

29. How important is it to you personally to know if an elected official or political candidate:
was reported to the State Legislative Ethics Committee for alleged ethics violations?

Very Important	84.9%
Somewhat Important	10.3%
Not very Important	2.1%
Not at all Important	1.2%
Other/Don't know	1.5%

30. Some have proposed limiting the value of gifts that lobbyist can give to legislators – things like dinners, tickets to ball games, et cetera. What do you think is a reasonable dollar figure for limits on lobbyists' gifts to elected officials? (*Open-ended response*)

\$0 (zero)	29.3%
\$1 - \$99	18.4%
\$100	12.5%
\$101 - \$500	16.8%
\$600 - \$1,000	9.1%
\$15,000 \$100,000	9.8%

31. I'm going to read a list of groups. For each, I'd like you to tell me if that group has too much influence in Illinois, too little influence, or about the right amount:

Pro-choice groups

Too much	24.9%
Too little	17.3%
About right	44.6%
Don't know	13.2%

32. Gay rights groups	
Too much	29.3%
Too little	18.1%
About right	40.6%
Don't know	12.0%
32. Pro-life groups	
Too much	27.0%
Too little	18.3%
About right	42.5%
Don't know	12.2%
33. Business/industry organizations	
Too much	29.3%
Too little	17.0%
About right	40.4%
Don't know	13.2%
34. Evangelical Church groups	
Too much	26.5%
Too little	15.4%
About right	39.0%
Don't know	19.1%
35. Private-Sector Labor unions	
Too much	36.6%
Too little	16.8%
About right	32.3%
Don't know	14.3%
36. The Occupy Wall Street movement	
Too much	34.0%
Too little	17.4%
About right	27.6%
Don't know	21.0%
37. The Tea Party movement	
Too much	34.6%
Too little	15.9%
About right	32.0%
Don't know	17.5%

38. The Illinois Chamber of Commerce	
Too much	15.6%
Too little	16.1%
About right	47.8%
Don't know	20.5%
39. The National Rifle Association	
Too much	40.9%
Too little	16.4%
About Right	31.6%
Don't know	11.0%
40. The Catholic Church	
Too much	28.8%
Too little	13.2%
About right	43.5%
Don't know	14.5%
41. Public employee unions	
Too much	36.3%
Too little	19.0%
About right	32.5%
Don't know	12.1%
42. In regards to corruption, would you say corruption in Illinois business is widespread or not?	
Yes	62.3%
No	26.3%
Other/Don't know	11.4%
43. And what about in state government? Would you say corruption in Illinois government is widespread or not?	
Yes	76.8%
No	16.3%
Other/Don't know	7.0%
44. Compared to other states, do you think Illinois state government is more corrupt than governments in other states, less corrupt than in other states, or do you think it is about the same?	
More corrupt	58.0%
Less corrupt	2.1%
About the same	36.6%
Other/Don't know	3.2%

45. What about in your city or area of the state? Is your local government more corrupt than government in other parts of Illinois, less corrupt, or do you think it is about the same?

More corrupt	18.7%
Less corrupt	35.8%
About the same	41.6%
Other/Don't know	3.9%

46. Now let me read you some information. In 2010, in a case commonly referred to as Citizens United... From what you know, do you favor or oppose this Supreme Court ruling?

Strongly favor	8.3%
Somewhat favor	17.0%
Somewhat oppose	14.4%
Strongly oppose	52.1%
Other/Don't know	8.2%

Now I'm going to read two groups of statements about political reform. For each, please tell me which comes closer to your views, even if neither is exactly right, OK? First is a question about campaign contribution limits.

47. First is a question about campaign contribution limits.

Limits on campaign contributions are necessary to prohibit corruption and maintain the confidence of the public in politics. Complete disclosure of contributions is important, but it is not enough. 46.0%

Contribution limits do not work. Money always finds a way to influence politics. The best way to ensure the integrity of politics and maintain the confidence of the public is to eliminate contribution limits and to require complete, immediate disclosure of all contributions. 49.2%

Other/Don't know 4.8%

48. Next, about former elected officials as lobbyists, which statement comes closer to your views?

To reduce the likelihood or the perception of corruption, or trading votes for money, politicians should be prohibited from lobbying their former colleagues for one year after leaving office. 68.5%

Organizations hire former legislators for their expertise in the lawmaking process. Contacting governmental officials is a constitutional right for anyone and should not be regulated--even for former elected officials. 25.4%

Other/Don't know 6.1%

49. Which of these statements comes closer to your own view- even if neither is exactly right.

Most rich people today are wealthy mainly because of their own hard work, ambition or education 40.4%

Most rich people today are wealthy mainly because they know the right people or are born into wealthy families 46.9%

Neither (VOL) 2.2%

Both equally (VOL) 7.8%

Other/don't know 2.7%

50. Do you feel that the distribution of money and wealth in this country today is fair, or do you feel that the money and wealth in this country should be more evenly distributed among a larger percentage of the people?

Fair now 34.5%

Should be more even 57.8%

Other/Don't know 7.7%

51. Do you think the federal government should or should not pursue policies that try to reduce the gap between wealthy and less well-off Americans?

Should 52.1%

Should not 41.1%

Other/Don't know 6.8%

52. Next, I want to get your thoughts on a scenario I'm going to read to you. Let's say that you have a close relative who has just been arrested on a serious charge of driving under the influence of alcohol. He is in his first job out of college and cannot do his job without a driver's license. His wife is pregnant with their first child. Your relative has hired a veteran lawyer who says he knows his way around the courthouse. The lawyer says that if your relative provides him \$1000 in cash, in addition to his fee, he is confident that he can have the charge dismissed. Your young relative has asked for your advice. Would you tell him to

Accept the lawyer's offer	25.1%
Decline the lawyer's offer	67.6%
Other/ Don't know	7.2%

53. Do you think abortions should be legal under all circumstances, legal only under certain circumstances, or illegal in all circumstances?

Legal under any	37.0%
Legal under certain	44.3%
Illegal under all	15.9%
Other/ Don't know	2.9%

54. Which of the following three statements comes closest to your position on the legal rights of gay and lesbian couples in Illinois

Gay/lesbian couples should be allowed to legally marry 43.6%

Gay/lesbian couples should be allowed to form civil unions 31.8%

There should be no legal recognition of relationships between gay and lesbian couples 20.2%

Other/ Don't know 4.4%

55. Do you have a current, unexpired Illinois-issued ID with your picture on it, like a driver's license?

Yes	90.3%
No	9.4%
Other/ Don't know	.3%