Avigail: Hi, I'm Avigail Oren.

Lisa: And I'm Lisa Hernandez.

Avigail: And we are your hosts for Scholar Strategy Network's No Jargon. Every other week, we will discuss an American policy problem with one of the nation's top researchers without jargon.

Lisa: And it's time to brush up on all the different researching skills that everyone has, because it's Election Day, but not the usual elections that everyone freaks out about. Mostly local. So this should be interesting to dive into.

Avigail: Yeah, so it's a non-presidential year. There are a few states having gubernatorial elections, but for most of us, we're gonna be voting in state and local elections. So whether that's at the county, city, or borough level, we're gonna be choosing our representatives for councils for school boards, and maybe even doing judge retention elections or other races like that. These are races that are not receiving the same sort of buzz necessarily as the bigger races that we had in 2024.

Lisa: Absolutely. It's time for people to really look into who is running things in their own neighborhoods. It's always interesting to get that feeling and you're like, wait, do I actually know who my school board person is, or who my election supervisor is? There's so many different roles that impact so much of our lives, and yet we're not totally aware of who these people are that are filling these roles.

Avigail: Absolutely. I live in a small borough in Allegheny County that's directly adjacent to the city of Pittsburgh. When I'm voting for my council members, they're the people who are gonna make sure that code enforcement is happening, that garbage is getting picked up, that streets are getting paved. These sorts of quality-of-life things that affect me from morning to night every single day. And so yeah, I'm about to go diving into my research to make sure that I'm picking candidates who are going to represent my policy interests, and my personal interests.

So, that was why I was really excited that for this episode, I spoke to Brian Adams, who's a professor of political science at San Diego State University. His research focuses on democratic practices on a local level, exploring how citizens attempt to influence local policy through direct participation and electoral behavior.

Here's our conversation.

Avigail: Professor Adams, welcome to No Jargon.

Brian: Great to be here.

Avigail: So, we're heading into Election Day 2025. I actually just received my mail-in ballot here in Pennsylvania. I was talking to my sister yesterday in Denver, and she and her husband had just dropped off their ballots.

So, voters in a handful of states are gonna be choosing new governors. Many others are going to be deciding on mayors, city council members, school board representatives, and the one thing we're that no one is going to be voting on this year is a presidential contest. So, we're looking at more of these down-ballot races. And maybe aside from New York City, these aren't the kinds of races that dominate national headlines. Like, you know, New York has a big mayoral race this year that is making some buzz. For most of us, we're voting in much quieter races. Can you explain why these local and state dynamics still really matter on election day?

Brian: Well, what state and local governments do affect people's lives. So if you think about local governments, they're affecting things like how much rent you pay, how long your commute is, what access you have to amenities. I mean, just to give one example of this, you know, we have a national housing shortage in this country, and that is largely the function of decisions made on a local level and to a lesser extent on a state level. The fact that rents have gone up so much isn't really a national issue, right? So these local elections matter because who we elect really does affect the policies that get enacted and our quality of life.

Avigail: When people are getting to the ballot box and they're opening up their ballots and they're looking at these city council and school board races, they may

not recognize any of the names. So some of your research has actually been about the decision-making that happens at the ballot box. When voters are looking at these ballots and trying to decide who to vote for, what have you found in your research about these decisions?

Brian: So generally, when voters are voting in elections where they don't have a lot of information, they use shortcut cues to try to help them figure out how to make decisions. Now, those cues could be things like endorsements. It could be, you know, endorsement by a political party, by an elected official, by an interest group they support by a famous person. It could be something like name recognition, right? So you often see in local elections where candidates will just leave their signs on people's yards, which just have their name on them. That's just to get name recognition. And that actually does matter to some extent.

And they use other shortcut cues as well. Maybe cues they get from certain advertising that they see, and so forth. One thing in particular that I looked at in some research is whether occupation matters as a shortcut queue, right? So this is research I did with some colleagues at Sacramento State, and we wanted to know whether candidates that have a business background do better at the polls than candidates that don't. Now, in California, where we're doing this research, we have a very unique setup in that occupation is actually listed on the ballot for local races, so they're all nonpartisan. So party isn't listed and candidates can list an occupation up to three words to describe themselves.

