

THE POLITICS OF FEDERAL GRANTS: PRESIDENTIAL INFLUENCE OVER THE
DISTRIBUTION OF FEDERAL FUNDS

By

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To my wife, Emily and my parents, Patti and Jack—their support in the past and present
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On the other hand, if the money is being spent as it needs to be spent—to rebuild our roads and our bridges and our schools, and making sure that we are putting in place the kinds of infrastructure foundations that are necessary for economic growth over the long term—then I think all of us will benefit and our voters and our constituents, the people we work for, are going to be extraordinarily grateful. – Barack Obama, 12 March 2009.

Many administrations have sought to maximize their control of the machinery of government for political gain, dispatching Cabinet secretaries bearing government largess to battleground states in the days before elections. But [Karl] Rove...pursued the goal far more systematically than his predecessors...enlisting political appointees at every level of government in a permanent campaign. –Washington Post, August 19, 2007.

In late 2008 and early 2009, the United States rapidly entered a profound economic recession. In concert with Congress, the Bush and Obama Administrations crafted legislation intended to stem economic losses and restart the economy on a path toward growth, employment, and stability. What became the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009¹ was signed into law on February 19, 2009. The White House stated that the legislation was “a nationwide effort to create jobs, jumpstart growth and transform our economy to compete in the 21st century”² and would “provide immediate tax relief to families and businesses, while investing in priorities like health care, education, energy, and infrastructure...”³

¹ P.L. 111-5

² Obama, Barack. “White House Releases State by State Numbers; American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to Save or Create 3.5 Million Jobs.” The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 17 February 2009. Web. 20 October 2011.

³ Obama, Barack. “Statement on Recovery and Reinvestment Agreement.” The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 11 February 2009. Web. 20 October 2011.

The Recovery Act or ARRA ultimately provided \$282 billion in tax relief, \$274 billion in discretionary funding programs like grants and contracts, and \$284 billion in entitlement program funding.⁴ Although the legislation attempted to serve a universal goal—rehabilitating the flailing economy—the means by which the Obama Administration and Democrats in Congress sought to achieve that goal was controversial. During the negotiation and even after passage of the bill, criticism percolated across the two parties and branches as well as in the media. This concern over the structure and content of the bill involved issues such as the role of politics in the economic recovery and the exercise and expansion of power in policy making.

While the bill was intended to resolve an enormous economic crisis, critics suggested that the Recovery Act and the many drafts before final form contained porkbarrel spending that advanced individual electoral interests over the economic interests of the nation. Much of the discussion of porkbarrel spending came to fruition in a debate over the use of earmarks in the legislation. The president voiced this concern most actively. Although this criticism emerged in response to the Recovery Act, such concerns are not context specific. Instead, these earmarks are frequent points of contention in the discussion of the annual federal appropriations process.

The debate over porkbarrel politics and legislative earmarking did not begin with the Recovery Act. Earmarks as anathema has been part of the political lexicon and mood for decades. The issue prompted President Bush to issue an aggressive Executive Order (No. 13457) in January 2008 in an effort “to be judicious in the expenditure of taxpayer

⁴ http://www.recovery.gov/About/Pages/The_Act.aspx

dollars.”⁵ Specifically, this Executive Order directs federal agencies to ignore earmark requests that are not written into appropriations or authorization legislation.⁶ While many of the talking points of the time suggested an effort to eliminate earmarks, Presidents Bush and Obama instead wanted “the number and cost of earmarks [to] be reduced...”⁷ because “done right, earmarks have given legislators the opportunity to direct federal money to worthy projects that benefit people in their districts.”⁸

One concern over pork and the use of earmarks was their “corrupting element” that can “be traded for political favors.”⁹ However, some frame this worry in terms of fiscal responsibility. In early 2009, as the American economy contracted and government spending rose dramatically, earmarks became a target of those voicing concerns over unchecked disbursements. While Obama sought to strip earmarks from the Recovery Act, between it and the FY 2009 Appropriations bills, there were nearly 12,000 earmarks (Riedl 2009). The reality of the earmarks debate had little to do with fiscal responsibility, and the Obama critique while publicly framed as deficit control had a different motivation entirely.

The removal of earmarks from spending bills does little to reduce spending. In fact, “earmarks don’t add money to the annual federal budget, they simply direct money from the pot that is already being spent” (Needham 2010). In this way, the removal of earmarks does not aid in the pursuit of fiscal discipline. Instead, it simply transfers the

⁵ Bush, George W. “Protecting American Taxpayers From Government Spending on Wasteful Earmarks.” Executive Order 13457 of 29 January 2008. Web. 20 October 2011.

⁶ Commonly, legislators include earmark requests in conference reports with the expectation that federal agencies will honor such a provision. E.O. 13457 requires federal agencies to treat such requests as advisory and non-binding.

⁷ Ibid at 5.

⁸ Obama, Barack. “Remarks by the President on Earmark Reform.” The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. 11 March 2009. Web. 20 October 2011.

