Understanding public support for compromise and privacy in negotiations

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Privacy of Negotiations

In past work, we've found that one reason legislators reject compromise is the fear of voter punishment. As part of this research, we tested potential solutions (Anderson et al. Forthcoming). One solution could be to allow legislators to negotiate in private rather than public. While sunshine laws, geared at greater transparency, often seem appealing at first blush, public-facing negotiations can have the unintended consequences of making compromise harder to achieve, both by increasing incentives to adhere to party messages and decreasing attention to the concessions each side would be willing to make (Binder and Lee 2016). These arguments are buttressed by social psychology research on negotiation that generally shows that private negotiations can make individuals more flexible by limiting the influence of audiences (Druckman 1994) and by reducing pressures to save face (Brown 1977). And indeed, there are many examples of successful negotiations carried out in private, including bipartisan agreements on No Child Left Behind in 2001 (Lott and Daschle 2017, 94), the 9/11 Commission agreement over the creation of national intelligence director (Tamu 2011), and even the very Federal Convention that designed the U.S. Constitution (Mason 1892). Though negotiating in private has the potential to make it easier to reach compromises that would allow legislators to overcome gridlock in the legislative process, legislators may be wary about the perceptions that accompany these private deliberations. Our past work highlighted that legislators believed compromise was more likely in a private negotiation, but that they were less likely to attend. We also found that, when surveyed, voters preferred negotiations that occurred in public over those done in private. This study builds from this finding and examines under what conditions private negotiations are more acceptable to voters. We are interested in how the effects of a private versus public negotiation on legislator evaluations vary depending on whether the compromise passes or fails and which party (or a bipartisan group) proposes meeting in private.

We will collect data from the Qualtrics panel (with quotas for gender, age, race, and region). After answering questions about their demographics and broad political views, respondents are asked about what policy goals are important to them: creating new jobs, making the U.S. energy secure, balancing the budget, and securing Social Security and Medicare. All respondents are then asked about the means they would like to use to address each goal, with choices of a liberal alternative, a conservative alternative, or a mix of the two. For the survey experiment on public/private negotiations, respondents are randomly assigned to one of the issues they marked as important. The rationale for this decision is that people will have stronger views about both the legislative process and the outcome on an issue they care about compared to one they do not care about, making this a more difficult case for approval of private negotiations. Respondents who do not mark any issues as important are randomly assigned to one of the issues.

Once assigned to an issue, respondents are first asked whether they would support or oppose a proposal that used an equal mix of the liberal and conservative alternatives to address the issue. This question is designed to capture their support for the specific compromise (as our previous work found that only among those who oppose the specific compromise is there a penalty for compromising). We use respondent's state to randomly assign respondents to one of the two Senators from their state. Respondents then see a vignette about a negotiation in Congress and how their Senator acted. The vignette explains that Democrats and Republicans are negotiating over the assigned issue, how their positions differ, and that they weighed whether to hold some bipartisan meetings that were open or closed to the public. We then randomize the following pieces of information: 1) did they decide to hold private meetings or only public meetings; 2) was the decision about the type of meeting decided by Democrats, Republicans, or both Democrats and Republicans (bipartisan); and 3) was the outcome of the negotiation that legislators failed to pass a compromise bill or succeeded in passing a compromising bill. In all cases, the respondent's Senator was part of the public/private meeting and voted with the majority that either passed/killed the compromise. Respondents are then asked about their approval of the Senator and whether they would vote for the Senator. All respondents see a question about the general election and only co-partisans (including leaning co-partisans) also see a primary vote intention question. See Appendix A for the full survey.

Hypotheses

Given our previous findings that public negotiations are viewed more favorably than private negotiations, and that, on average, people favor compromise over refusing to compromise, we are primarily interested in what factors reduce or eliminate the penalty for negotiating in private. These include passage versus failure of the compromise and which group initiates the private meeting. However, we are also interested in support for compromise more broadly and will look at the effects of key variables separately among respondents who support the compromise and those who oppose the compromise. First, we hypothesize the following direct effects:

H1 (private): Reading about a private negotiation will reduce support for the Senator (approval and vote intention)
H2 (failure): Reading about a compromise that failed will reduce support for the Senator (approval and vote intention)

Next, we turn to key comparisons across cells and moderation by various treatments:

H3A (copartisans and private): Among partisan voters, the negative effect of a private negotiation will be lessened when it is proposed by a copartisan (relative to an opposing partisan).
H3B (bipartisan and private): Among both partisan and independent voters, the negative effect of a private negotiation will be lessened when it is proposed by a bipartisan group (relative to an opposing partisan).