So we looked at that data over a number of years, and we also did a survey experiment where we asked people in a hypothetical election, would you support a candidate with a business background, or, I think we used a school board member as the alternative option. These were for city council elections, and there's this conventional wisdom that having a business background really helps candidates, especially on a local level. But actually, it turns out not to be true. We found that business candidates didn't necessarily do better. If you look at actual results in California, they don't necessarily do better than candidates who list their occupation as attorney or as an elected official or something along those lines. And that when we did the survey experiment, we found that voters generally weren't all that supportive of business candidates either, with one exception, and that is for

candidates who are identified as quote, small business owners, right? So, voters really like the small business owner. The guy who runs the restaurant down the street, can have a big advantage. But being a corporate executive or just listing a general business background isn't necessarily gonna be all that helpful for getting elected.

Avigail: And was that regardless of the party affiliation of the voter or the candidate?

Brian: So we found that Republican voters were a little bit more supportive of business candidates, but it was relatively small. and we try to control for other things, other candidate characteristics. And so even when we controlled for those, we found that generally business candidates weren't necessarily favored by voters.

Avigail: Oh, so interesting. Well, like staying on this question of partisanship, you've written that local elections tend to be less partisan than national ones, and that people do sometimes cross party lines when issues hit close to home. So I wanted to ask you why, you know, why is that? Like, what are the kinds of local issues that seem to bring voters together across political divides?

Brian: So there's a couple of different aspects here. One is that local elections are becoming more partisan. They're becoming nationalized in a lot of ways where national party divisions are mattering more. 20, 30 years ago, local elections often weren't really all that connected to what was going on nationally. Now they are a little bit more, but it is still a different dynamic. And part of that is because in many places, they're overwhelmingly of one party or another. So you actually don't have real party competition.

So most large cities are overwhelmingly Democratic. A lot of more rural areas are overwhelmingly Republican and local elections, therefore aren't between Democrats versus Republicans. They're between, say, a very liberal Democrat versus a moderately liberal Democrat or a Trump Republican versus a never-Trump Republican type of thing. So you often get inter-party conflicts. Rather than conflicts across parties. So for example, in the city of Chicago, the

classic conflict is between reformed Democrats versus machine Democrats, right? So you get those types of dynamics.

But also, a lot of local issues don't fall neatly along partisan lines, right? So I'm in California. And in California, one of the biggest issues is where to build new housing. And this is true in a lot of other places as well, right? Whenever a developer proposes a new housing development, there's often community opposition. People yell and scream about how they don't want this higher density in their communities, whatever, whatever. That doesn't fall neatly along partisan lines. We actually did a survey of California voters, where we asked them, would you be willing to support greater housing development in your community? And it was split pretty evenly 50/50 between Republicans and Democrats. I mean, there was no clear partisan divide there at all. It's just not, and you have Democrats, some Democrats who are all in favor of new housing development. You know the so-called YIMBYs who are trying to, yes, in my backyard, who are trying to get more development.

But then you have a lot of Democrats that are against it for a variety of different reasons. Same thing on the Republican side. You have Republicans that are all gung-ho property rights, people should be able to do whatever they want, and other Republicans that wanna protect single-family, you know, suburban communities from new development. So a lot of these local issues don't fit neatly into our partisan boxes that we tend to put national politicians in. As a result, local elections often don't turn on the same types of issues that you're seeing on a national level.

Avigail: Yeah, let's take that into the ballot box. So when people are, are going in to decide, are they thinking about these policies? Like, like housing development when they're voting, or are they just walking in there and saying, I supported the Democrat in the last presidential, or I always vote the Republican ticket and just going straight down the ballot.

Brian: Yeah, so it varies across voters. There are clearly some voters that simply vote a straight partisan ticket. Now, most local elections in the United States are nonpartisan, so you actually don't have party labels on the ballot, even though voters can often figure out who the parties are endorsing and what parties the

candidate belongs to. But there are other voters that may not necessarily vote along party lines. We did some research on this. We being myself and some colleagues from Sacramento State, to try to look at how strong that party pull was for voters in local elections.

So what we did was we did a survey experiment, and we wanted to know whether candidates would be willing to cross party lines and defect from their party if the other candidate was closer to their policy positions. So this is what we did. We asked our survey respondents what their party affiliation was. And then we asked them what they thought about two important issues in California right now. And these were just California voters, on housing development. This question about whether you'd support more housing in your community and on homelessness, whether you'd want stronger policies enforcing, breaking up homeless camps and things like that. After, we asked them what their policy views were and what their partisanship was, we then presented them with a case of where they could either vote for a candidate who shared their party affiliation but disagreed with them on housing and homelessness, or they can vote for a candidate that was of the other party, but agreed with them on policy issues, right?

