# PRESIDENTIAL INVESTMENT IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE STATE

Nicholas R. Bednar
David E. Lewis
Vanderbilt University

Given the president's authority over the administrative state, one may expect that the chief executive invests great effort to build capacity within agencies to implement the tasks Congress and the president have assigned to them. The empirical data shows that this not the case. In this paper we explain how presidents strategically invest in administrative capacity, noting that presidents have few incentives to build capacity in most agencies. We test our account with two analyses using new observational and survey data. First, we examine the time it took for the Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations to nominate individuals to appointed positions. We find that presidents prioritize appointments to policy positions over management positions and that nominations occur sooner in agencies that implement presidential priorities. Second, we examine the responses of federal executives to the 2020 Survey on the Future of Government Service to see whether perceptions of presidential investment in administrative capacity match those anticipated by our predictions. We find that federal executives perceive higher levels of investment when the agency is a priority of the president and when the agency shares the president's ideological leanings. We conclude by drawing out implications for our understanding of the modern presidency, particularly presidential reputation, and government performance.

A central function of government is to resolve collective-action problems that would otherwise harm the public. Pursuant to this goal, Congress and the president have enacted programs to deliver benefits to the poor, prevent economic and environmental harms, and defend the country from national-security threats. Yet these politicians lack the time and capacity to perform the day-to-day tasks associated with implementing these programs. As a result, they have delegated implementation authority to a massive administrative state of more than 250 major agencies and 2.8 million civilian employees (see, e.g., Epstein and O'Halloran 1999; Huber and Shipan 2002). Collectively, this administrative state manages many programs created by congressional majorities—most of which are overwhelmingly popular with the American public.[1]

Implementation necessitates administrative capacity. Capacity is the ability of an agency to perform the tasks assigned to it by Congress and the president (Huber and McCarty 2004; Williams 2021). Agencies require expert workforces, competent leaders, and efficient management to accomplish their missions and prevent government failures. They cannot generate this capacity alone. The political principals who control appropriations, appointments, and programs must invest time and resources to build and maintain this capacity.[2] Neglect leads to the decay of capacity and, eventually, government failures. Students of the American presidency and bureaucracy have long assumed that the fear of failure incentivizes presidents to build capacity within the federal bureaucracy. When a crisis befalls the American public or a scandal engulfs an agency, the public blames the

[1] John Gramlich, "Few Americans support cuts to most government programs, including Medicaid," Pew Research, May 26, 2017 (https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/05/26/few-americans-support-cuts-to-most-government-programs-including-medicaid/);

[2] Sometimes capacity building means larger budgets and employee rosters. Other times, it means automation and restructuring, leading to reductions in both budgets and staffing.

president (Achen and Bartels 2016; Malhotra and Kuo 2008; Neustadt 1960). As Moe (1990) states, "[a]ll presidents are acutely aware of this, and they respond by trying to build and deploy an institutional capacity for effective governance" (237).

Two phenomena should give us pause before continuing to endorse this assumption. First, recent work suggests that the health of the bureaucracy is declining and the pace of administrative failure is increasing (Fukuyama 2014; Light 2008; Verkuil 2017). Countless failures—from the mismanagement of Hurricane Katrina to the spread of COVID-19—trace their roots to poor management in starved agencies (M. Lewis 2018). If presidents truly invest in the entire administrative state, we should not observe such frequent failures attributable to a lack of capacity. Second, the vow of President Donald Trump to "deconstruct the administrative state" suggests that presidents, at times, have political incentives to undermine capacity. Some may hope that current trends of decline stem from these anti-administrativist ideologies, which may dissipate over time (see e.g. Metzger 2017; Moynihan and Roberts 2020). That explains part of the puzzle. However, if *all* presidents lack the incentives necessary to spur investment—even those without anti-administrativist tendencies—then neglect will likely continue regardless of which party remains in control of the White House.

In this paper we explain how presidents strategically invest in administrative capacity, noting that presidents have few incentives to build capacity in most agencies. Presidents have three choices when it comes to managing a particular agency: build, neglect, or deconstruct. Electoral incentives encourage presidents to pursue substantive policy over management and focus their attentions elsewhere. Accordingly, neglect has become the norm rather than the exception. Presidents have the greatest incentives to build capacity in agencies that (1) implement policies central to the president's agenda, (2) share the president's ideological leanings, or (3) face a high risk of experiencing a publicly salient failure. These same electoral incentives mitigate the desire to deconstruct and we explain when this is most likely.

We test our account with two analyses using novel observational and survey data. First, we examine the time it took for the Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations to nominate individuals to appointed positions. We find that presidents prioritize appointments to policy positions over management positions and that nominations occur sooner in agencies that implement presidential priorities. Second, we examine the responses of federal executives to the 2020 Survey on the Future of Government Service to see whether perceptions of presidential investment in administrative capacity match those anticipated by our predictions. We find that federal executives perceive higher levels of investment when the agency is a priority of the president and when the agency shares the president's ideological leanings. We conclude by drawing out implications for our understanding of the modern presidency and government performance.

**Presidents and Administrative Capacity**

Congress and the president entrust the implementation of various welfare, national security, and regulatory programs to the administrative state. Most of these programs—and the agencies that administer them—have emerged from lobbying efforts by constituents, interest groups, and other political actors for federal intervention in an ongoing problem (Arnold 1979; Moe 1989). As head of the executive branch, presidents must ensure the successful implementation of these programs by the agencies that oversee their day-to-day functions.

Expansion of the administrative state has had two consequences for the presidency. Continuous delegation has endowed presidents with new tools of policymaking (Howell 2003; Kagan 2001; Moe 1985). These tools allow agencies to promulgate legally-binding regulations, distribute grants and benefits, and prosecute violations of law (e.g., Kriner and Reeves 2015; Potter 2019). Although presidents cannot exercise this authority alone, they steer agencies toward their policy priorities—with or without the assistance of Congress (see, e.g., Haeder and Yackee 2018; O'Connell 2008; Potter 2020).

Yet this expansion comes at a cost. The president is entrusted to manage the executive branch and, accordingly, has been vested with powers to build capacity. Presidents appoint leaders to these agencies (Mackenzie 1981), propose budgets (Pasachoff 2016), and take other actions to improve the management of the administrative state (Freeman and Rossi 2012).[3] With sufficient investment of effort and attention, the administrative state proves capable of great and mundane accomplishments alike. Agencies and their employees have produced some of the most significant scientific advancements in history, including the Internet, the moon landing, and evidence pinning the dinosaur extinction to a meteorite impact. The administrative state performs the most mundane activities with little disruption. The Postal Service delivers 173 million pieces of first-class mail per day; the Social Security Administration deposits monthly benefits for 69 million people; and the Internal Revenue Service processes over 250 million tax returns annually. Viewed as a single institution, the federal government remains among the highest capacity organizations in the world.

But presidents' foci on policy *creation* over *implementation* leads to persistent neglect of agencies that contribute little to presidents' policy priorities. For example, the Affordable Care Act—President Obama's signature legislative accomplishment—necessitated the creation of insurance marketplaces. Yet the Administration invested greater effort into creating the policy than ensuring that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) had sufficient capacity to deliver an efficacious rollout. In the end, the rollout proved disastrous (Herd and Moynihan 2019). Despite periodic

[3] In other cases, the White House diminishes capacity by increasing procedural demands on agencies (McGarity 1992), delaying approval of agency actions (Bolton, Potter, and Thrower 2016), appointing ineffective leaders (Hollibaugh, et al. 2014; Lewis 2008), leaving leadership positions vacant (Kinane 2021; O'Connell 2020), allowing the agency's workforce to wither (Iafolla 2020; Richardson 2019), and actively dismantling agency capacity (Benn 2019; Moynihan and Roberts 2020).

investment, administrative capacity writ large has remained stagnant and, in some cases, has receded (DiIulio 2014; Lewis 2019).

Persistent neglect causes poor performance. Increased workloads in understaffed agencies lead to delays in the processing of key activities (Bolton, Potter, and Thrower 2016). Inexperienced leadership prevents agencies from reacting quickly to catastrophe (Lewis 2008). Lack of expertise hinders the attainment of policy goals (Skocpol and Finegold 1982). Even the highest-performing agencies slip into poor performance absent occasional investment. At one time, the Postal Service exhibited high levels of both capacity and performance (Carpenter 2001). But years of decreasing revenues, growing expenses, and cost-cutting measures led to delays in mail delivery (Powell and Wessel 2020). Similar failures and scandals emerge every several years, tainting the reputations of agencies like the Department of Veteran Affairs, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the Internal Revenue Service.

Widespread neglect poses a puzzle for existing theories of presidential investment. Why would presidents neglect much of the administrative state? Existing explanations of presidential investment proffer that presidents either engage in regular investment or invest in capacity based largely on ideological considerations. Neither account proves fully satisfactory.

The first explanation assumes that presidents uniquely care about ensuring high capacity across the executive branch. Presidents occupy a unique position as the only elected officials with a national constituency (Dearborn 2021). Poor government performance threatens presidents' electoral prospects and legacies (Achen and Bartels 2016; Malhotra and Kuo 2008). Accordingly, adherents of this view argue that presidents' unique national perspective, legacy concerns, and electoral concerns create sufficient incentives for presidents to work to improve governance (Arnold 1998; Moe 1990; Neustadt 1960). Although presidents may disagree about how the federal government should perform its job, no president should want the bureaucracy to fail (Lewis 2008; Moe 1985). All presidents should build capacity throughout the administrative state to implement policy effectively or change policy in a liberal or conservative direction.

The second explanation assumes that presidents make strategic choices about agency capacity based on ideological and partisan considerations. Scholars in this tradition predict that presidents will work to increase capacity in agencies implementing policies the president likes and decrease capacity in agencies implementing policies the president opposes (Durant 1992; Herd and Moynihan 2019; Richardson 2019). Republican presidents pursue a vision of free-market environmentalism by diminishing the Environmental Protection Agency's capacity, while Democratic presidents pursue humanitarian immigration policies by constraining the ability of Immigration and Customs Enforcement to remove undocumented immigrants. Moreover, we should observe a greater willingness to deplete capacity during Republican administrations due to conservative preferences for deregulation and small governance (Benn 2019).

Both accounts of presidential investment assume that presidents take an active role in building (or deconstructing) administrative capacity. Under the first theory, presidents should always be attentive to capacity to ensure effective policy implementation and avoid failure. If there is neglect, it would be in the highest-performing agencies because these agencies perform well without presidential attention. Under the second theory, partisanship and ideology determine whether presidents build or deplete capacity. Sometimes these arguments hold true. Yet these theories fail to account for the neglect that persists across administrations and partisan lines, whether in the Federal Emergency Management Agency or the Centers for Disease Control (Lewis 2008; Roos 2013; Friedersdorf 2020). A more comprehensive explanation should explain the regular presence of neglect and explain *when* presidents have incentives to devote the time and energy necessary to building administrative capacity.

### When Do Presidents Invest in Capacity?

We turn now to explaining what motivates presidents to invest in administrative capacity. By "investment," we mean presidents' investment of time and energy to build agency capacity. Investment costs presidents effort that could be expended elsewhere, such as public events, electoral politics, or the creation of substantive policy. Of course, presidents may also expend effort to decrease agency capacity (i.e., "deconstruct"). Increasing agency capacity requires identifying an agency's needs and instituting serious reforms targeted at those needs. Presidents and their staff must expend time identifying capable leaders, advocating for targeted appropriations, and mitigating procedural constraints that impact performance. Deconstruction may require presidents to find ways to circumvent civil-service laws, cut budgets, or flood an agency with busy work (Freeman and Jacobs 2021; Skowronek et al. 2021). Ultimately, presidents are limited in how much effort they can expend to build capacity across the sprawling administrative state.

Although presidents head the administrative state, their central motivations do not stem from an inherent desire to ensure good governance. Rather, reelection is a first-order concern for all presidents. Presidents behave strategically to increase the likelihood of reelection for themselves and their co-partisans in their first terms and approximate this behavior in their second terms (Kriner and Reeves 2015). Although presidents care about specific policies and their legacies (Cohen 2012; Moe 1985; Neustadt 1960), these motivations depend on voters returning the president and/or their co-partisans to office. Of course, presidents will maximize their chances of implementing policy priorities whenever electorally feasible. But presidents have finite resources and short time-horizons to convince voters to return their party to office. Presidents can only afford to take the actions that provide the greatest marginal returns toward securing reelection and implementing their policy agendas. Building administrative capacity often provides a lower return on investment than substantive policymaking.

These electoral incentives create two constraints on presidents' actions. First, presidents must respond to the preferences of voters and interest groups in ways that lead the electorate to return their party to office. Voters, however, are too preoccupied with their own economic security and physical safety to concern themselves with public administration (Achen and Bartels 2016). Most voters have only a vague sense of the operations of major institutions—let alone obscure agencies like the Marine Mammal Commission or the Agricultural Marketing Service—within the federal government or how the benefits they receive connect to the work of the federal government (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Howard 2007; Mettler 2011). They respond favorably to initiatives that address afflictions facing the public but provide no electoral reward for initiatives that prevent those problems from happening in the future (Healy and Malhotra 2009). Management of the administrative state proves too disconnected from the minds of voters to warrant presidents' utmost attention.