Analysis

Note that the variables are defined as follows:
- Private: 1 if assigned to private negotiation, 0 if assigned to public negotiation
- Failure: 1 if compromise fails to pass, 0 if compromise passes
- Copartisan: 1 if negotiation process proposed by copartisan of respondent; 0 if proposed by opposing partisan of respondent or bipartisan group
- Bipartisan: 1 if negotiation process proposed by bipartisan group; 0 if proposed by opposing partisan of respondent or copartisan
- Legislator is Copartisan: 1 if assigned Senator shares partisanship with respondent; 0 if does not

We will estimate the following models:

Equation 1:
Sample: Self-identified partisan voters
$$Approval_i = \alpha + \beta_1 Private_i + \beta_2 Failure_i + \beta_3 Bipartisan_i + \beta_4 Copartisan_i + \beta_5 Legislator\ is\ Copartisan_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Equation 2:
Sample: Independent voters
$$Approval_i = \alpha + \beta_1 Private_i + \beta_2 Failure_i + \beta_3 Bipartisans_i + \varepsilon_i$$

The first set of hypotheses predict that β_1 will be negative and β_2 will be negative. Note that the same analyses will be conducted with general election vote intention as the dependent variable as well. We will also analyze primary vote intention as the dependent variable only among those who are copartisans of the assigned Senator.

To test H3A and H3B, we focus on the following models:

Equation 3:
Sample: Self-identified partisan voters
$$Approval_i = \alpha + \beta_1 Private_i + \beta_2 Failure_i + \beta_3 Bipartisan_i + \beta_4 Copartisan_i + \beta_5 Private_i * Copartisan_i + \beta_6 Private_i * Bipartisan_i + \beta_7 Legislator\ is\ Copartisan_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Equation 4:
Sample: Independent voters
$$Approval_i = \alpha + \beta_1 Private_i + \beta_2 Failure_i + \beta_3 Bipartisan_i + \beta_6 Private_i * Bipartisan_i + \varepsilon_i$$

If H3A is correct, β_5 will be positive in Equation 3. If H3B is correct, β_6 will be positive in both regressions.

For all of the analyses above, we will also test whether the findings hold among key subgroups, separating those who support the compromise and those who oppose the compromise. These two groups provide differing expectations for how public/private and pass/fail may be viewed. Among those who don't like the compromise, private and passage is two strikes against the legislation, whereas among those who like the compromise to pass, private and compromise is a trade-off. For the latter group, we are interested in whether the passage of compromise is enough to mitigate the negative reaction to private negotiation.

References

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Appendix A: Full Survey

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consent Title of Research Study: Survey on Politics and Policymaking
IRB Study Number: STU00209986
Consent If you want a copy of this consent for your records, you can print it from the screen. If you are 18 years or older and wish to participate, please click the "I Agree" button and you will be taken to the survey. If you do not wish to participate in this study, please select "I Do Not Agree" or select X in the corner of your browser.

○ I agree (1)

○ I do not agree (2)

Skip To: End of Block If Title of Research Study: Survey on Politics and Policymaking IRB Study Number: STU00209986 Invest... = I do not agree

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promise
Also, we care about the quality of our data. In order for us to get the most accurate measures of your opinions, it is important that you thoughtfully provide your best answers to each question in this survey.

By clicking, you commit to thoughtfully provide your best answers to each question in this survey.

○ I will provide my best answers (1)

Page Break

X→

female What is your gender?

○ Male (0)

○ Female (1)

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age What is your age?

○ Under 18 (1)

○ 18-24 (2)

○ 25-34 (3)

○ 35-44 (4)

○ 45-54 (5)

○ 55-64 (6)

○ 65 - 74 (7)

○ 75 - 84 (8)

○ 85 or older (9)

Skip To: End of Block If What is your age? = Under 18

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race Which of the following best describes you?

○ White / Caucasian (1)

○ Black / African American (2)

○ Hispanic (3)

○ Asian (4)

○ Other (5)

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state What state are you from?

▼ I live outside the United States (1) ... Wyoming (52)

Skip To: End of Block If What state are you from? = I live outside the United States
Skip To: End of Block If What state are you from? = District of Columbia

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education What is the highest level of school you have completed?

○ No high school diploma (1)

○ High School graduate (2)

○ Some college, no degree (3)

○ 2 year college degree (4)

○ 4 year college degree (5)

○ Post-graduate degree (6)

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income Thinking back over the last year, what was your family's annual income?