So we want to see whether they agreed, whether they were gonna vote, party, or they were gonna vote policy. We found that the majority of voters stuck with their party even if they on policy issues, they disagreed. And it varied depending on whether they're looking at Democrats or Republicans.

But generally, a majority said, yeah, I'm gonna vote for my party, irrespective of what that candidate believes. But there were sizable minorities who were willing to defect. There were, you know, 30, 40% of voters that said in a local, and these were questions about local elections, right? It was about voting for a city council candidate. There were sizable minorities that said, you know, I'm gonna vote against my party because the other party candidate actually believes what I believe on the issues. So our conclusion was that voters are loyal to their party. But it's not necessarily a blind loyalty and under the right conditions, voters will defect from their party if the other party is actually better at representing their views.

Avigail: So what are some methods that local candidates can or do use when they're trying to convince this 30 to 40% of voters who might switch parties to align with their platform?

Brian: Yeah, so the classic approach to that if you're in the minority party, is to deny your party affiliation and to hide that as much as you can. So we just had, last year we had a mayoral election here in San Diego where I'm located. And you know, San Diego is a very heavily democratic city. The incumbent mayor was a Democrat and his opponent was a Republican but didn't admit he was a Republican. He never mentioned he was a Republican. He received money from the Republican party and Republican donors, but he never mentioned any of that and basically ran as a quote independent.

So that happens a lot on a local level, where you see candidates who are trying to win in a place where the majority of voters don't share your party affiliation, just like hide your party affiliation, right? Candidates will just focus on a handful of issues that they feel voters will support them on, even if voters may not agree with their party affiliation.

Avigail: Interesting. I wouldn't have guessed that obfuscating would be the most effective.

Brian: It's not always effective. I mean, often voters will figure out that the candidates are doing it, but it certainly is your best bet. If you're trying to run as a Republican in a heavily democratic city or running as a Democrat in a heavily Republican suburb or rural area, your best bet is to try to say, well, party isn't important, I'm just gonna focus on the issues and hope that voters are willing to switch party lines.

Avigail: Yep. That makes sense. So let's talk about money in politics. It sometimes appears that candidates can buy their way into office. So the more they spend, the better their name recognition, the better they do, when voters show up at the ballot box. How does money shape local campaigns, versus national campaigns and what makes local campaign finance unique compared to state or federal races?

Brian: Yeah, so the phrase that political scientists use to describe the role of money is that money is a necessary but not sufficient condition for success. If you wanna win, you need money, right? You can't run a campaign without any money. You won't have to be able to advertise or get your message out, whatever. But just because you have a lot of money doesn't guarantee you're gonna be successful. And there are plenty of candidates that lose, even though they raise more money than their opponents. So money is necessary but not sufficient. And that's true, I think, on all levels of government.

I've looked at campaign finance in some smaller cities, cities that are 25,000 residents, 50,000 residents, a hundred thousand residents. And money matters there too. You know, I think some people may have the assumption that when we get down to the local level, unlike state or federal money matters a lot less, but you still need money to run in those types of places. There are very few candidates who are able to win on a local level without raising any money at all. Now, maybe you got down into really small cities, cities of say, less than 10,000 residents. Maybe that would be the case. I'm not aware of anybody who's actually studied cities that small, but that's certainly possible if you can knock on enough doors that you can win, even if you don't have any money.

But in moderate, mid-size cities, and cities of over 25,000 people, generally you're gonna need some money to be able to be successful. And the amount of money you need per voter isn't necessarily going to be less than what you need on a state or national level, right? So obviously the raw dollar amounts are a lot less. If you're running in a, you know, city of 20,000, 25,000 people, you may only need $10,000 to run your campaign. The amount of money you're spending per registered voter isn't necessarily going to be less than what you would be spending if you're running for Congress or state legislature or governor. Yeah, president, probably be less than that 'cause we spend so much money on presidential campaigns. But you know that you still need a certain amount of money.

And of course on a local level, it's actually harder to raise that money because you have fewer potential donors that actually would be interested in your race. So it's not necessarily the case that raising $10,000 if you're running for city council in a

city of 25,000 people is gonna be easier than raising a hundred thousand dollars you may need to run for a state legislative race.

Avigail: So, what's your assessment of how democratic or fair the current campaign finance system is on the local level?

Brian: So the Supreme Court has put some real restrictions on what you can do in terms of campaign finance, what governments can do in terms of regulating campaign finance. The US Supreme Court has said that campaign expenditures are a form of political speech, right? So if you're spending money, you're basically trying to get out your message to voters, and that's a form of speech.