Instead, voters concern themselves with specific policy issues rather than something as remote as agency management. This creates incentives for presidents to expend effort working on substantive policy issues like taxes, immigration, and climate change through legislation and executive action rather than actions that build prospective capacity or prevent problems from happening. The time and effort presidents and their administrations expend on management and governance are hard to connect to these policy issues except in an indirect and episodic way. Voters understand the benefits they obtain from new tax credits but do not see, for example, how replacing the Internal Revenue Service's antiquated computer system would affect their tax returns.[4]

[4] Konkel, Frank R. "The IRS System Processing Your Taxes is Almost 60 Years Old." *Nextgov*. 19 March. https://www.nextgov.com/it-modernization/2018/03/irs-system-processing-your-taxes-almost-60-years-old/146770.

Second, short electoral time horizons discourage presidents from pursuing management over policy. Administrative capacity is a concern about *future* performance (Williams 2021). Presidents that invest in administrative capacity expend effort now for potential benefits in the future. Upon assuming office, a set of pressing deadlines immediately confront presidents. They must rework the previous president's budget for submission in February. They must take advantage of the window left open by the Senate to push through a large number of nominees. And, they must have a demonstrable record of accomplishment in the first 100 days, usually through the enactment of legislation or consequential unilateral actions. Before they know it, presidents are up against pressures related to midterm elections. When presidents decide to devote some of this precious time to management, they may not realize the returns on investments until late in their term or until after they have left office. In this context, presidents are strongly incentivized to prioritize immediate tangible accomplishments because voters are more likely to respond to these accomplishments in the forthcoming election. Presidents rarely win reelection by explaining to voters how they reformed the personnel system inside the intelligence community or future planning inside the Commerce Department (Zegart 1995).

The lack of electoral incentives and delayed payoffs leads us to predict that presidents obtain greater marginal benefits from investing time and effort into policymaking over management.[5]

**Hypothesis 1. Management:** Presidents will invest more effort in substantive policy than bureaucratic management.

Of course, there are cases where reelection concerns and the administrative state are intertwined, and presidents must invest scarce time and effort in building capacity. If they choose to

[5]Neglect usually stems from disinterest rather than malice. It is not that presidents disagree with the agency's mission. Rather, presidents may determine that building capacity within these agencies fails to further their electoral motivations because voters are relatively disinterested in the agency's policies.

invest, where should they focus their attention? Presidents will invest in capacity to maximize their return from the substantive policies that can be sold as accomplishments to the electorate. Accordingly, we offer three predictions.

First, the marginal returns on investment are highest when an agency implements a presidential priority. These priorities are often those the president discussed during the campaign but can also include other items forced onto the agenda by events during the president's term. Presidents tout these policies as accomplishments to voters and, therefore, have significant incentives to ensure their success. Agencies with insufficient capacity may bungle the implementation of presidents' priorities, marring the president's electoral chances and legacy. Therefore, presidents build capacity within agencies implementing priorities to increase the likelihood that these programs succeed.

**Hypothesis 2. Priority:** Presidents will invest more effort to build capacity in agencies implementing policies central to the president's electoral agenda.

Second, presidents' decisions to build capacity also depend upon whether agencies share the policy views of the president. Agencies, by virtue of their statutes, histories, and previous choices have missions that align more easily with the interests of some elected officials than others (Downs 1964; Clinton and Lewis 2008). Presidents of different parties are more or less enthusiastic about agencies depending upon what they do. Ideologically-congruent agencies tend to implement policies that align with presidents' preferences. More liberal agencies tend to regulate and provide social welfare. More conservative agencies provide national security and serve clients in the business community. Therefore, presidents build capacity in these agencies to ensure the continued success of their programs in the future.

On the other hand, presidents express ambivalence—or, in some cases, skepticism—toward the policies implemented by ideologically-divergent agencies. Presidents find fewer reasons to build capacity in these agencies. This is not to suggest that presidents never prioritize ideologically-divergent agencies or would never benefit from building capacity within them.[6] However, they struggle to ensure that an investment in capacity will go toward the president's priorities. Federal employees in these agencies are themselves unenthusiastic about presidents' efforts to change the direction of their policies (Potter 2019; Brehm and Gates 1999). Admittedly, most agencies lack any ideological tenor. But many significant and salient agencies, like the Environmental Protection Agency or Immigration and Customs Enforcement, have clear ideological leanings. Accordingly, all else equal, investments in ideologically-divergent agencies offer fewer marginal returns relative to their ideologically-congruent counterparts.

Interest groups play an important role here. Although individual voters may not care about the efficacy of individual agencies, groups do. Interest groups understand that achieving their substantive interests requires ensuring that implementing agencies have sufficient capacity. For example, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) has lobbied for increases in Social Security Administration capacity to address its "service logjams."[7] Interest groups mobilize in favor of presidents who protect these interests and against presidents who fail to promote these interests (Arnold 1990). Presidents have the greatest incentive to cater to ideologically-aligned interest groups

[6] Presidents often promise to undo the actions of previous administrations. For example, Republicans often campaign to reduce regulations within the Environmental Protection Act. Yet deregulation often requires the same capacity as regulation. Both regulation and deregulation require agencies to undergo an arduous rulemaking process, which necessitates some level of policymaking capacity (Potter 2019). If presidents hope to accomplish these sorts of priorities in an ideologically-divergent agency, they may need to make additional investments in the agency's capacity.

[7] Terrell, Kenneth. 2018. "Don't Shortchange Social Security Funding." *AARP*. https://www.aarp.org/politics-society/advocacy/info-2018/social-security-budget-funding-fd.html.

because these interest groups can animate the presidents' base through media and get-out-the-vote campaigns.

At the same time, these groups may constrain presidents from investing in certain agencies. Presidents may occasionally have incentives to build capacity in ideologically-divergent agencies. However, interest groups may represent the investment as the president taking a position antithetical to the group's preferences. For example, immigration advocates disfavor building capacity in Immigration and Customs Enforcement because such investments are viewed as promoting greater enforcement. Yet greater funding may provide the agency with the resources it needs to care for detained children at the U.S.-Mexican Border.

> **Hypothesis 3. Ideology**: Presidents will invest more effort building capacity in agencies that share the president's policy views.

Third, low-performing agencies create liabilities for presidents. Sometimes performance issues break through to the public's consciousness (Malhotra and Kuo 2008). Presidents do not want to enact a program and stumble in implementation. They do not want a large problem to emerge and be unprepared. No president wants their electoral prospects or legacy tainted with government failures like those surrounding Hurricane Katrina, the VA Scandal, or the COVID-19 Pandemic. Accordingly, presidents expend greater effort to build capacity in the low-performing agencies, where failure is most likely to occur. In contrast, high-performing agencies have already demonstrated their ability to implement policies without additional investments and, therefore, presidents may trust that these agencies will continue to perform without much attention.

Of course, presidents occasionally depart from this heuristic. At times, presidents build capacity in high-performing agencies because these agencies produce accomplishments that presidents gloat about on the campaign trail. Many low-performing agencies never receive an investment because their failures have little chance of reaching voters. But these are exceptions and not the rule. All else equal, however, presidents receive a greater marginal return from investing in low-performing agencies than high-performing agencies.

> **Hypothesis 4. Performance:** Presidents will invest less effort to build capacity in agencies with higher levels of performance.

Thus far, we have predicted when presidents are likely to *build* capacity. What about deconstruction? A corollary to our theory suggests that deconstruction should be quite rare. Voters rarely elect presidents to break government, particularly since most programs and agencies are popular. Presidents may advocate for smaller government, but they seek deregulation through policy change rather than diminishment of government performance. Two conditions must hold for presidents to actively deconstruct agency capacity. First, deconstruction cannot produce a government failure that would result in voters punishing the president. Therefore, presidents have few incentives to actively deconstruct agencies that distribute benefits, engage in national security, or mitigate disasters. Second, the active deconstruction of the agency must serve to ideologically motivate presidents' voters. If the president simply disagrees with the agency's programs, the most cost-effective route is to neglect the implementing agency. However, presidents may take an ideological position by deconstructing certain salient agencies.

Presidents' reelection incentives consistently push presidents away from broad-based investments in administrative capacity. While there have been some exceptions, presidentially-driven reforms like President Nixon's focus on super-cabinet agencies or President Clinton's focus on Reinventing Government have been episodic, partly symbolic, and often short-term in focus. Instead, when presidents and their teams invest, they focus on a subset of the larger executive establishment, namely agencies implementing policies that are a priority to the president and policies that align with the president's own views. And, they do so when it is most impactful.

## Evaluating White House Investment: Data Analysis

An empirical evaluation of presidential investment requires observing where presidents build capacity, but observing these investments proves challenging. We can observe outputs like budgets or performance but neither is a measure of presidential effort or attention. Presidential investment can be obscure, even to White House insiders because their work is often siloed. Agency outputs and outcomes result from the actions of diverse political actors throughout government, and it can be difficult to disentangle the influence of presidents amidst this complexity.

Given the difficulty of identifying investment, we perform two separate analyses using novel datasets. First, we track how long it took presidents Bush, Obama, and Trump to send their *first* nominee to the Senate for each vacant position. The length of time to nomination is a means of measuring the time and priority the White House is placing on individual agencies across government, making it a useful way to evaluate where presidents make capacity investments. As certain positions are tied to either policymaking or management, it also provides a way of testing our first hypothesis.

While our first analysis uses observational data, our second analysis examines whether federal executives perceive presidential investments in a way that comports with our theory. To assess the perception of investment in capacity, we use the 2020 *Survey on the Future of Government Service*, a survey of thousands of federal executives in the United States Government. The survey data provide a unique opportunity to systematically examine the unobserved behavior of the White House from the perspective of those that have the ability to observe it—agency leaders.

### *Presidential Nominations: Bush, Obama, Trump*

The U.S. Constitution empowers presidents to appoint "officers of the United States" with the advice and consent of the Senate. Agency leadership (or the lack thereof) has significant implications for agency performance (Kinane 2021). Agencies with persistent vacancies or regular turnover tend to perform worse overall (Lewis 2008). But presidents and their staff must invest significant time into pairing the right nominees with the right positions. Accordingly, presidential nominations provide one source of data to examine questions surrounding where presidents invest time into building agency capacity. We assume that quicker nominations reflect greater presidential concern for agency capacity.

We test our hypotheses by estimating the time it takes presidents to nominate an official to a particular position using newly collected data on all Senate-confirmed appointed positions and presidential nominations to these positions (for full details see Appendix A). Transitions that result in a change of the party in the White House provide a useful way of evaluating presidential priorities since each president begins their term needing to fill hundreds of vacant positions. We examine three such periods of transition: 2000, 2008, and 2016. Prior to the inauguration of the new president, all appointees not serving fixed terms (e.g., a five or seven-year term) resign, leaving each new president a clean slate of positions to fill starting on January 20th.[8] Presidents have over 1,000 Senate-confirmed positions to nominate and must invest time to identify competent leaders who can realize their agendas within each agency. Yet the sheer number of vacancies requires presidents to prioritize nominations to some agencies over others.

**Table 1. Positions Requiring Senate Confirmation, Vacancies, and Nominations, First Two Years of Bush, Obama and Trump Presidencies.**

| President | Positions | Vacancies | Nominations | %Nominated | Average Days |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| President Bush | 1,358 | 1,093 | 835 | 0.76 | 384 |
| President Obama | 1,416 | 1,092 | 801 | 0.73 | 390 |
| President Trump | 1,317 | 1,132 | 723 | 0.64 | 466 |
| **Total** | 4,091 | 3,317 | 2,359 | 0.71 | 414 |

Note: Average days are calculated by assuming vacant positions received a nominee at the end of the president's second year. *Source*: Appendix A.

[8] Some officials customarily stay over into a new administration to ease the transition. These positions, however, are effectively vacant in the sense that these appointees expect to be replaced and presidents treat them as vacant.

Table 1 summarizes the data across the three transitions. When President Bush assumed office on January 20, 2001, there were 1,358 Senate-confirmed positions and of these positions, 1,093 were available for appointment (i.e., formally vacant or filled by a person invited to stay on temporarily). Over the course of two years, President Bush nominated persons for 835 of the 1,093 positions (76%). This means that 24 percent of positions vacant on January 20th still did not have a nominee two years later. Indeed, if we optimistically assume that positions without vacancies all received a nominee at the end of two years, the average position did not receive a nominee until 384 days into the presidency, more than one year after Inauguration Day. Just receiving a nominee is no guarantee of confirmation. About 20 percent of the nominations were withdrawn or returned to the president, meaning the actual success in filling positions was much lower.

Our dependent variable measures the number of days it took the president to send the first nominee to a given position (Mean 413.89; SD 251.56). The measure ranges between 0 to 730 days, where 0 days indicates that the nomination took place on Inauguration Day and 730 days indicates that the position did not receive a nomination during the two-year window. Accordingly, the data exhibits both left and right censoring. Presidents announce some (2.17%) of their nominees shortly after the election, allowing for smoother transitions come inauguration day. At the other end of the spectrum, many positions (28.88%) do not receive a nominee within the first two years.

