Dear Professor,

This book’s argument and evidence provide an important component to the literature on behavior and opinion. Because of the conventional wisdom in our field, existing literature largely holds that American citizens do not have the capacity to play an active and healthy role in American democracy. Our research demonstrates, however, that Americans can and do hold their government responsible by rewarding and punishing party candidates at the polls, based on ideological judgments of Congress’ performance. In doing so, this book provides a vital and underrepresented view, along with important and compelling supporting evidence, to the debate over individual Americans’ political capacities and their effects on democracy.

Courses covering the U.S. Congress will often include readings on how well individual members of Congress represent constituents in their district, but these same courses regularly give short shrift to the broader question of how responsive Congress is to the American public as a whole. To the extent that this question is raised at all, students are most likely to be taught that members of Congress easily avoid any consequences of public disapproval of congressional performance. Our book provides a new, comprehensive look at this issue of accountability for collective institutional performance. As such, the book provides a useful counterpoint to the traditional, narrow coverage of representation. In addition, the book’s argument that poor congressional performance particularly affects the majority party will help engage classroom debate about the role that political parties play in congressional politics.

Thank you for your interest in our work. Please refer to our title’s Book Info Page at the link above for other Classroom Resources.

Sincerely,

David R. Jones
Monika L. McDermott