So the government can't really limit that. They can't put a hard limit on how much can be spent. And they also said campaign contributions, money given to candidates, are also a form of speech. So there's actually very limited things that the government can do to actually regulate money. Many local governments have, like state governments, they have contribution limits on how much money you can give to a candidate. They're pretty easy to get around. Then donors can just spend money on their own, and get around that limit, or find other ways to get around the limit as well.

Some local governments have some type of public financing regime, where candidates can get some public money to run their campaign. But they're all voluntary. You can't make those mandatory. So they're also fairly limited because candidates that wanna spend a lot of money simply don't accept public money and they go and spend all the money that they want. There really aren't a lot of very effective public financing regimes, although there have been a lot of experiments on a local level to try different things to see if there's a way to reduce the influence of money in local elections.

Avigail: So what potential other reforms might be out there to make sure that local campaigns are adequately serving the interests of the people voting in them.

Brian: So one really interesting reform when it comes to campaign finance has been what's going on in Seattle. They've implemented what are called democracy

vouchers, and this is a way of doing public financing where instead, typically how public financing works is that government has some sort of formula where they give out public money to candidates as long as those candidates agree to certain restrictions on their campaign spending. What democracy vouchers do is they actually give vouchers to voters that they can then give to candidates. And those candidates can then use those vouchers to get public money.

So the way this works in Seattle is for the city council or in mayoral elections, every voter gets a hundred dollars in vouchers at the beginning of the election, and they can give those vouchers to any participating candidate. And for candidates to participate, they need to limit their fundraising and their overall expenditures and so forth. And it's basically a way for voters to have a greater impact on which candidates are able to get money. It's a way for candidates to be able to fund their campaigns without having to rely on private donations.

Research has been somewhat mixed on democracy vouchers. They do seem to have a positive impact on competitiveness and on reducing the influence of private money in Seattle elections, although a lot of voters have not used their vouchers. So I think there have been biases in who does use the vouchers. So wealthier, better-educated, more politically aware voters are more likely to use our vouchers than other types of voters.

And of course there are ways for candidates to get around the vouchers. Of course, candidates don't have to participate if they don't want to, and therefore they can spend as much as they want. And there's also ways that donors can support candidates even who are participating through independent expenditures and so forth.

This is one of the newest reforms. And there are a couple of other cities that think, Oakland and a few others may be trying democracy vouchers soon. But they're an interesting way of trying to get voters to get more involved in local elections. Voters may have more of an incentive to really get involved in local elections if they have money to give out, right? And it's also a way to get voters to pay a little bit more attention to what's going on and to take local elections more seriously.

Avigail: Yeah, I'd be curious to see over time if there's more uptake on the vouchers as voters, become more accustomed to their existence. It's a pretty interesting reform.

Brian: Yeah. And also too, to see if it works in cities other than Seattle. Seattle is unique in a lot of ways,right? It could work either better or worse in some other places. And I'd especially be interested to see if it works in a really small city. If you had a city of say, 50,000 people or a hundred thousand people, whether that could actually have a different impact than in a larger city like Seattle.

Avigail: I would also be really curious to see if it changes the profile of who's running. I mean this system is basically like an offer of a kind of not, maybe not a guaranteed upfront, but like you just, you have to do less independent fundraising, right? Because you know that you'll get access to this public money if you participate. So it's kind of like trading a sure thing for a bigger risk. And I, you know, would be so curious to see if you start getting candidates running who know that they're not necessarily privileged by the existing donor system, but instead, might be able to have an impact through this newer financing program.

Brian: You know, that's one of the primary goals of public financing, right? It is to encourage more candidates and different types of candidates to run. So far, most of the public financing efforts on a local level have been somewhat disappointing in that regard, in that they haven't really seen significantly different types of candidates running or significantly more candidates running. So I think a lot of reformers are still struggling to figure out exactly how to set up public financing systems in order to actually get people who ordinarily wouldn't run for local office because it's too expensive to actually get them to actually run.

Avigail: Yeah. This again, I'm wondering if with more time and more familiarity that that might pan out. Always, with these sorts of initiatives, I hope that they're given the time to really mature. We were just talking about democratic potential, and you've written that local governments often don't live up to said potential. What do you mean by that? Is it about participation or representation? Maybe accountability or something else?