Our hypotheses lead to several predictions. First, we hypothesize that presidents invest more effort in substantive policymaking than management of the administrative state. Presidents use appointees to advance their agendas within certain agencies, but these appointees differ in their responsibilities. We include two indicators that allow us to test whether presidents prioritize nominees for positions that focus on policymaking versus management. We coded positions that primarily concern legislative affairs, policy planning, or legal as key policy positions (4.4%). In contrast, we coded positions whose functions primarily concern management, finances, acquisition, or personnel as key management positions (4.1%). We expect that presidents will nominate individuals to key policy positions sooner than key management positions. To be clear, the most senior positions such as cabinet secretary or administrator involve both policy and management responsibilities. The purpose of the variables described here is identify positions that are policy-only or management-only to determine whether presidents prioritize otherwise similar positions (e.g., pay, agency, title) based upon a discrete responsibility for policy vs. management.

Second, appointees play a central role in managing presidents' agendas and priorities within agencies. We expect that positions within agencies that implement presidents' priorities will receive nominees sooner than positions in other agencies. To measure presidential priority we coded all bureaus with 1 if the agency implemented a policy listed in President Trump's *Contract with the American Voter* and 0 otherwise (28%).[9] Since neither President Obama nor President Bush had similar documents, we use President Obama's first televised address to Congress and President Bush's first televised address to Congress to identify agencies implementing policies central to each president's agenda.[10] Although we use different sources for each administration, we observe no significant

[9] See https://assets.donaldjtrump.com/_landings/contract/O-TRU-102316-Contractv02.pdf, accessed March 13, 2021. We prefer the *Contract with the American Voter* over post-treatment measures for obvious reasons. However, we do not believe that the televised addresses meaningfully introduce post-treatment bias because these addresses concern issues presidents raised on the campaign trail. For full details see Appendix A.

[10] The measure we use in our analysis looks at whether the specific bureau administers a policy related to the presidents' priorities. Subcomponents are not categorized as priorities simply because the president classifies the larger department as a priority.

difference in the number of priority positions across the three administrations.[11] We expect that positions within agencies that implement presidents' priorities will receive nominees sooner than positions in other agencies.

Our third hypothesis predicts that presidents invest more effort to build capacity in ideologically-congruent agencies. Political actors perceive that some (but not all) agencies have ideological leanings due to their missions and the kinds of personnel they attract. We rely on Richardson et al. (2018) for stable, time-invariant measures of agencies' ideological leanings. Since our data includes nominees from both Republican and Democratic presidents, we rescale the measure to reflect ideological distance (Mean 2.0; Min 0; Max 3.87). The larger the value, the further away the agency is from the president.[12] We expect that positions within agencies that align more closely with presidents' ideological preferences will receive nominations sooner. Since the effect of ideology may be influenced by whether the agency implements a policy on the president's agenda, we also include an interaction of presidential priority and agency ideology.

Fourth and finally, in some cases, a lack of competent leadership creates an environment amenable to government failure (Lewis 2008). Seeking to avoid these situations, presidents may nominate individuals to lower capacity agencies sooner. However, the lack of time-series measures of agency capacity constrains our ability to assess this relationship. Accordingly, we are only able to estimate the relationship between agency capacity and nominations for the Trump Administration. To

---

[11] In the Bush Administration, 69 (6.3%) positions are coded as priorities. In the Obama Administration, 71 (6.5%) positions are coded as priorities. In the Trump Administration, 66 (5.8%) positions are coded as priorities.

[12] Unfortunately, we lack common measures of presidential preferences that scale with agency preferences (Clinton et al. 2012).

measure the level of agency capacity at the start of the Trump Administration, we use a measure of workforce skills from Richardson et al. (2018). In a 2014 survey, the authors asked federal executives to rate the skills of other agencies and aggregated these responses via a Bayesian item-response model to adjust for differences in the use of the scale by raters (Mean 0.15; SD 0.85; Min -1.99; Max 1.83). Our expectation is that presidents will invest less time and effort in agencies with high levels of existing skills.

Other characteristics of agency structure or specific positions may influence the nomination process. We control for agency structure using binary indicators for whether the agency is a subcomponent of the Executive Office of the President (Mean 0.02), part of a cabinet department (Mean 0.68), or an independent commission (Mean 0.16). Because presidents may have greater incentives to build capacity in agencies that award discretionary grants, we include a binary indicator for whether the agency awarded grants in the fiscal year prior to the start of the new administration (Kriner and Reeves 2015).[13] To account for seniority, we include a control for position pay level using the Executive Schedule, where zero indicates that the position's pay does not follow the Executive Schedule and five indicates the highest level of pay under the Executive Schedule (Mean 1.11; SD 1.34). Relatedly, we include an indicator for whether the position is a part-time position (Mean 0.19; see Hogue et al. 2008). We also include indicators for positions requiring a great number of appointees such as ambassadors (N=540), inspector generals (N=93), U.S. marshals (N=281), and U.S. attorneys (N=279). Finally, we include indicators for the different presidential administrations.

The time-dependent nature of the dependent variable and censoring necessitates the use of Cox proportional hazard models. We report robust standard errors adjusted for clustering at the department level. We include coefficient estimates in Table 2. A positive coefficient in the table implies

[13] We have also estimated models with the logged number of grants and attained consistent results.

a quicker nomination (i.e., higher hazard rate) and a negative coefficient should be interpreted as a nomination that takes a longer time (i.e., lower hazard rate). The estimates are interpreted by exponentiating the coefficient, which provides the relative likelihood that a position experiences a nomination at a given point in time. An increased likelihood of nomination indicates presidents are faster to nominate to that position. Unless specified otherwise, we use Model 2 for interpretation. Where possible, we stratify at the department and congressional-committee levels to satisfy the proportional-hazards assumption. For robustness, we report estimates from Tobit models in Appendix B.

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, we find evidence that presidents prioritize nominations to policy positions over management positions. In all four models, *Policy Position* increases the likelihood that presidents to nominate an individual at a given point in time. At any point in time, presidents are twice as likely (Hazard Ratio 1.97) to make a nomination to a key policy position than other positions. This effect is the largest of the hypothesized relationships. In contrast, presidents are a third less likely (Hazard Ratio 0.68) to nominate individuals to key management positions. This is consistent with our expectation that presidents prioritize substantive policymaking over managing the administrative state. Presidents want their appointees to begin policymaking as soon as possible. Although administrative capacity necessitates support from managers who understand finance, acquisitions, and personnel, presidents do not view these managers as essential to their electoral goals. Nominations to these positions, therefore, are a lower priority.

*Presidential priority* also has a significant effect on the time it takes a president to nominate an individual to fill a vacant position. The coefficient is positive in all four models and significant in three models. The size of the coefficient varies across specifications but, even at its lowest, the average position in a priority agency is 13 percent (Hazard Ratio 1.13) more likely to receive a nomination than positions in non-priority agencies. At the highest estimate, positions in priority agencies are twice as likely to receive a nomination (Hazard Ratio 2.05). Consistent with our expectations in Hypothesis 2, presidents appear to prioritize filling leadership positions in agencies that implement their priorities.

The results are less clear for ideological distance. In three of the specifications, the estimates reveal that presidents are more likely to nominate individuals to positions in agencies that are more ideologically distant. Model 2 suggests that presidents are a third less likely (Hazard Ratio 0.68) to nominate individuals to positions in ideologically distant agencies relative to positions in ideologically close agencies. For example, President Obama took an average of 134 days to nominate individuals to positions in the Environmental Protection Agency compared to an average of 191 days in the Department of Homeland Security. In contrast, President Trump took an average of 384 days to nominate individuals to positions in the Environmental Protection Agency compared to an agency of 250 days in the Department of Homeland Security. The findings in these models comport with our expectations. However, we cannot reject the null of no effect in the final model where we control for agency skills and estimate the model on the subsect of cases from the Trump Administration.[14] A joint hypothesis test for *agency ideology* in Model 4 returns a p-value just shy of significance (p=0.06), but the only positions that suffered from a decrease in the likelihood of nomination were those in priority agencies.

Our expectation was that the nominations would be influenced by the overall capacity of the agency when the president assumed office. We find a positive relationship between *Agency Skills* and the likelihood that presidents nominate an individual to the position. Presidents nominate individuals to the lowest skilled agencies 85 percent sooner (Hazard Ratio 1.85) than an agency with average skills.

[14] Additionally, we find little evidence of a meaningful interaction between presidential priority and agency ideology.

Likewise, positions in high-skilled agencies are half as likely (Hazard Ratio 0.57) to receive a nomination at a given point in time.

**Table 2. Models of Likelihood of Nomination: Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations**

| | *Dependent Variable* Days to First Nomination | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **(1)** | | **(2)** | | **(3)** | | **(4)** | |
| **Variable** | **B** | **SE** | **B** | **SE** | **B** | **SE** | **B** | **SE** |
| *Hypothesized Relationships* | | | | | | | | |
| Policy Position (0,1) | 0.77 | 0.09* | 0.68 | 0.10* | 0.73 | 0.12* | 0.52 | 0.18* |
| Management Position (0,1) | -0.14 | 0.10 | -0.37 | 0.11* | -0.36 | 0.13* | -0.38 | 0.20* |
| Priority (0,1) | 0.35 | 0.16+ | 0.12 | 0.17 | 0.43 | 0.19* | 0.72 | 0.27* |
| Agency Ideology (0.00,3.87) | -0.06 | 0.03 | -0.10 | 0.03* | -0.09 | 0.03* | 0.10 | 0.09 |
| Priority*Agency Ideology | -0.04 | 0.07 | -0.02 | 0.08 | -0.09 | 0.10* | -0.15 | 0.16 |
| Agency Skills (-1.99,1.82) | | | | | | | -0.31 | 0.10* |
| *Agency Level Controls* | | | | | | | | |
| EOP (0,1) | -0.30 | 0.13* | | | -0.23 | 0.19* | -1.42 | 0.42* |
| Commission (0,1) | -0.08 | 0.08 | | | 0.28 | 0.14* | 0.42 | 0.23 |
| Agency Giving Grants (0,1) | | | | | 0.11 | 0.13* | -0.08 | 0.23 |
| *Position Level Controls* | | | | | | | | |
| Pay Level (0-5) | 0.45 | 0.03* | 0.58 | 0.04* | 0.49 | 0.04* | 0.57 | 0.07* |
| Part Time (0,1) | -0.65 | 0.12+ | -0.42 | 0.14 | -0.46 | 0.16* | -0.94 | 0.28* |
| *Administration Controls* | | | | | | | | |
| Bush (0,1) | 0.48 | 0.05* | 0.62 | 0.06* | | | | |
| Obama (0,1) | 0.35 | 0.05* | 0.39 | 0.06* | 0.37 | 0.06* | | |
| Estimator | Cox | | Cox | | Cox | | Cox | |
| Position-Type Controls | Yes | | Yes | | Yes | | Yes | |
| Department Level Stratified | No | | Yes | | No | | No | |
| Committee Stratified | No | | Yes | | Yes | | Yes | |
| N | 2,867 | | 2,867 | | 1,934 | | 937 | |
| $R^2$ | 0.28 | | 0.21 | | 0.23 | | 0.25 | |

Note: *significant at the 0.05 level; +significant at the 0.10 level in two-tailed tests. All estimates use type HC0 standard errors clustered at the department level. Position-type controls include indicators for ambassadors, inspectors general, U.S. marshals, and U.S. attorneys. Full model estimates with position-type controls are available in Appendix B, Table B2.

Our analysis of nominations suggests that policymaking drives presidents' investment decisions. Presidents strongly prioritize key policymaking positions over all other positions. Relatedly, they neglect management positions that have the potential to build capacity from within the agency. Ideological divergence appears to increase the time it takes for presidents to nominate an individual but further research is necessary to understand under what contexts ideology matters. Presidents also wait longer to fill positions in high-performing agencies or positions that perform managerial functions within an agency. In sum, presidents prioritize nominations to positions that provide them with the greatest utility in terms of policymaking. Beyond nominations, do agency leaders perceive similar trends in investment? We now turn to survey data to help us answer this question.