▼$0-$10,000 (1) ... More than $250,000 (23)

Display This Question:

If comp_pref_first = 1

X→

prefer_compromise Would you prefer an elected official who compromises to get things done, or who sticks to his or her principles no matter what?

○ Compromises to get things done (1)

○ Sticks to his or her principles no matter what (0)

X→

follow_politics How much do you follow politics?

○ All the time (4)

○ A fair amount (3)

○ Not very much (2)

○ Not at all (1)

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libcon We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Below is a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale?

○ Extremely liberal (1)

○ Liberal (2)

○ Slightly liberal (3)

○ Moderate, middle of the road (4)

○ Slight conservative (5)

○ Conservative (6)

○ Extremely conservative (7)

End of Block: Ideology & Political Interest

Start of Block: Partisanship

X→

group_favorability What is your overall opinion of the following groups?

	Very favorable (4)	Mostly favorable (3)	Mostly unfavorable (2)	Very unfavorable (1)
Republican party (1)	○	○	○	○
Democratic party (2)	○	○	○	○
Tea party movement (3)	○	○	○	○
Indivisible/Resist movement (4)	○	○	○	○

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pid Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or what?

○ Democrat (1)

○ Republican (2)

○ Independent (3)

○ Other (4) _____

X→

strong_dem Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or not a very strong Democrat?

○ Strong Democrat (1)

○ Not very strong Democrat (0)

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strong_rep Would you call yourself a strong Republican or not a very strong Republican?

○ Strong Republican (1)

○ Not very strong Republican (0)

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pid_followup Do you think of yourself as closer to the Democratic party, closer to the Republican party, or equally close to both parties?

○ Closer to the Democratic party (1)

○ Closer to the Republican party (2)

○ Equally close to both parties (3)

End of Block: Partisanship

Start of Block: Participation

X→

contributor Have you ever contributed money to a candidate running for public office or to a group working to elect a candidate?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (0)

○ Don't remember (9)

X→

vote_in_general Regarding the presidential -general election in November 2016, which of the following statements best describes you?

○ I did not vote in the general election (4)

○ I thought about voting in the general election this time, but didn't (3)

○ I usually vote in the general election, but didn't this time (2)

○ I am sure I voted in the general election (1)

X→

vote_in_primary Regarding the presidential -primary election leading up to the November 2016 election, which of the following statements best describes you?

○ I did not vote in the primary election (4)

○ I thought about voting in the primary election this time time, but didn't (3)

○ I usually vote in the primary election, but didn't this time (2)

○ I am sure I voted in the primary election (1)

End of Block: Participation

Start of Block: Goals

goals Mark all of the goals that are important issues for you (you can mark more than one):

☐ We should create new jobs (1)

☐ We should make the US energy secure (2)

☐ We should balance the budget (3)

☐ We should secure Social Security and Medicare (4)

☐ We should improve American infrastructure (roads and bridges, waterways, utilities, and broadband) (5)

means_job Which of the following best describes your attitude about job creation:

○ The government should create new jobs by providing tax incentives to companies in order to hire new workers. (1)

○ The government should create new jobs by expanding government activities that hire new employees. (2)

○ The government should create new jobs by both providing tax incentives to companies and expanding government activities. (3)

means_energy Which of the following best describes your attitude on securing America's energy:

○ The government should secure America's energy future by easing regulations in order to expand oil and gas production in America (1)

○ The government should secure America's energy future by investing in green energy (2)

○ The government should secure America's energy future by both investing in green energy and expanding oil and gas production in America (3)

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means_budget Which of the following best describes your attitude on balancing the budget:

○ The government should balance the budget by cutting spending on social programs (1)

○ The government should balance the budget by increasing taxes (2)

○ The government should balance the budget by increasing taxes and cutting spending (3)

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means_socialsecurity Which of the following best describes your attitude on securing Social Security and Medicare:

○ The government should secure Social Security and Medicare by decreasing benefits to recipients. (1)

○ The government should secure Social Security and Medicare by raising payroll taxes to cover the costs. (2)

○ The government should secure Social Security and Medicare by both decreasing benefits and raising payroll taxes. (3)

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means_infrastructure Which of the following best describes your attitudes on improving American infrastructure:

○ The government should improve infrastructure by using tax incentives to increase public-private partnerships and increase ownership by private (non-public) entities. (1)

○ The government should improve infrastructure by increasing federal spending on these projects. (2)

○ The government should improve infrastructure by both increasing tax incentives to private companies and increasing government spending. (3)

X→

jobs_comp_support If there was a proposal that dealt with job creation through a roughly equal combination of government hiring and tax incentives to private companies, would you support or oppose this deal?