Brian: Well, so local governments have a lot of potential to be sort of embodiment of grassroots democracy, right? I mean, there's a lot of ways that you can participate locally that you really can't do on a national level, or perhaps more accurately, that you can do the same activities, but they're gonna be much more meaningful and a lot easier to do on a local level. So on a local level, it's easier for you to talk directly to your elected officials; many city council members will actually answer calls from their constituents, right? You can go to a city council meeting, you can, you know, do a protest on a local level where it's likely to have a bigger impact than maybe a protest trying to influence national policy, right? That you can, you wanna organize your neighbors to try to influence a policy issue on a local level. That's a lot easier to do than trying to organize hundreds of thousands of people to try to influence a national policy.

So in a lot of ways, local governments provide great opportunities for people to really get directly involved in the democratic process, but the reality is that most people don't take advantage of those. Voter turnout in local elections is dismally low, like usually significantly lower than presidential elections. So the last few presidential cycles, voter turnout among eligible voters was over 60%. On a local level, you're lucky if you get 50%, but on average you're talking about turnout closer to 20% or 30%, especially for like off, off-cycle elections like we're having, voters just aren't voting. They aren't really paying much attention. Voters don't show up to their city council meetings. They really don't have the knowledge they need to really engage constructively.

Now obviously there's always a subset of people who do, there's always activists who are really involved in their local government, but for most voters, they're generally not all that involved. And because of that, like local governments aren't these hotbeds of citizen participation and embodiment of grassroots democracy, it's actually something a lot worse. Where you often have local governments acting without much accountability and often local officials don't feel they need to be responsive because most voters aren't paying attention anyway.

Avigail: Are there any communities that are bucking this trend that are actually really figuring out how to get citizens to be more involved and hold their local governments more accountable?

Brian: There have been all sorts of experiments to try to get people more involved in local government. So there have been experiments with trying different ways of community outreach, of different ways of getting people to participate, doing things like deliberative forms where you're getting local residents to sit and discuss policy issues, different ways of getting people more involved in local elections, such as with the democracy vouchers or other sorts of things along those lines. I think the track record on those has been somewhat mixed. I mean, it's hard. I mean, I don't wanna say that they've all been failures because some of 'em have worked in a particular context. Scholars really haven't been able to find a really good way to get people who ordinarily aren't involved to be involved. What most of those reforms have done is they've gotten people who are already involved even more involved.

So a good example of this is participatory budgeting. This is something that was actually started in Brazil decades ago, but it's basically where you have a portion of the budget set aside for residents to decide how they want that budget to be spent. And there are public meetings and discussions where the public will sort of decide public spending, and they've been successful in the sense that it actually does give the public an opportunity to actually influence these budgeting decisions. And when they've done them, you've gotten people to show up. And you know, government has, you know, in many cases, been forced to listen to what the public wants that money spent on.

But the people who show up to these are the usual suspects. They're the people who are already involved, the ones who are already voting in local elections. They're not really bringing in new people. And that's really been the challenge, how to get the 50% of people who aren't paying any attention whatsoever to what's going on in local government to actually get them to pay a little bit more attention.

Avigail: So you have a forthcoming book, *Activism, Majority Rule, and Local Democracy,* that looks at the tension between activist influence and majority preferences. I'd love to hear a few key insights from the book, especially if there are any that might help voters or local officials think differently about democracy after this election day.

Brian: Sure. Yeah, so I interviewed activists in San Diego, who were trying to influence local government on housing and land use issues. And as I was doing these interviews, I found that they did a lot of work to try to convince me that they were representing the majority. And I was interviewing activists on both sides of a lot of issues. So people in favor of more housing development, people against more housing development. And they're all trying to convince me that they represent the majority and people who disagreed with them were some irrelevant minority that should be ignored.

As I was doing these interviews, it really struck me that neither group was really representative of what the majority actually wanted. Activists tend to be extreme on both sides, right? And they tend to be . . . they're self-selected, and many of 'em have very different views than your average resident. So here you have all these activists that are trying to convince me that they're the embodiment of the majority of the public, like they're the people. And that their opponents are somehow something else. And it really got me thinking about this issue of government responsiveness to activists versus government responsiveness to what the majority wants. And, you know, local governments are responsive to some extent. I mean, there's actually been a lot of political science research to show that at least on some issues, local governments do respond, but they're often responsive to what activists want, and that's often very different than what the majority actually wants.