*2020 Survey on the Future of Government Service*

To evaluate perceptions of White House investment in capacity building, we use new data from a survey of agency leaders. This online survey, conducted by scholars in collaboration with the Partnership for Public Service, was opened in June 2020 and closed in December 2020. The target population included all appointed and career federal executives in all non-advisory federal agencies. Specifically, it included all political appointees, all career members of the Senior Executive Service, Washington, DC-based members of the Senior Foreign Service, and other high level career professionals (e.g., GS14, GS15) with titles indicating key management responsibilities.[15] The survey included questions that measure concepts like capacity investments and individual ideology that are nearly impossible to measure with other existing data.[16] All analysis includes survey weights to adjust for differences between respondents and the target population (Keeter et al. 2017).[17]

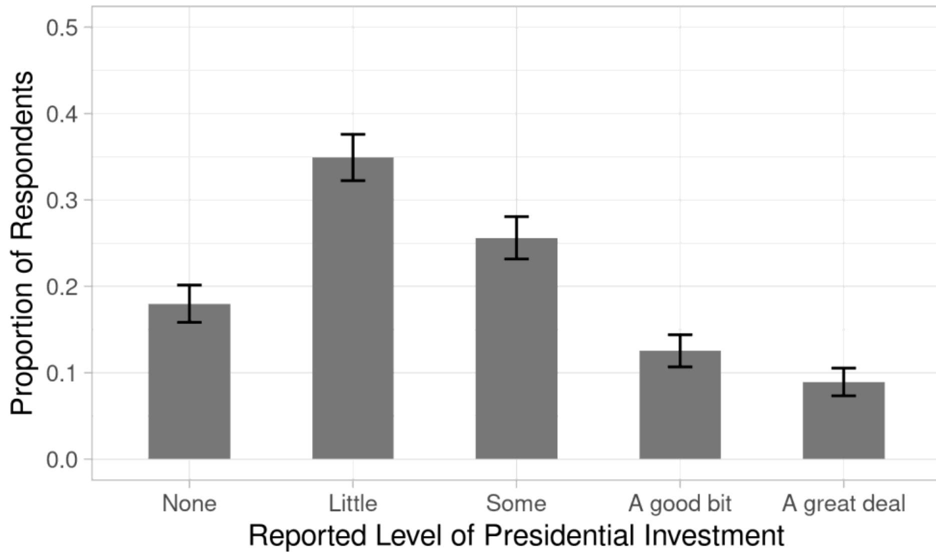
---

[15] For full details of the sample see Appendix C.

[16] The response rate of the survey was 9 percent (1,485 completed surveys out of 16,232) and 11% participation rate (1,779 complete or partial surveys out of 16,232). This is comparable to most public opinion surveys. Response rates for Gallup telephone surveys average about 7% (Marken 2018).

[17] The survey researchers created post-stratification weights with data on location, appointment authority, and agency using iterative proportional fitting, more commonly called raking. For details see Appendix C.

**Figure 2. "How much effort do the following groups [White House] spend to ensure that [your agency] has what it needs to carry out its mission?"**




Note: N=1,216. Error bars show 95% confidence intervals. Source: *2020 Survey on the Future of Government Service.*

To measure investment from the White House in agency capacity we use a question that asked respondents, "How much effort do the following groups spend to ensure that [your agency] has what it needs to carry out its mission?" Each respondent's self-identified workplace replaced "[your agency]" in the question wording. The response categories were "None," "Little," "Some," "A good bit," "A great deal," and "Don't know." The survey asked respondents about the White House, congressional committees, political appointees, Republicans in Congress, and Democrats in Congress. Figure 2 includes the weighted responses to the question on White House efforts.

Respondents report little White House effort to make sure that their agencies have what they need. More than half of federal executives report that the White House is exerting no effort or little effort to make sure the agency has what it needs. About 21 percent report that the White House is doing a good bit or a great deal to make sure the agency has what it needs to carry out its mission. By comparison, a little more than half of federal executives report that congressional committees are exerting a good bit or a great deal of effort. Notably, there is significant variation across the executive establishment. For example, the average response in the International Trade Administration is 0.79

(Min 0; Max 4) compared to 3.4 in the Farm Service Agency. Nevertheless, this descriptive data reinforces the idea that the White House exerts little effort overall.

Our expectation is that the same factors that influence presidential priorities in nominations will be reflected in perceptions of White House investment. We use the same measures of key independent variables for presidential priority (28%),[18] agency ideology,[19] and agency workforce skills as we did in the nominations analysis. We also include agency and individual-level controls appropriate for analysis of survey data. We include binary indicators for whether the respondent works in an agency in the Executive Office of the President (2%), part of an executive department—the Office of the Secretary (6%), a discrete bureau (61%), or other part (12%)[20]—or an independent commission (8%). The base category is a respondent working in an executive agency that is not a cabinet department. We control for distributive agencies by including an indicator for whether *usaspending.gov* reports the agency as having awarded any project grants in the year prior to the survey (59%). We

[18] This variable, like agency ideology, is measured at the bureau level. Respondents working in an agency without bureaus were coded with a 1 if their agency carried out a policy mentioned in the president's campaign document. Respondents working in the Office of the Secretary in one of the executive departments were also coded with a 1 if their department or a subcomponent carried out a policy listed in the President's document.

[19] Since we have only one administration, there is no need to recode the original measure of agency ideology from Richardson et al. (2018).

[20] Within larger agencies, there are many respondents that work in parts of the agency that are neither part of a large bureau nor the Office of the Secretary or the Office of the Administrator or Chair. Rather, they work in small offices or divisions like the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, the Board of Appeals, or the Office of the Deputy Secretary.

include this control because presidents may pay more attention to agencies that give out particularistic benefits. In some specifications, we also include fixed effects for the executive departments.

Respondents also have individual characteristics that could affect access to the White House and perceptions about the president's efforts. We include an indicator for whether the respondent is a political appointee (9%). We also measure party identification as a continuous variable ranging from 0 (Democrat) to 2 (Republican) (Mean 0.74; (0) Democrat: 47%; (1) Independent: 35%; (2) Republican: 18%). Our expectation is that appointees and Republicans are more likely to report White House support for the agency because the survey was fielded during a Republican administration.[21] As the respondent's position and years of experience may shape their perception of White House effort, we also include controls for scope of responsibility for agency management and years of experience. We measure scope of responsibility with a question from the survey that asks respondents whether they "deal directly deal with decisions" regarding eight different managerial responsibilities.[22] We count the number of "yes" answers to these questions and assume that respondents with more responsibility will have a greater understanding of the role of the White House (Mean 3.36; SD 1.75; Min 0; Max 7). To measure experience, we include responses to a question asking respondents "how

[21] We have also estimated models controlling for the respondent's self-reported ideology on a 7-point scale and the results are similar.

[22] The responsibilities included in the question are: (1) Information management (e.g., Information Technology, Database Management); (2) Grants to state or local governments, other organizations, or individuals; (3) Deciding what enforcement responsibilities to prioritize; (4) Human resources; (5) Budget formulation/proposals; (6) Setting overall priorities in [your agency]; (7) Procurement and contract management; and (8) Developing Notices of Proposed Rulemaking, summarizing related comments, and writing final rules.

many years, in total, have you been employed" in federal government (Mean 22.90; SD 10.94; Min 0; Max 50).

Given the data structure, we estimate different types of models.[23] First, given the data are ordered and categorical, we estimate ordered logit models. Second, given that the variation of interest is at the agency level, we also estimate models on average agency responses. We report robust standard errors adjusted for clustering on workplace. We have also estimated models excluding political appointee respondents given their uneven distribution across the sample, models only on executive agencies (i.e., agencies with direct hierarchical control), and models with random intercepts at the department-level to account for the hierarchical nature of the survey data. These results are consistent with what we report here and are included in Appendix E.

[23] In addition, we note that the scale may be censored since it does not provide a way for federal executives to report that the White House was doing less than nothing to ensure the agency had what it needs to fulfill its core mission (i.e., actively working against the agency). While there does not appear to be any clustering of responses in the end categories, we also estimate Tobit models assuming censoring at 0 on the dependent variable. These models confirm the results in Table 3, with key coefficients estimated slightly more precisely (Appendix D).

**Table 3. Models of Federal Executive Responses to Question, "How much effort do the following groups [White House] spend to ensure that [your agency] has what it needs to carry out its mission?", 2020**

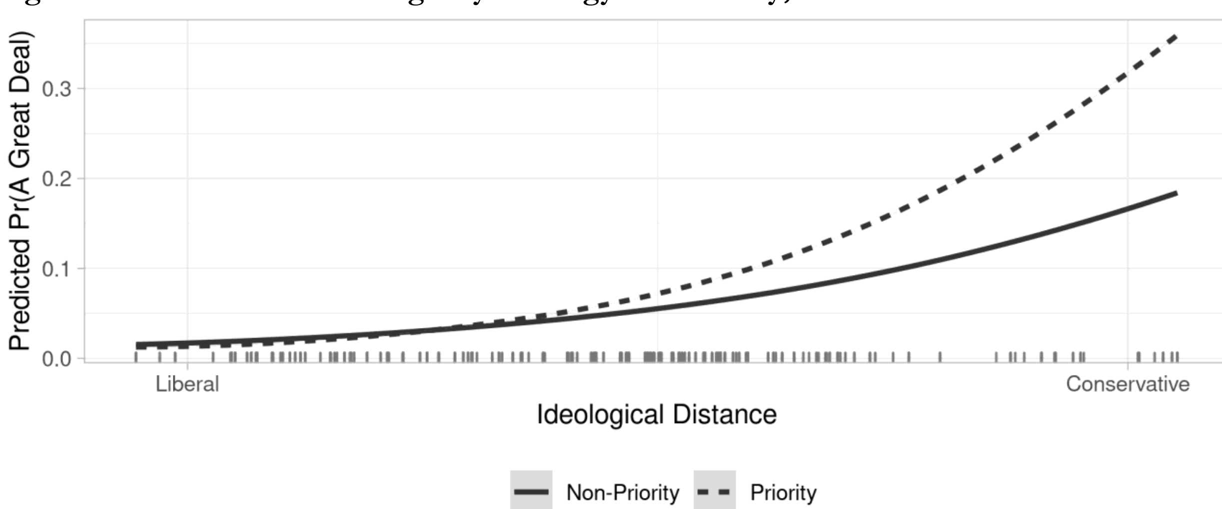
| | *Dependent Variable* | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Individual-Level Response | | | | Agency-Average Response | |
| | (1) | | (2) | | (3) | |
| **Variable** | **B** | **SE** | **B** | **SE** | **B** | **SE** |
| *Hypothesized Relationships* | | | | | | |
| Priority (0,1) | 0.14 | 0.25 | 0.38 | 0.20+ | -0.03 | 0.15 |
| Agency Ideology (L-C) | 0.47 | 0.15* | 0.70 | 0.17* | 0.28 | 0.09* |
| Priority*Agency Ideology | 0.27 | 0.22 | 0.38 | 0.20+ | 0.23 | 0.12+ |
| Agency Skills (Low to High) | 0.07 | 0.12 | 0.13 | 0.14 | -0.05 | 0.09 |
| *Agency Level Controls* | | | | | | |
| Executive Office of the President (0,1) | 0.66 | 0.35+ | 0.86 | 0.51+ | 0.44 | 0.18* |
| Executive Department | | | | | | |
| Office of the Secretary (0,1) | -0.28 | 0.35 | -0.64 | 0.49 | 0.04 | 0.22 |
| Distinct Bureau (0,1) | -0.72 | 0.25* | -1.21 | 0.28* | -0.45 | 0.12* |
| Independent Commission (0,1) | -0.68 | 0.41+ | -0.71 | 0.50 | -0.41 | 0.21* |
| Agency Giving Grants (0,1) | 0.43 | 0.22+ | 0.39 | 0.25 | 0.29 | 0.12* |
| *Individual Level Controls* | | | | | | |
| Appointee (0,1) | 1.35 | 0.36* | 1.44 | 0.36* | 0.39 | 0.53 |
| Party ID (D, I, R) | 0.59 | 0.11* | 0.58 | 0.11* | 0.44 | 0.15* |
| Scope of Responsibility (0 to 7) | 0.08 | 0.04+ | 0.09 | 0.05+ | 0.04 | 0.07 |
| Years of Government Experience | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.01 | -0.00 | 0.01 |
| Constant | | | | | 1.21 | 0.38* |
| Estimator | Logit | | Logit | | OLS | |
| Unit of Analysis | Individual | | Individual | | Agency | |
| Department Level Fixed Effects | No | | Yes | | No | |
| Sampling Weights | Yes | | Yes | | Yes | |
| Wald Test for Interaction (1 df) | 1.56 | | 3.52+ | | 3.37+ | |
| N | 866 | | 866 | | 140 | |
| Number of Groups | 143 | | 143 | | 140 | |
| Wald Test, F-Test (13, 28, 14 df) | 91.17* | | 245.12* | | 4.82* | |

Note: *significant at the 0.05 level; +significant at the 0.10 level in two-tailed tests. Response categories: None (0), Little (1), Some (2), A good bit (3), A great deal (4). All models estimated with robust fixed effects adjusted for clustering on agency. Cutpoint estimates omitted. Source: *2020 Survey on the Future of Government Service*. Full model estimates are available in Appendix E.

We include the main model estimates in Table 3. The estimates complement the results from the analysis of presidential nominations. The effect of *Presidential Priority* depends partly upon whether the agency shares the president's views about policy. As suggested by the results above, the estimates reveal robust relationships between agency ideology and presidential efforts to build capacity. We cannot reject the null that *Agency Skills* has no influence on presidential investment choices. Thus, the estimates suggest that presidents are strategic in their investments, although not necessarily attentive to the existing capacity of agencies when making their choices.