○ Support (1)

○ Oppose (0)

Page Break

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Note for all vignettes:

PubPri_PartyText = Democrat OR Republican OR Democrat and Republican

PubPri_Meeting = decided to hold several closed-door meetings to discuss this issue OR decided to make all meetings to discuss this issue open to the public

PubPri_Meeting2 = private OR public

PubPri_Outcome1 = the legislators failed to pass a compromise bill OR the legislators passed a compromise bill

PubPri_Outcome2 = killed the compromise OR passed the compromise

Senator information = all respondents randomly assigned to one of the Senators from their state

dv_app_jobs *Now we are going to ask you about a negotiation in Congress and how your Senator's action on that bill affects your approval of them.* Recently the U.S. Senate considered how to create jobs. Democrats wanted to achieve this goal by expanding government activities to hire new workers but Republicans wanted to achieve this goal by providing tax incentives to companies that hire workers. After some initial discussions, Senators deliberated over whether they should hold some bipartisan meetings that were open or closed to the public in order to facilitate reaching a compromise. The highest ranking ${e://Field/PubPri_PartyText} issued a statement saying that they ${e://Field/PubPri_Meeting}. After those meetings, ${e://Field/PubPri_Outcome1} that contained about half of the expanded government programs that Democrats wanted and about half of of the tax incentives that Republicans wanted. Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast} (${e://Field/SenatorPartyAbbrev}-${e://Field/Postal}) was part of this ${e://Field/PubPri_Meeting2} meeting and ultimately voted with the majority that ${e://Field/PubPri_Outcome2}. Thinking about

Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast}, please indicate whether you approve or disapprove of the job that Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast} is doing.

○ Strongly approve (6)

○ Approve (5)

○ Slightly approve (4)

○ Slightly disapprove (3)

○ Disapprove (2)

○ Strongly disapprove (1)

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ti_jobs Timing

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dv_primary_jobs If the <u>primary</u> election for the Senate seat held by Senator
${e://Field/SenatorLast} were held today, would you vote for Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast}?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (0)

`X→`

dv_vote_jobs If the <u>general</u> election for the Senate seat held by Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast} were
held today, would you vote for Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast}?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (0)

End of Block: Vig: Jobs

Start of Block: Vig: Budget

`X→`

budget_comp_support If there was a proposal that dealt with balancing the budget through a roughly
equal combination of tax increases and spending cuts, would you support or oppose this deal?

○ Support (1)

○ Oppose (0)

Page Break

dv_app_budget *Now we are going to ask you about a negotiation in Congress and how your Senator's action on that bill affects your approval of them.* Recently the U.S. Senate considered how to balance the federal budget. Democrats wanted to achieve this goal by increasing taxes but Republicans wanted to achieve this goal by cutting spending. After some initial discussions, Senators deliberated over whether they should hold some bipartisan meetings that were open or closed to the public in order to facilitate reaching a compromise. The highest ranking ${e://Field/PubPri_PartyText} issued a statement saying that they ${e://Field/PubPri_Meeting}. After those meetings, ${e://Field/PubPri_Outcome1} that contained about half of the tax increases that Democrats wanted and about half of of the spending cuts that Republicans wanted. Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast} (${e://Field/SenatorPartyAbbrev}-${e://Field/Postal}) was part of this ${e://Field/PubPri_Meeting2} meeting and ultimately voted with the majority that ${e://Field/PubPri_Outcome2}. Thinking about Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast}, please indicate whether you approve or disapprove of the job that Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast} is doing.

○ Strongly approve (6)

○ Approve (5)

○ Slightly approve (4)

○ Slightly disapprove (3)

○ Disapprove (2)

○ Strongly disapprove (1)

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ti_budget Timing

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X→

dv_primary_budget If the <u>primary</u> election for the Senate seat held by Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast} were held today, would you vote for Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast}?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (0)

X→

dv_vote_budget If the <u>general</u> election for the Senate seat held by Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast} were held today, would you vote for Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast}?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (0)

End of Block: Vig: Budget

Start of Block: Vig: Energy

X→

energy_comp_support If there was a proposal that dealt with securing America's energy through a roughly equal combination of investment in green energy and easing regulations on oil and gas production, would you support or oppose this deal?