And as I was doing this research, this question that kept coming up was like, well, how should government be responsive? Like how should government react to activists who are putting a lot of effort and time into trying to influence what government is doing, versus paying attention to a majority that really doesn't know much about what's going on and has very weakly held and maybe misinformed views about this. So what I try to do in the book is try to think about what the role of activism is in relation to a system where we pride on majority rule, where we expect decisions to actually reflect what the majority believes. And I argue that we shouldn't always assume that government should respond to majority preferences, that there actually is some value for government to be responding to activists, even if they're not representative of what the majority actually wants, but there are other cases where we maybe want more majoritarian type of decision making and where

activists shouldn't be getting what they want. I try to sort through in the book of thinking about like what democracy should actually look like, right?

If we're thinking about government responsiveness and we want the government to be responsive to quote the people. Now, what does that actually look like on a practical basis? Because I think that the standard democratic idea that it's majority rule and that government chooses what the majority wants, I actually reject that. I don't think that makes a lot of sense, especially on a local level.

Avigail: Ooh, I am challenged here because I personally have often felt like the activist often are the ones who know the policy ins and outs much, much better than even I, who, you know, works for a policy organization and is interested in policy and especially with issues like housing, transportation, right. The devil's in the details. And, sometimes it takes like a professional advocacy class who's paid to get into those details and know them much better than most of us can handle. I also very much hear the critique that, perhaps, they aren't always as in tune with what the public wants or thinks they want. So yeah, tell me, tell me a little bit more about kind of where you ended up at the end of this study.

Brian: Yeah, so I think you're absolutely right. I should note, people I interviewed actually weren't professionals. They were all volunteers and that was part of the criteria for being interviewed for my study. And even them though, I mean, your average volunteer activists, they know a lot more about local issues than does your average resident. And so what I try to do is come up with some criteria about when we should decide issues on a majoritarian basis and when it's acceptable for government to maybe, I wouldn't say ignore, but to maybe de-emphasize majority views in favor of activists. Now part of that is how much the majority actually cares about an issue, and I do argue that ultimately the final decision should be majoritarian, right? If you have a majority that really cares about something, they should get their way in a democracy, right?

But when you have a majority that maybe is somewhat apathetic, maybe not paying all that much attention, I think it makes sense for government to discount that a little bit and say, well, yeah, you know, the majority may be against this policy, but you know, there's this group of activists that make a really good case

that we should do it, they're very knowledgeable. They studied the issue and in some ways maybe they could represent what the majority would believe if the majority was actually paying more attention.

So I think that those sorts of issues matter. And also, like how much the majority actually knows about the issue. And I think this gets to your point earlier, that when you have a majority that is really uninformed, or even misinformed about a policy, I think it does make more sense for elected officials to be focusing more on the activists who are gonna know much more. Now, they could also be misinformed, and certainly some of the people I interviewed were misinformed about issues but much less likely, right? So I think that also matters too, there are some issues where the majority actually has a pretty good grasp of what's going on, even if they're not paying that much attention, 'cause it's a fairly simple issue. And maybe on those issues, they should be more majoritarian than other types of issues.

Avigail: I live in the city of Pittsburgh and, there's a deer cull program in the city parks because they're overrun by deer and it absolutely is one of those issues where most people are not in favor of open hunts in city parks, but the data shows that actually it's a pretty good policy to send people in there and thin the deer population. And, you know, there was a lot of grumbling about it at the time, but it's persisted because, turns out, the parks are nicer when they're not defoliated.

Brian: Right. And if you're an elected official, like how do you deal with that, right? How do you deal with the fact that the majority wants you to do something? And then you have activists who actually know much more about the issue, and they want you to do something else, right? It's not easy if you're that type of elected official. And our democratic theory about how a local government should work. Doesn't really address this, right? And that's what I'm trying to get at, is to think through some of those issues in this book.

Avigail: Yeah, no one wants to be anti-Bambi. But, yeah, exactly. Thank you so much, Professor Adams for coming onto to No Jargon and talking to us about all of your fascinating research.

Brian: Thank you. It was a pleasure to be here.

Avigail: And thanks for listening. For more on Professor Adams's work, check out our show notes at scholars.org/nojargon.

No Jargon is the podcast of the Scholars Strategy Network, a nationwide organization that connects journalists, policymakers, and civic leaders with America's top researchers to improve policy and strengthen democracy.

The producers of our show are Wendy Chow and Dominik Doemer. Our audio engineer is Peter Linnane. If you liked the show, please subscribe and rate us on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your shows. You can give us feedback on X, formerly known as Twitter, @NoJargonPodcast or at our email address nojargon@scholars.org.