As a face validity check, we note that the estimates suggest that presidents invest more effort in the capacity of their staff agencies in the EOP and agencies giving out grants. They invest less effort in independent commissions. Appointees, Republicans, and those with the greatest responsibilities perceive the most presidential effort to support their agencies. Model estimates suggest that respondents in the EOP are about 14 percentage points more likely to report "a good bit" or "great deal" of White House effort to make sure their agencies had what they need to carry out their mission. Respondents in grant-giving agencies are about 5 percentage points more likely to report presidential investment. Respondents in independent commissions, however, are estimated to be about 11 percentage points less likely to provide such responses. Appointees are close to 18 percentage points more likely to report this level of support from the White House and Republicans 15 percentage points. Each additional managerial responsibility is estimated to increase the probability a respondent gives a "good bit" or "great deal" response by 1 percentage point.

**Figure 3. Predicted Effect of Agency Ideology and Priority, 2020**




Note: Figure uses the specification from Table 3, Model 2 to estimate predicted probabilities. Predicted probabilities calculated with all variables set to mean value.

While executives in the departments dealing with the military and veterans reported more presidential involvement, other agencies implementing policies that were presidential priorities during the campaign did not do so as consistently. Indeed, respondents working in agencies that were presidential priorities reported increased White House support only if the agency was sufficiently conservative (Figure 3). The effect of priority was different for liberal and conservative agencies. If an agency had a reputation for being conservative, implementing a policy that was a presidential priority was estimated to *increase* the perception of presidential investment. By contrast, presidential priority *decreased* perceptions of White House investment for respondents in the most liberal agencies.

This is seen most clearly in Figure 3 which graphs the estimated impact of agency ideology and priority. Federal executives in a high priority liberal agency (e.g., USAID) are estimated to report about 0.10 *less* White House support than executives in liberal agencies that are not a priority for the president (e.g., Wage and Hour Division). By contrast, an executive in a high priority conservative agency (e.g. Navy) is estimated to report about 0.60 more White House support on average than a respondent in a conservative agency that is a lower priority for the president (e.g., National Nuclear Security Administration). The interaction of presidential priority and ideology highlights the fact that just because something is a priority of the president does not mean the president wants to build capacity. In some cases, as with President Trump and the Environmental Protection Agency, an agency being a presidential priority meant less support for capacity building rather than more.

Our expectation was that presidents' investment choices would be influenced by the overall capacity of the agency when the president assumed office. We find no relationship between *Agency Skill* and White House effort. The coefficient estimates are consistently near 0 and estimated imprecisely. The estimates suggest that investment choices are driven more by political considerations than elite perceptions of workforce capacity. This finding also raises the question of how much the

White House itself knows about which agencies are working well or poorly given the poor quality of data on performance and workforce skill collected by the U.S. government (Resh et al. 2021).

Overall, the survey data suggests that the White House is doing very little investing overall. Where they invest depends upon the policy views of the agencies and whether the agency is a presidential priority. The impact of getting on the president's agenda, however, differs depending upon the ideology of the agency.

**Discussion**

In the past century, Congress and presidents have created an immense administrative state to deliver benefits to the elderly and the poor, mitigate natural hazards, and protect American citizens from national-security risks. Managing these programs requires effective leaders, sufficient budgets, and efficient organizations. As head of the executive branch, presidents are the natural choice to build capacity across the agencies of the administrative state. Overall, however, we find little evidence that presidents spend significant time investing in capacity.

Our empirical analysis suggests that when presidents do invest, they try to build capacity in the agencies with the greatest chance of contributing to presidents' primary goals: ensuring reelection for themselves and preserving a historical legacy. Presidents prioritize nominations for policymaking over management positions, suggesting that concerns about substantive policymaking influence presidential behavior more than general management of the administrative state. Additionally, we observe that presidents nominate individuals sooner in agencies that implement policies related to presidential priorities and in agencies that share presidents' ideological preferences.

Federal executives report similar beliefs about where presidents invest time in building capacity. Executives in agencies related to presidential priorities and those in agencies ideologically closer to the president report higher levels of investment. Both sets of findings are consistent with our description of how presidents strategically build capacity when these investments advance their own electoral interests.

Our findings have significant implications for our understanding of the presidency and the bureaucracy. As we described, existing theories assume that presidents broadly care about the health of the administrative state (Moe 1990) or make investment decisions based primarily on ideological considerations (Durant 1992; Herd and Moynihan 2019; Richardson 2019). Our findings challenge these assumptions by asserting an alternative: Neglect—not investment—is the norm. Of course, certain elements of the previous theories remain. Presidents want to avoid public failures (Achen and Bartels 2016), and ideological incentives *do* play a role in whether they exert effort building capacity within a particular agency (Benn 2019). However, most agencies receive no attention from the White House and, therefore, lack the capacity to implement the tasks entrusted to the executive branch by Congress.

One hopeful interpretation of these results is that presidents invest little time and effort because other actors are attentive to these concerns, whether political appointees or members of Congress. For example, do presidents select appointees with an eye toward performance and charge them with securing the necessary capacity? Federal executives do report higher levels of investment from these actors[24] but the current political dysfunction in the United States affects investments by these actors as well. Appointees, if nominated and confirmed—a big if—have sufficient opportunities to streamline processes and advocate for investments within the agency. Yet we do not observe

[24] A little more than half of federal executives report that political appointees or congressional committees expend "a good bit" or "a great deal" of effort to make sure the agency has what it needs to fulfill its core mission. About 45% of executives *cannot* report that these actors give this level of attention or effort.

presidents appointing individuals to the management positions most capable of investing in capacity. Moreover, the appointments process is broken, characterized by delayed nominations and slow confirmations. Once confirmed, appointees prioritize what the president prioritizes and this is substantive policymaking over management. Appointees also have even shorter time horizons than the president and this influences their incentives and ability to invest in capacity building. Appointees serve about two years on average and enter with two or three goals they hope to accomplish during their short tenure. Rarely do those goals include capacity building.

Between budgeting, oversight, and lawmaking, members of Congress have perhaps the greatest ability and obligation to build capacity. And, in times past, members of Congress with secure electoral prospects and majorities devoted greater attention to building agency capacity (Lewis 2019). But polarization, slim majorities, and regular transitions have diminished this trend. Members of Congress are allocating less time to the work of day-to-day oversight and are reluctant to cooperate to accomplish shared goals for fear that such cooperation will impact the electoral prospects of themselves and their party.

Another interpretation of these results is that they are the particular result of the Trump Presidency since the survey data was collected at the end of the Trump Administration. The nominations data, however, was not and the patterns in that data are consistent with presidential neglect of managerial concerns. Indeed, the nominations data reveal a clear presidential preference for policy positions over management and quicker nominations to agencies implementing policies those presidents prefer.

## Conclusion

Article II of the Constitution vests presidents with the executive power, at least in part to ensure that the federal bureaucracy has sufficient ability to implement programs created by Congress. Yet, our findings suggest that modern presidents devote little time and effort to building capacity within the administrative state and that many agencies are persistently neglected. Although presidents are the de facto managers of the administrative state, they do not approach federal agencies from the perspective of public management. Instead, presidents regularly seek to use these agencies to advance their own electoral and policy interests. Contrary to the hopes of voters and interest groups who advocate for these programs, agencies remain tools of electoral advancement—not program implementation. The fear of government failure may prompt presidents to invest in capacity, but this is only one of the many factors influencing presidential investments.

Normatively, the lack of investment raises questions about the role of government and representation. A traditional justification of the state concerns its ability to resolve collective-action problems and mitigate harms facing the public. Congress and the president may appease interest groups and the voting public by creating programs that target their concerns, but the passage of these policies is merely symbolic if the implementing agency lacks the capacity to achieve the desired outcomes. Although the existence of a program may create the appearance of protection from a particular harm, neglect and decay within the agency may hinder its implementation in the event of a disaster. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has recently revealed the cracks in America's public-health agencies. If presidents invest effort into policymaking but not into building capacity the implementing agencies need to manage the programs, then we may question whose interests presidents truly represent.

**Bibliography**

Achen, Christopher H., and Larry M. Bartels. 2016. *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Arnold, R. Douglas. 1979. *Congress and the Bureaucracy: A Theory of Influence*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Arnold, R. Douglas. 1990. *The Logic of Congressional Action*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Arnold, Peri E. 1998. *Making the Managerial President: Comprehensive Reorganization Planning, 1906-1996*. 2d ed. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.

Benn, Annie. 2019. "Tying Hands: Strategic Incentives to Undermine Bureaucratic Capacity." Manuscript, UC Berkeley.

Bolton, Alexander, Rachel Augustine Potter, and Sharece Thrower. 2016. "Organizational Capacity, Regulatory Review, and the Limits of Political Control." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organizations* 32(2): 242–71.

Brehm, John, and Scott Gages. 1999. *Working, Shirking, and Sabotage*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Carpenter, Daniel P. 2001. *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy: Reputations, Networks, and Policy Innovation in Executive Agencies, 1862-1928*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Clinton, Joshua D., and David E. Lewis. 2008. "Expert Opinion, Agency Characteristics, and Agency Preferences." *Political Analysis* 16(1): 3-20.

Clinton, Joshua D., Anthony Bertelli, Christian R. Grose, David E. Lewis, and David C. Nixon. 2012. "Separated Powers in the United States: The Ideology of Agencies, Presidents, and Congress." *American Journal of Political Science* 56(2): 341–54.

Cohen, Jeffrey E. 2012. *The President's Legislative Policy Agenda, 1789-2002*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Dearborn, John A. 2021. *Power Shifts: Congress and Presidential Representation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Delli Carpini, Michael X., and Scott Keeter. 1996. *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

DiIulio, John J. Jr. 2014. *Bring Back the Bureaucrats: Why More Federal Workers Will Lead to Better (and Smaller!) Government*. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press.

Downs, Anthony. 1964. *Inside Bureaucracy*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company.

Durant, Robert F. 1992. *The Administrative Presidency Revisited: Public Lands, the BLM, and the Reagan Revolution*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Epstein, David and Sharyn O'Halloran. 1999. *Delegating Powers*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Freeman, Jody, and Sharon Jacobs. 2021. "Structural Deregulation." *Harvard Law Review* 135: 585-665.

Freeman, Jody, and Jim Rossi. 2012. "Agency Coordination in Shared Regulatory Space." *Harvard Law Review* 125(5):1131-1211.

Friedersdorf, Conor. 2020. "Trump Defended Cuts to Public-Health Agencies, On Video." *Government Executive*. May 18, https://www.govexec.com/management/2020/03/trump-defended-cuts-public-health-agencies-video/163872.

Fukuyama, Francis. 2014. “America in Decay: The Sources of Political Dysfunction.” *Foreign Affairs*. September/October 2014, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2014-08-18/america-decay.

Haeder, Simon F, and Susan Webb Yackee. 2018. “Presidentially Directed Policy Change: The Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs as Partisan or Moderator?” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 28(4): 475–88.

Healy, Andrew, and Neil Malhotra. 2009. “Myopic Voters and Natural Disaster Policy.” *American Political Science Review* 103(3):387-406.

Herd, Pamela, and Donald P. Moynihan. 2019. *Administrative Burden: Policymaking by Other Means*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Hogue, Henry B., Maureen Bearden, and Terrence L. Lisbeth. 2008. *Presidential Appointee Positions Requiring Senate Confirmation and Committees Handling Nominations.* CRS Report RL30959, March 18, 2008. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20080318_RL30959_e8d2689f3bc242b49ac39eaf01db4de564fba6a9.pdf.

Hollibaugh, Gary E. Jr, Gabe Horton, and David E. Lewis. 2014. “Presidents and Patronage.” *American Journal of Political Science* 58(4):1024-42.

Howard, Christopher. 2007. *The Welfare State Nobody Knows: Debunking Myths about U.S. Social Policies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Howell, William G. 2003. *Power Without Persuasion: The Politics of Direct Presidential Action*. Princeton. Princeton, NJ.

Huber, John D., and Nolan M. McCarty. 2004. "Bureaucratic Capacity, Delegation, and Political Reform." *American Political Science Review* 98(3):481-94.

Huber, John D., and Charles R. Shipan. 2002. *Deliberate Discretion?* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Iafolla, Robert. 2020. "More than Half of NLRB Regional Offices Have Top-Level Vacancies." *Bloomberg Law*. March 4, https://news.bloomberglaw.com/daily-labor-report/more-than-half-of-nlrb-regional-offices-have-top-level-vacancies.

Kagan, Elena. 2001. "Presidential Administration." *Harvard Law Review* 114:2245-2385.

Kinane, Christina M. 2021. "Control without Confirmation: The Politics of Vacancies in Presidential Appointments." *American Political Science Review*: 1–16.

Kriner, Douglas L., and Andrew Reeves. 2015. *The Particularistic President: Executive Branch Politics and Political Inequality*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kumar, Martha Joynt. 2015. *Before the Oath: How George W. Bush and Barack Obama Managed a Transfer of Power*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Lewis, David E. 2019. "Deconstructing the Administrative State." *Journal of Politics* 81(3): 767–89.