○ Support (1)

○ Oppose (0)

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X→

dv_app_energy *Now we are going to ask you about a negotiation in Congress and how your Senator's action on that bill affects your approval of them.* Recently the U.S. Senate considered how to secure America's energy. Democrats wanted to achieve this goal by investing in green energy but Republicans wanted to achieve this goal by easing regulations on oil and gas production. After some initial discussions, Senators deliberated over whether they should hold some bipartisan meetings that were open or closed to the public in order to facilitate reaching a compromise. The highest ranking ${e://Field/PubPri_PartyText} issued a statement saying that they ${e://Field/PubPri_Meeting}. After those meetings, ${e://Field/PubPri_Outcome1} that contained about half of the green energy investment that Democrats wanted and about half of of the reduced regulations on oil and gas that Republicans wanted. Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast} (${e://Field/SenatorPartyAbbrev}-${e://Field/Postal}) was part of this ${e://Field/PubPri_Meeting2} meeting and ultimately voted with the majority that ${e://Field/PubPri_Outcome2}. Thinking about Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast}, please indicate whether you approve or disapprove of the job that Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast} is doing.

○ Strongly approve (6)

○ Approve (5)

○ Slightly approve (4)

○ Slightly disapprove (3)

○ Disapprove (2)

○ Strongly disapprove (1)

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ti_energy Timing

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dv_primary_energy If the <u>primary</u> election for the Senate seat held by Senator
${e://Field/SenatorLast} were held today, would you vote for Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast}?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (0)

X→

dv_vote_energy If the <u>general</u> election for the Senate seat held by Senator
${e://Field/SenatorLast} were held today, would you vote for Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast}?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (0)

End of Block: Vig: Energy

Start of Block: Vig: Social Security

X→

ss_comp_support If there was a proposal that dealt with securing Social Security and Medicare through
a roughly equal combination of increasing payroll taxes and reducing benefits to recipients, would you
support or oppose this deal?

○ Support (1)

○ Oppose (0)

Page Break

dv_app_ss *Now we are going to ask you about a negotiation in Congress and how your Senator's action on that bill affects your approval of them.*   Recently the U.S. Senate considered how to secure Social Security and Medicare. Democrats wanted to achieve this goal by raising payroll taxes but Republicans wanted to achieve this goal by decreasing benefits to recipients. After some initial discussions, Senators deliberated over whether they should hold some bipartisan meetings that were open or closed to the public in order to facilitate reaching a compromise. The highest ranking ${e://Field/PubPri_PartyText} issued a statement saying that they ${e://Field/PubPri_Meeting}.   After those meetings, ${e://Field/PubPri_Outcome1} that contained about half of the payroll tax increase that Democrats wanted and about half of of the decrease in benefits that Republicans wanted.   Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast} (${e://Field/SenatorPartyAbbrev}-${e://Field/Postal}) was part of this ${e://Field/PubPri_Meeting2} meeting and ultimately voted with the majority that ${e://Field/PubPri_Outcome2}.   Thinking about Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast}, please indicate whether you approve or disapprove of the job that Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast} is doing.

○ Strongly approve (6)

○ Approve (5)

○ Slightly approve (4)

○ Slightly disapprove (3)

○ Disapprove (2)

○ Strongly disapprove (1)

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ti_ss Timing

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dv_primary_ss If the <u>primary</u> election for the Senate seat held by Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast} were held today, would you vote for Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast}?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (0)

X→

dv_vote_ss If the <u>general</u> election for the Senate seat held by Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast} were held today, would you vote for Senator ${e://Field/SenatorLast}?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (0)

End of Block: Vig: Social Security

Start of Block: Attention Check

attn_check_pubpri When you read about your Senator's vote after the negotiation between Democrats and Republicans, was the negotiation conducted in public or in private?

○ In public (1)

○ In private (2)

○ This information was not mentioned (3)

End of Block: Attention Check

X→

prefer_compromise2 Would you prefer an elected official who compromises to get things done, or who sticks to his or her principles no matter what?

○ Compromises to get things done (1)

○ Sticks to his or her principles no matter what (0)

Q141 Thank you for taking our survey.   We would now like to make clear a few details about this study. First, the purpose of the study was to understand how people view compromise in politics, and how various characteristics of the circumstances at hand change people's views. We did not provide details about these goals prior to the survey because people sometimes respond to survey questions differently when they know why they are being asked certain questions. Second, the stories you read drew on the types of political agreements that have been covered in the news in recent years, but were written by the researchers. As a result, the description of how different members voted is hypothetical.   If you have any questions about the research, you can contact Laurel Harbridge Yong at l-harbridge@northwestern.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or concerns about the conduct of this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office of Northwestern University at (312) 503-9338, irb@northwestern.edu.   Please click next to submit your responses.