— 2008. *The Politics of Presidential Appointments*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Lewis, Michael. 2018. *The Fifth Risk*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

Light, Paul C. 2008. *A Government Ill Executed: The Decline of the Federal Service and How to Reverse It*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Mackenzie, G. Calvin. 1981. *The Politics of Presidential Appointments*. New York: Free Press.

Malhotra, Neil, and Alexander G. Kuo. 2008. "Attributing Blame: The Public's Response to Hurricane Katrina." *Journal of Politics* 70(1): 120–35.

McGarity, Thomas O. 1992. "Some Thoughts on 'Deossifying' the Rulemaking Process." *Duke Law Review* 41(6): 1385–1462.

Mettler, Suzanne. 2011. *The Submerged State*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Metzger, Gillian E. 2017. "1930s Redux: The Administrative State Under Siege." *Harvard Law Review* 131: 1-95.

Moe, Terry M. 1990. "Political Institutions: The Neglected Side of the Story--Comment." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 6(Special): 263–66.

— 1989. "The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure." In Can the Government Govern?, eds. John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 267–329.

— 1985. "The Politicized Presidency." In *The New Direction in American Politics*, eds. John Chubb and Paul E. Peterson. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 235–71.

Moynihan, Donald, and Alasdair Roberts. 2020. "Dysfunction by Design: Trumpism As Administrative Doctrine." *Public Administration Review* 81(February): 152–56.

Neustadt, Richard E. *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*. New York, NY: The Free Press.

O'Connell, Anne Joseph. 2008. "Political Cycles of Rulemaking: An Empirical Portrait of the Modern Administrative State." *Virginia Law Review* 94(4): 889–986.

— 2002. "Actings." *Columbia Law Review* 120(3): 613–728.

Pasachoff, Eloise. 2016. "The President's Budget as a Source of Agency Policy Control." *Yale Law Journal* 125: 2182–2290.

Potter, Rachel Augustine. 2020. "Providing Political Guidance? Agency Politicization and 'As If' Policymaking." *Journal of Political Institutions and Political Economy* 1(1): 1–26.

— 2019. *Bending the Rules: Procedural Politicking in the Bureaucracy*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Powell, Tyler, and David Wessel. 2020. "How is the U.S. Postal Service Governed and Funded?" *Brookings*. August 26, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/08/26/how-is-the-u-s-postal-service-governed-and-funded.

Resh, William, Tima Moldogaziev, Sergio Fernandez, and Colin Angus Leslie. 2021. "Reversing the Lens: Assessing the Use of Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey in Public Administration Research." *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 41(1):132-162.

Richardson, Mark D. 2019. "Politicization and Expertise: Exit, Effort, and Investment." *Journal of Politics* 81(3): 878–91.

Richardson, Mark D., Joshua D. Clinton, and David E. Lewis. 2018. "Elite Perceptions of Agency Ideology and Workforce Skill." *Journal of Politics* 80(1):303-8.

Roos, Robert. 2013. "CDC Preparedness Funds Take Hit in Proposed 2014." *Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy*. April 10, https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2013/04/cdc-preparedness-funds-take-hit-proposed-2014-budget.

Skocpol, Theda, and Kenneth Finegold. 1982. "State Capacity and Economic Intervention in the Early New Deal Author." *Political Science Quarterly* 97(2): 255–78.

Skowronek, Stephen, John A. Dearborn, and Desmond King. 2021. *Phantoms of a Beleaguered Republic: The Deep State and the Unitary Executive*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Verkuil, Paul R. 2017. *Valuing Bureaucracy: The Case for Professional Government*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Williams, Martin J. 2021. "Beyond State Capacity: Bureaucratic Performance, Policy Implementation and Reform." *Journal of Institutional Economics* 17: 339-57.

Zegart, Amy. 2005. "September 11 and the Adaptation Failure of U.S. Intelligence Agencies, *International Security* 29(4):78-111.

PRESIDENTIAL INVESTMENT IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE STATE

SUPPLEMENTAL APPENDICES

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Appendix A: Nominations Data

The nominations data come from a U.S. Government publication called *Policy and Supporting Positions* (i.e., the *Plum Book*), a regular Congressional Research Service publication called *Presidential Appointee Positions Requiring Senate Confirmation and Committees Handling Nominations*,[25] and the congressional website *congress.gov*.[26] The United States House of Representatives and the Senate have alternated publishing the *Plum Book* every election year since 1960. The *Plum Book* lists all of the key policy positions in the executive establishment, both those filled by political appointees and those filled by career professionals. It also includes key staff positions of a policy or confidential nature that support these key policy-making positions. From this document, we extracted all positions requiring nomination by the president and confirmation by the Senate (i.e., PAS positions). We focus specifically on *Plum Book* data from 2000, 2008, and 2016. We supplement the *Plum Book* with the other sources because it omits some Senate confirmed positions. In total, about 17% of all PAS positions are omitted from the *Plum Book*.

---

[25] The CRS first published this report in 2003 and updated it regularly through 2017 (Hogue 2003, Hogue et al. 2008, Davis and Greene 2017). This document provides a useful supplement to the *Plum Book* since the *Plum Book* includes some errors and omits many minor boards and commissions.

[26] When using official Senate data on nominations we found a few additional positions omitted from the *Plum Book* and CRS reports. Some of these positions were positions created after the publication of the *Plum Book* and the CRS report. Others were semi-discretionary positions in the State Department. Finally, neither document included the Marine Mammal Commission and each missed a few other positions. For a full discussion of the nominations for which no positions were listed in either the *Plum Books* or CRS reports see the nominations data appendix.

Starting from the master list derived from the three sources, we removed several classes of positions from the data. These include judicial positions on the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, positions in the *Plum Book* listed as requiring Senate confirmation that no longer require Senate confirmation[27], duplicates[28], and positions included in the *Plum Book* that no longer existed by Inauguration Day.[29] We also excluded positions that are filled automatically when persons receive

[27] Occasionally, Congress will remove the confirmation requirement for certain PAS positions. For example, Congress enacted the Presidential Appointment Efficiency and Streamlining Act in 2012. This law removed the confirmation requirement from more than 150 positions. Positions no longer requiring Senate confirmation in 2016 that were still listed as PAS in 2016 included the following positions: John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (36); National Museum and Library Services Board (14); National Council on Disability (5); Director, Selective Service System (1); Assistant Secretary for Administration, USDA (1); Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, HUD (1); Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management, DOL (1); Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs/CFO, DOT (1); Alternate Federal Co-Chairman, Appalachian Regional Commission (1); Administrator, United States Fire Administration, FEMA/DHS (1); Office of Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation, Commissioner (1).

[28] All of the *Plum Books* include some minor errors. For example, the 2016 *Plum Book* includes the following duplicates: Director, Institute of Museum and Library Services; Chief Financial Officer, Department of Labor; Inspector General, Small Business Administration; and Inspector General, Social Security Administration.

[29] Since the *Plum Book* is published during the election year, some legislative changes occur after data has been collected.

another Senate confirmed position. For example, the Secretary of the Treasury assumes a role on the Financial Stability Oversight Council automatically upon confirmation as Secretary of the Treasury.

To connect executive nominations to specific positions, we used data from *congress.gov* during the first two years of the president's term. Specifically, we downloaded all formal nominations to civilian positions from the Congress seated during the first two years of the president's term. This means collecting all civilian nominations during one congress and part of another. This means we collected all nominations from January 20th until the seating of a new Congress two years later, either January 3rd for the 111th and 115th congresses or January 7th for the 107th Congress. We also downloaded nominations to civilian positions between January 3 and January 20th for the 112th, and 116th congresses and January 7 and January 20 for the 108th Congress. We matched nominations to the list of vacant positions, noting that a nomination had been made and the number of days since Inauguration Day. For each position, we include only the first nomination to a position. While presidents make new nominations to replace failed nominations or to replace appointees that have departed, we are interested here in using the time to the first nomination as an indicator of importance or priority. As a general rule, positions that receive their first nominations long after Inauguration Day are a lower priority for the president than positions that receive nominees closer to Inauguration Day.[30]

[30] For some commissions, presidents must nominate and the Senate must confirm a chair from among the members of the commission. Other commissions select their chairs in different ways. This dataset excludes nominees for chair positions unless the nominee is taking the commission slot held by the former chair. For example, there were three such cases in 2017-2018. These cases include: Ann Marie Buerkle, of New York, to be Chairman of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, replacing Elliot F. Kaye; J. Christopher Giancarlo, of New Jersey, to be Chairman of the Commodity Futures Trading

So, for example, most cabinet secretary positions receive nominations on Inauguration Day but positions on many minor boards and commissions are left without a nominee well into a president's second year or longer.

*Priority*: This variable is coded with a 1 if this subcomponent of a larger agency is specifically responsible for carrying out an item mentioned in President Bush's first speech to Congress, President Obama's first speech to Congress, or in President Trump's *Contract with the American Voter*. For example, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Citizenship and Immigration Services, and Customs and Border Protection are coded with a 1 because of their role in immigration enforcement. A list of issues and their related agencies are included in Tables A1-A3 for all three presidencies. Positions in agencies with no subcomponents are coded with a 0.

---

Commission, replacing Timothy G. Massad; Jerome H. Powell, of Maryland, to be Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for a term of four years, replacing Janet L. Yellen.

**Table A1. Coding of Agency Priority, Bush Administration, 2001**

| Policy Issue | Agency--Department Level | Agency--Bureau Level |
|---|---|---|
| Increased spending Social Security | Social Security Administration; Social Security Advisory Board | |
| Increased spending on Medicare | Department of Health and Human Services | Health Care Financing Administration (HHS) |
| Fiscal responsibility and debt | Office of Management and Budget | Office of Management and Budget |
| Education for K-12; No Child Left Behind; Vouchers and charter schools | Department of Education | Elementary and Secondary Education (DOED) |
| Medicare prescription drug benefit | Department of Health and Human Services | Health Care Financing Administration (HHS) |
| Health insurance tax credits | Department of the Treasury | Internal Revenue Service (TREAS); Assistant Secretary for Tax Policy (TREAS) |
| Community health care for low income communities | Department of Health and Human Services | Health Care Financing Administration (HHS); Administration for Children and Families (HHS); Health Resources and Services Administration (HHS); Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (HHS) |
| Patient's bill of rights | Department of Health and Human Services | Health Care Financing Administration (HHS) |
| Tort reform—medical malpractice | Department of Health and Human Services | Health Resources and Services Administration (HHS) |
| NIH funding | Department of Health and Human Services | National Institutes of Health (HHS) |
| New Freedom Initiative (Americans with disabilities[31] | Corporation for National and Community Service; Federal Communications Commission; General Services Administration; National Council on Disability; National Endowment for the Arts; Office of Personnel Management; Small Business Administration; Social Security Administration; Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban | Federal Transit Administration (DOT); Office of Disability Employment Policy (DOL); Administration for Community Living (HHS; predecessor); Civil Rights Division; Elementary and Secondary Education (DOED); Office of Civil Rights (DOED); Fair Housing (HUD); Health Care Financing Administration (HHS) |

[31] Based upon information from 2007 highlights and report of program (https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/newfreedom/newfreedom-report-2007-Acronyms.html, accessed May 26, 2020).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Development, Interior, Justice, Labor, Transportation, Treasury, Veterans Affairs; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; Federal Emergency Management Agency | |
| Military pay and benefits | Department of Defense | Personnel and Readiness (DOD); Health (DOD) |
| Veterans health care | Department of Veterans Affairs | Veterans Health Administration (VHA) |
| Veterans benefits | Department of Veterans Affairs | Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) |
| Land and Water Conservation Fund | Department of Interior; Department of Agriculture | National Park Service (DOI); Bureau of Land Management (DOI); U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (DOI); Under Secretary for Natural Resources & Environment, U.S. Forest Service (USDA) |
| National Park Service funding | Department of Interior | National Park Service (DOI) |
| Tax cuts for charitable deductions | Department of the Treasury; Council of Economic Advisers | Internal Revenue Service (TREAS); Assistant Secretary for Tax Policy (TREAS) |
| Federal compassion capital fund | Department of Health and Human Services | Administration for Children and Families (HHS) |
| Racial profiling | Department of Justice | Civil Rights Division (DOJ) |
| Tax cuts/reform | Department of the Treasury, Council of Economic Advisers | Internal Revenue Service (TREAS); Assistant Secretary for Tax Policy (TREAS) |
| Military review and reform | Department of Defense | Under Secretary of Defense (Policy) |
| Trade promotion authority | Office of the United States Trade Representative; Department of Commerce | |
| Energy independence; New energy sources | Department of Energy; Department of Interior; Department of Commerce | Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (DOE); Office of Fossil Energy (DOE); Office of Surface Mining and Enforcement (INT); Bureau of Land Management (INT); Land and Minerals Management (INT) |
| Reform Medicare | Department of Health and Human Services; Department of the Treasury; Office of Management and Budget | Health Care Financing Administration (HHS) |
| Effective Missile Defense | Department of Defense | Missile Defense Agency (DOD) |
| Protect Against Threats of 21st Century | Central Intelligence Agency; Department of Defense; Department of Energy; State Department | Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Nuclear and Chemical and Biological Defense Programs (DOD); National Security Agency (DOD); |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | National Nuclear Security Administration (DOE); Bureau of Intelligence (STAT); Bureau of Nonproliferation (STAT); Bureau of Verification and Compliance (STAT); Under Secretary For Arms Control And International Security Affairs (STAT);<br>Office of the Ambassador-at-Large for Counter Terrorism (STAT); |
| Reform Social Security | Social Security Administration; Department of the Treasury; Office of Management and Budget | |

**Table A2. Coding of Agency Priority, Obama Administration, 2009**

| Issue | Department/Agency | Bureau |
|---|---|---|
| Economic Crisis | Council of Economic Advisers; Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); Department of the Treasury (TREAS); Commodity Futures Trading Commission; Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation; Federal Housing Finance Board; Federal Reserve; National Credit Union Administration; Securities and Exchange Commission; Department of State (STAT) | HUD: Government National Mortgage Association (GNMA); TREAS: Comptroller of the Currency, Financial Institutions, Financial Markets, Office of Thrift Supervision, Trouble Asset Relief Program; STAT: Ambassador to the OECD |
| Renewable Energy | Department of Energy (DOE) | DOE: Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy |
| Health Care | Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) | HHS: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services; TREAS: Internal Revenue Service |
| Post-secondary Education | Department of Education (DOED) | DOED: Postsecondary Education, Vocational and Adult Education |
| Tax Cut and Tax Fairness | Department of the Treasury (TREAS) | TREAS: Assistant Secretary for Tax Policy |
| Spending Accountability | Department of Treasury (TREAS) | TREAS: Treasury Inspector General |
| Housing | Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) | |
| Fiscal responsibility/ Deficit | Office of Management and Budget (OMB) | |
| Basic Science | Department of Agriculture (USDA); Department of Commerce(COM); Department of Energy (DOE); Department of Health and Human Services (HHS); Department of the Interior (INT); Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); National Aeronautics and Space Administration; National Science Foundation | COM: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; DOE: Office of Science, ARPA-E; EPA: Science and Technology; HHS: National Institutes of Health; INT: US Geological Survey; USDA: Agricultural Research Service |
| New power lines | Department of Energy (DOE) | DOE: Electricity Delivery/Energy Reliability; USDA: Rural Development |
| Cure Cancer | Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) | HHS: National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute |
| Early Childhood Education | Department of Education (DOED); Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) | DOED: Elementary and Secondary Education; HHS: Administration for Children and Families (Head Start) |
| Procurement | Office of Management and Budget (OMB); General Services Administration (GSA) | OMB: Office of Federal Procurement Policy |
| Reform Defense Budget | Department of Defense (DOD) | DOD: Comptroller for department and military services |
| Social Security Reform | Social Security Administration | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Wars in Iraq, Afghanistan | State Department (STAT); Department of Defense (DOD) | DOD: Regional bureaus; STAT: Regional bureaus; Ambassadors to Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan |
| Security/Terrorism | Department of Homeland Security (DHS); Office of the Director of National Intelligence; Central Intelligence Agency; Department of Justice (DOJ); Department of State (STAT) | DHS: Citizenship and Immigration Services, Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Transportation Security Administration; DOJ: Federal Bureau of Investigation; STAT: Consular Services; TREAS: Terrorist Financing |
| Health Care for Soldiers and Veterans | Department of Defense (DOD); Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) | DOD: Assistant Secretary (Health); DVA: Veterans Health Administration |
| Guantanamo Bay | Department of Defense (DOD) | DOD: General Counsel |
| Middle East Peace | State Department (STAT) | STAT: Regional bureaus; Ambassadors to Egypt, Israel, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria |
| Regulation | Office of Management and Budget (OMB) | OMB: Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs |
| Student Debt/College Debt | Department of Education (DOED) | DOED: Financial Aid |
| Small Business Loans | Small Business Administration (SBA) | |
| Terrorism | Department of Homeland Security (DHS); Office of the Director of National Intelligence; Central Intelligence Agency; Department of Justice (DOJ); Department of State (STAT) | DHS: Citizenship and Immigration Services, Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Transportation Security Administration; DOJ: Federal Bureau of Investigation; STAT: Consular Services |
| Nuclear Proliferation | Department of Energy (DOE) | DOE: National Nuclear Security Administration |
| Pandemic | Department of Health and Human Services (HHS); Department of Homeland Security (DHS); Department of State | HHS: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office of Global Health Affairs, Public Health Emergency Preparedness; DHS: Federal Emergency Management Agency; STAT: Global Health |
| Cyber Threats | Department of Homeland Security (DHS); Office of the Director of National Intelligence; Central Intelligence Agency; Department of Justice (DOJ); Department of State (STAT); National Security Agency | DHS: Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency |

Table A3. Coding of Agency Priority, Trump Administration, 2017

| Policy Issue | Agency--Department Level | Agency--Bureau Level |
|---|---|---|
| Term limits | Department of Justice | |
| Hiring freeze | Office of Personnel Management | |
| Regulatory policy | Office of Management and Budget | Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OMB) |
| Ethics | Office of Government Ethics | |
| NAFTA | Office of the United States Trade Representative; Department of State | Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment (STAT); Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs (STAT) |
| TPP | Office of the United States Trade Representative; Department of State | Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment (STAT); Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs (STAT) |
| Currency Manipulation[32] | Department of the Treasury | International Affairs (TREAS) |
| Trade Abuses[33] | Department of the Treasury; Department of Commerce; Office of the United States Trade Representative; Department of State; US Agency for International Development, US International Trade Commission, US Trade and Development Agency, Department of Agriculture | International Trade Administration, Foreign Agricultural Service, Bureau of Industry and Security, U.S. Commercial Service, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Treasury (International), International Affairs (Energy), EPA (International Programs) |
| Energy production | Department of the Interior; Department of Energy | Office of Fossil Energy; Bureau of Ocean Energy Management; Office of Surface Mining and Enforcement; Bureau of Land Management; Land and Minerals Management |
| Keystone Pipeline | Department of State | |

[32] https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/206/2019-05-28-May-2019-FX-Report.pdf

[33] https://ustr.gov/about-us/trade-toolbox/us-government-trade-agencies

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Climate Change | Environmental Protection Agency; Department of State; Department of Commerce; Council on Environmental Quality | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration |
| Executive Orders | Department of Justice | Office of Legal Counsel (DOJ) |
| Gorsuch Nomination | Department of Justice | Office of Justice Policy (DOJ) |
| Sanctuary Cities | Department of Justice | |
| Immigration enforcement | Department of Homeland Security | Immigration and Customs Enforcement; Citizenship and Immigration Services; Customs and Border Protection |
| Visas | Department of State; Department of Homeland Security | Bureau of Consular Affairs; Citizenship and Immigration Services |
| Tax Relief | Department of the Treasury; Council of Economic Advisers | Tax Section; Internal Revenue Service |
| Offshoring | Department of the Treasury | Internal Revenue Service |
| Infrastructure[34] | Department of Transportation; Department of Defense; Environmental Protection Agency; Department of Veterans Affairs; Department of Agriculture | Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, Federal Railroad Administration, Army Corps of Engineers; Federal Aviation Administration; Maritime Administration; Veterans Health Administration; EPA (Water Infrastructure); Rural Development (USDA) |
| School choice | Department of Education | Office of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| Obamacare | Department of Health and Human Services | Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services |
| Childcare and eldercare | Department of Treasury | Internal Revenue Service |
| Border wall | Department of Homeland Security | Customs and Border Protection; Immigration and Customs Enforcement |
| Violent crime | Department of Justice | |

[34] https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/budget/fy2018/fact_sheets/2018%20Budget%20Fact%20Sheet_Infrastructure%20Initiative.pdf

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Military Spending | Department of Defense; National Security Council | Comptroller; Department of the Army; Department of the Navy; Department of the Air Force; Joint Chiefs |
| Veterans | Department of Veterans Affairs | Veterans Health Administration |
| Cyber security | Department of Defense; Department of Homeland Security; Central Intelligence Agency; Office of the Director of National Intelligence | National Security Agency; Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency (DHS) |
| Red tape at FDA | Department of Health and Human Services | Food and Drug Administration |
| Medicaid | Department of Health and Human Services | Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services |

## Appendix B. Models of Time to Nomination

**Table B1. Estimated Days to First Nomination: Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations**

| | *Dependent Variable* Days to First Nomination | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **(1)** | **(2)** | **(3)** | **(4)** |
| **Variable** | **B SE** | **B SE** | **B SE** | **B SE** |
| *Hypothesized Relationships* | | | | |
| Policy Position (0,1) | -138.71* (17.32) | -125.31* (19.96) | -137.85* (27.06) | -114.87* (38.52) |
| Management Position(0,1) | 24.27 (18.98) | 48.98* (19.60) | 75.89* (31.56) | 48.10 (40.58) |
| Presidential Priority (0,1) | -69.17* (29.54) | -41.68 (33.02) | -49.78 (48.15) | -156.79* (42.97) |
| Agency Ideology (0.00,3.87) | 18.77* (8.54) | 21.85* (9.72) | 27.46* (11.70) | -25.25 (29.60) |
| Presidential Priority*Agency Ideology | 3.12 (15.09) | -0.05 (15.54) | -18.07 (15.99) | 14.86 (20.17) |
| Agency Skills (-1.99,1.82) | | | | 68.22* (25.90) |
| *Agency Level Controls* | | | | |
| EOP (0,1) | 61.38* (15.33) | | | 245.63* (24.05) |
| Commission (0,1) | -14.64 (35.67) | | | -143.53* (65.30) |
| Agency Giving Grants (0,1) | | | 99.44* (39.45) | -24.48 (73.10) |
| *Position Level Controls* | | | | |
| Pay Level (0-5) | -100.15* (6.96) | -103.28* (7.46) | -112.11* (9.48) | -120.35* (17.27) |
| Part Time (0,1) | 226.19* (84.94) | 169.94* (80.02) | 142.11 (94.68) | 256.28* (81.18) |
| *Administration Controls* | | | | |
| Bush (0,1) | -113.60* (19.85) | -118.80* (17.29) | | |
| Obama (0,1) | -91.28* (15.24) | -92.68* (15.63) | -84.92* (15.42) | |
| Constant | 570.38* (30.64) | 299.06* (50.96) | 910.72* (36.22) | 803.38* (129.72) |
| Estimator | Tobit | Tobit | Tobit | Tobit |
| Position-Type Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Department Level Fixed Effects | No | Yes | No | No |
| Committee Fixed Effects | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| N | 2867 | 2867 | 1934 | 937 |
| Psuedo-$R^2$ | 0.12 | 0.13 | 0.12 | 0.16 |

Note: *significant at the 0.05 level; +significant at the 0.10 level in two-tailed tests. All estimates use type HC1 standard errors clustered at the department level. Position-type controls include indicators for ambassadors, U.S. marshals, and U.S. attorneys. Goodness-of-fit for tobit models reported as McFadden's Pseudo-R2 (McFadden 1974).

**Table B2. Models of Likelihood of Nomination: Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations**

| | *Dependent Variable* Days to First Nomination | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **(1)** | | **(2)** | | **(3)** | | **(4)** | |
| **Variable** | **B** | **SE** | **B** | **SE** | **B** | **SE** | **B** | **SE** |
| *Hypothesized Relationships* | | | | | | | | |
| Policy Position (0,1) | 0.77 | 0.09* | 0.68 | 0.10* | 0.73 | 0.12* | 0.52 | 0.18* |
| Management Position (0,1) | -0.14 | 0.10 | -0.37 | 0.11* | -0.36 | 0.13* | -0.38 | 0.20* |
| Priority (0,1) | 0.35 | 0.16+ | 0.12 | 0.17 | 0.43 | 0.19* | 0.72 | 0.27* |
| Agency Ideology (0.00,3.87) | -0.06 | 0.03 | -0.10 | 0.03* | -0.09 | 0.03* | 0.10 | 0.09 |
| Priority*Agency Ideology | -0.04 | 0.07 | -0.02 | 0.08 | -0.09 | 0.10* | -0.15 | 0.16 |
| Agency Skills (-1.99,1.82) | | | | | | | -0.31 | 0.10* |
| *Agency Level Controls* | | | | | | | | |
| EOP (0,1) | -0.30 | 0.13* | | | -0.23 | 0.19* | -1.42 | 0.42* |
| Commission (0,1) | -0.08 | 0.08 | | | 0.28 | 0.14* | 0.42 | 0.23 |
| Agency Giving Grants (0,1) | | | | | 0.11 | 0.13* | -0.08 | 0.23 |
| *Position Level Controls* | | | | | | | | |
| Pay Level (0-5) | 0.45 | 0.03* | 0.58 | 0.04* | 0.49 | 0.04* | 0.57 | 0.07* |
| Part Time (0,1) | -0.65 | 0.12+ | -0.42 | 0.14 | -0.46 | 0.16* | -0.94 | 0.28* |
| Ambassador (0,1) | 0.44 | 0.12* | 0.85 | 0.17* | 1.09 | 0.39* | 1.17 | 0.56* |
| Inspector General (0,1) | -1.72 | 0.22* | -2.33 | 0.75* | -1.88 | 0.62* | -1.27 | 0.92 |
| US Attorney (0,1) | 0.74 | 0.14* | 0.79 | 0.16* | 0.87 | 0.20* | 1.35 | 0.37* |
| US Marshall (0,1) | 0.14 | 0.13 | 0.06 | 0.16 | 0.04 | 0.19 | 0.26 | 0.29 |
| *Administration Controls* | | | | | | | | |
| Bush (0,1) | 0.48 | 0.05* | 0.62 | 0.06* | | | | |
| Obama (0,1) | 0.35 | 0.05* | 0.39 | 0.06* | 0.37 | 0.06* | | |
| Estimator | Cox | | Cox | | Cox | | Cox | |
| Department Level Stratified | No | | Yes | | No | | No | |
| Committee Stratified | No | | Yes | | Yes | | Yes | |
| N | 2,867 | | 2,867 | | 1,934 | | 937 | |
| $R^2$ | 0.28 | | 0.21 | | 0.23 | | 0.25 | |

Note: *significant at the 0.05 level; +significant at the 0.10 level in two-tailed tests. All estimates use type HC0 standard errors clustered at the department level.

## Appendix C. Survey on the Future of Government Service, 2020[35]

*Sampling Procedure*: The goal of the procedure was to secure a sample that was a census of Presidential Appointees with Senate Confirmation (PAS), presidential appointees without Senate confirmation (PA; excluding the immediate White House), Schedule C appointees (SC), members of the Senior Executive Service (both career and non-career; CA, NA), and members of the Senior Foreign Service (SFS). Senior federal employees included in the survey who do not hold a position listed above were identified by title. Specifically, the sample includes a census of employees whose titles are variants of Administrator, Commissioner, Secretary (e.g., Under Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Assistant Secretary), Chief or General Counsel, Chief of Staff, Chief Officers (e.g. Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer), Controller, President, Director (e.g., Deputy Director). The agencies included in the sample comprise the 15 executive departments, 7 agencies in the Executive Office of the President, and 68 independent agencies.

Heterogeneity in title usage across agencies makes it difficult to identify a set of titles that reliably identifies senior employees in every agency. Moreover, variants of Chief, Manager, and Supervisor are common among senior employees in subagencies, meaning that the titles used to construct the census sample may not produce a large enough sample to yield a sufficient number of responses to make reliable subagency-level inferences. Therefore, for EOP agencies, subagencies, and independent agencies that had at least 100 employees in the sample frame (i.e., enough potential respondents to yield a reliable agency-level estimate give our expected response rate), survey principals executed the following sampling procedure:

[35] This section comes more or less directly from the document "SFGS 2020 Methods: Sample Construction, Weighting, and Agency List," on file with the author. Mark D. Richardson wrote this document describing the 2020 survey methodology.

For each agency with at least 100 people in the sample frame and the titles Administrator, Director, Chief, Manager, and Supervisor (in that order),

a. Calculate the number of additional respondents needed to reach a sample size of 100 for the agency
b. Select people in the sample frame not already selected by the census procedures
c. From step b, identify all individual whose title includes “Administrator”
d. If adding all individuals from step c would cause the sample size to exceed 100, take a simple random sample from the set of individuals such that the sample size for that agency will be 100 and proceed to the next agency
e. Otherwise, add all individuals from step c to the sample and repeat step c for the next title
f. If all titles have been searched and the sample size remains below 100, proceed to the next agency

In total, this procedure yielded a sample of 23,824 individuals of whom 2,984 were not part of the census sample. Names and addresses were submitted to a vendor for mail service processing. There were 22,819 records (out of 23,824) that had a mailing address or building location in the directory. About 96% of these addresses were found to be valid delivery points in the USPS delivery sequence file. Through additional editing and research, nearly all of the remaining 4% were validated. The file was also inspected for duplicate names and email addresses. Because the survey is administered online, we then eliminated individuals with no email address resulting in a final sample of 17,792 individuals.

*Survey Execution:* The Princeton Survey Research Center (PSRC) fielded the 15-20 minute survey in the summer and fall of 2020 (June 12, 2020 to December 31, 2020).[36] In 2020, most federal executives were working from home because of the 2020 global pandemic. This made letters and postcards infeasible since most respondents would not receive their work mail at home. The pandemic also made telephone calls difficult since most executives were working from home rather than the office. PSRC still tried to reach executives through calls to work numbers. Most of the 2020 survey involved electronic communications.

*Response and Participation Rates:* The participation rate was 11% (1,779 full or partial completes out of 16,232).[37] Out of 1,779 respondents, there were 125 appointees (7%; 125/1,605) and 1,654 career professionals (11%; 1,654/14,627). These rates are comparable to most public opinion surveys (Marken 2018; response rates for Gallup telephone surveys average around 7 percent).

*Survey Weights:* All analysis includes survey weights to ensure that the answers provided by the sample of respondents are reliable and mirror those of the target population. The results reported are weighted to reduce non-response and noncoverage bias. We created post-stratification weights using iterative proportional fitting, more commonly called raking. The sample drawn from the Federal Government database was used to create population marginals because the sample is primarily a census sample, meaning the sample is our best estimate of the population.

The characteristics used for weighting are:

a. Whether a respondent worked in the DC area (defined as the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia).

[36] For further details see Richardson (2019).

[37] We refer to the participation rate since many respondents started but did not complete the whole survey.

b. Position type defined as political appointees (i.e, Presidential Appointments with Senate Confirmation, Presidential Appointments without Senate Confirmation, Schedule C Appointments, Non-Career Senior Executive Service positions), career member of the Senior Executive Service, member of the Senior Foreign Service, and career civil servant.

c. Workplace location in the executive branch defined as the Executive Office of the President, each executive department (separately), and independent agencies (as a whole).

The composite design effect for a sample of size $n$ with each case having weight $w_i$ is:

$$deff = \frac{n\sum_{i=1}^{n} w_i^2}{(\sum_{i=1}^{n} w_i)^2}$$

We set $\hat{p}$ = 0.5 and calculated the weighted margin of error as:

$$\pm\left(\sqrt{deff} \times 1.96\sqrt{\frac{\hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{n}}\right)$$

**Appendix D. Tobit Models of Federal Executive Responses to Question, "How much effort do the following groups [White House] spend to ensure that [your agency] has what it needs to carry out its mission?", 2020**

| | (1) | | (2) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Variable** | **B** | **SE** | **B** | **SE** |
| *Hypothesized Relationships* | | | | |
| Presidential Priority (0,1) | 0.08 | 0.17 | 0.24 | 0.12+ |
| Agency Ideology (L-C) | 0.31 | 0.10* | 0.47 | 0.11* |
| Presidential Priority*Agency Ideology | 0.20 | 0.15 | 0.28 | 0.13* |
| Agency Skills (Low to High) | 0.03 | 0.08 | 0.07 | 0.08 |
| *Agency Level Controls* | | | | |
| Executive Office of the President (0,1) | 0.46 | 0.25+ | 0.53 | 0.33 |
| Executive Department | | | | |
| Office of the Secretary (0,1) | -0.21 | 0.22 | -0.42 | 0.30 |
| Distinct Bureau (0,1) | -0.51 | 0.16* | -0.79 | 0.18* |
| Independent Commission (0,1) | -0.42 | 0.26 | -0.43 | 0.31 |
| Agency Giving Grants (0,1) | 0.33 | 0.15* | 0.30 | 0.15+ |
| *Individual Level Controls* | | | | |
| Appointee (0,1) | 0.86 | 0.23* | 0.87 | 0.22* |
| Party ID (D, I, R) | 0.38 | 0.07* | 0.35 | 0.07* |
| Scope of Responsibility (0 to 7) | 0.05 | 0.03+ | 0.05 | 0.03+ |
| Years of Government Experience | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.01 |
| Constant | | | | |
| Estimator | Tobit | | Tobit | |
| Unit of Analysis | Individual | | Individual | |
| Department Level Fixed Effects | No | | Yes | |
| Sampling Weights | Yes | | Yes | |
| Wald Test for Interaction (1 df) | 1.94 | | 4.72* | |
| N | 866 | | 866 | |
| Number of Groups | 143 | | 143 | |
| F-Test (13, 28 df) | 7.92* | | 12.31* | |

Note: *significant at the 0.05 level; +significant at the 0.10 level in two-tailed tests. Response categories: None (0), Little (1), Some (2), A good bit (3), A great deal (4). All models estimated with robust fixed effects adjusted for clustering on agency. Source: *2020 Survey on the Future of Government Service*.

**Appendix E. Alternate Models of Federal Executive Responses to Question, "How much effort do the following groups [White House] spend to ensure that [your agency] has what it needs to carry out its mission?", 2020**

| | Careerists only | | Executive agencies | | Hierarchical | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Variable** | **B** | **SE** | **B** | **SE** | **B** | **SE** |
| *Hypothesized Relationships* | | | | | | |
| Presidential Priority (0,1) | 0.34 | 0.21 | 0.41 | 0.20* | 0.48 | 0.17* |
| Agency Ideology (L-C) | 0.70 | 0.17* | 0.84 | 0.18* | 0.48 | 0.16* |
| Presidential Priority*Agency Ideology | 0.44 | 0.19* | 0.33 | 0.21 | 0.54 | 0.20* |
| Agency Skills (Low to High) | 0.17 | 0.14 | 0.25 | 0.13+ | 0.04 | 0.13 |
| *Agency Level Controls* | | | | | | |
| Executive Office of the President (0,1) | 0.47 | 0.62 | 0.73 | 0.49 | | |
| Executive Department | | | | | | |
| Office of the Secretary (0,1) | -0.22 | 0.50 | -0.63 | 0.49 | -0.32 | 0.26 |
| Distinct Bureau (0,1) | -1.08 | 0.29* | -1.24 | 0.27* | -0.46 | 0.20* |
| Independent Commission (0,1) | -0.72 | 0.49 | | | -0.05 | 0.43 |
| Agency Giving Grants (0,1) | 0.34 | 0.26 | 0.41 | 0.23+ | 0.53 | 0.15* |
| *Individual Level Controls* | | | | | | |
| Appointee (0,1) | | | 1.52 | 0.36* | 0.99 | 0.36* |
| Party ID (D, I, R) | 0.51 | 0.11* | 0.58 | 0.12* | 0.28 | 0.13* |
| Scope of Responsibility (0 to 7) | 0.09 | 0.05+ | 0.10 | 0.05* | 0.05 | 0.06 |
| Years of Government Experience | 0.02 | 0.01+ | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.01 |
| Constant | | | | | | |
| Estimator | Logit | | Logit | | Logit | |
| Department Level Fixed Effects | Yes | | Yes | | No | |
| Random Intercepts for Department | No | | No | | Yes | |
| Sampling Weights | Yes | | Yes | | No | |
| Wald Test for Interaction (1 df) | 5.28* | | 2.57 | | 7.60* | |
| N | 821 | | 801 | | 905 | |
| Number of Groups | 143 | | 125 | | 48 | |
| Wald Test (13, 28, 13 df) | 216.53* | | 240.37* | | 76.97* | |

Note: *significant at the 0.05 level; +significant at the 0.10 level in two-tailed tests. Response categories: None (0), Little (1), Some (2), A good bit (3), A great deal (4). All models estimated with robust fixed effects adjusted for clustering on agency. Cutpoint estimates omitted. The ICC for hierarchical model is 0.00. Source: *2020 Survey on the Future of Government Service*.

## References


Davis, Christopher M., and Michael Greene. 2017. *Presidential Appointee Positions Requiring Senate Confirmation and Committees Handling Nominations*. CRS Report RL30959, May 3. https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL30959.pdf.

Hogue, Henry B. 2003. *Presidential Appointee Positions Requiring Senate Confirmation and Committees Handling Nominations.* CRS Report RL30959, October 27. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20031027_RL30959_dfd4157bf54c3547fc8a715c2b4854e44f75bf4f.pdf.

Hogue, Henry B., Maureen Bearden, and Terrence L. Lisbeth. 2008. *Presidential Appointee Positions Requiring Senate Confirmation and Committees Handling Nominations.* CRS Report RL30959, March 18. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20080318_RL30959_e8d2689f3bc242b49ac39eaf01db4de564fba6a9.pdf.

Marken, Stephanie. 2018. "Still Listening: The State of Telephone Surveys," GALLUP METHODOLOGY BLOG, January 11. https://news.gallup.com/opinion/methodology/225143/listening-state-telephone-surveys.aspx).

McFadden, Daniel 1974. "Conditional Logit Analysis of Qualitative Choice Behavior." In P. Zarembka, ed. *Frontiers in Econometrics*, New York, NY: Academic Press: 104-42.

Richardson, Mark D. 2019. "Politicization and Expertise: Exit, Effort, and Investment." *Journal of Politics* 81(3): 878–91.

Richardson, Mark D. N.d. "SFGS 2020 Methods: Sample Construction, Weighting, and Agency List," Manuscript on file with author.