⁹ Ibid.

power to make distributive decisions from Congress to the president. Traditionally, Congress has exercised the power to decide where federal spending would be directed. The legislative branch exercises this power in a multitude of ways including creating block and categorical grants, designing distributive formulas, detailing criteria, and earmarking funds. However, executive branch discretion guides the allocation of large sums of federal dollars under both divided and unified government. Presidential efforts to curb earmarking are born not from an altruistic desire to rid policy of politics. Rather, such endeavors serve to protect the presidential power of the purse by maintaining and preserving discretion.

Congress and members of the media have noted that the foundations of a presidential critique on porkbarrel politics is both motivated by a desire to expand and preserve executive power and a disingenuous attack on the role of politics in policy making. Early into his tenure and in response to the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009,¹⁰ President Obama wrote in a signing statement that “spending decisions shall not be treated as dependent on the approval of congressional committees” and that his administration would resist any effort to “condition the authority of officers to spend or reallocate funds on the approval of congressional committees,” calling these Congressional actions “impermissible forms of legislative aggrandizement in the execution of laws.”¹¹

Congress became acutely aware of presidential efforts to expand spending power and resisted such pressure. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) summed up the president’s maneuver as an “issue about discretion, about an argument between the

¹⁰ P.L. 111-8

¹¹ Obama, Barack. “Statement on Signing the Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009.” The White House. 11 March 2009.

executive branch and the legislative branch over how funds should be spent” (as quoted in Bolton 2010). Understanding this fight between the branches and the political, electoral, and institutional power that spending authority and allocation decision making carries, Congress resisted “put(ing) the money into the hands of President Obama [and] allowing his administration to spend the money as it saw fit.”¹²

This conflict between the branches over the distributive powers of government is not new. In fact, wrangling over proper spheres of power date to the beginning of the Republic, and as the government has grown in size and scope, so too have battles over the demarcation of legislative and executive power. Louis Fisher wrote in 1975, “a customary congressional control has been to delegate broad discretionary authority, confining that discretion by a combination of statutory guidelines and a trust in the integrity and good faith of executive officials” (259). He went on to explain that “unless Congress strengthens its control over budget execution, it cannot legislate back to reality its vaunted ‘power of the purse’” (1975, 260).

Congress has long enjoyed the political benefits and unique character of its constitutional role.¹³ As the government’s appropriators, legislators use this power to influence policy and demonstrate for their constituencies their hard work by returning to their state or district a share of the federal largesse. Through what David Mayhew calls “credit claiming,” legislators use spending power to seek political and electoral rewards (reelection or electoral stability) from their employers (voters) (1974). Any threat to a

¹² Senator Inhofe (OK). “Earmarks.” *Congressional Record* Vol. 156 (November 29, 2010) p. S8254.

¹³ In fact, Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) explains that efforts to ride Congress of the ability to earmark “would undermine the Constitution because instead of placing a check on the President, it turns the checkbook over to him” (Alexander, Lamar [TN]. “Alexander Statement on Earmark Moratorium.” Office of US Senator Lamar Alexander. 15 November 2010).

fundamental behavior and the primary goal of Congressional actors is met with profound resistance.

In the battle over porkbarrel spending, earmarks and the Recovery Act, Republicans were quick to criticize the behaviors of President Barack Obama. However, Democratic co-partisans were also wary of presidential efforts to expand spending authority (Needham 2010; Ward 2009).¹⁴ The separation-of-powers controversy over the power to spend government revenue rests not over *whether* earmarks exist, but rather, *who* performs the earmarking. A 2006 *Wall Street Journal* article declares, “Presidents like pork, too” (Calmes). The piece proceeds to explain that “the president’s earmarks are harder—if not impossible—to tally” and “once federal agencies get funding from Congress, [the president’s] appointees are fairly free to steer sums to places, programs and vendors as the administration decides” (Calmes 2006).

Presidential earmarks, a phrase less common than its Congressional counterpart, demonstrate not only the president’s discretionary authority over large tracts of the federal budget, but also his desire to use such spending in politically or electorally expedient ways. While it is often regarded as a truism that Members of Congress use porkbarrel spending to claim credit before their electoral constituency, presidents behave in similar ways. Seniority, seats on key legislative committees, and electoral vulnerability are among the characteristics that benefit legislators in seeking to garner extra funding from the appropriations process for political gain. However, discretionary spending authority in the executive branch similarly empowers the president. There is also little doubt that the White House seeks such influence and pursues such goals. In discussing

¹⁴ Needham’s article from *The Hill* includes quotations from David Obey (D-WI) and Ward’s article from *The Washington Times* includes quotations from Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV). Both criticize the transfer of spending power to the executive branch.

the Recovery Act, Vice President Joe Biden remarked that whenever “we’ve sent money out to renovate a school in a particular city, in a particular states—it will be up there [the recovery.gov web site]. All the press will see it on the web site. The neighbors and the community will see it.”¹⁵ The Vice President makes clear that the funds allocated by the executive branch serve as credit claiming opportunities for the President.

To this end, presidents emulate the behaviors of Members of Congress in the arena of distributive policy. Chiefs executive seek to wield spending authority such that allocation decisions run through the White House or the offices of appointees within respective agencies. Such authority carries with it an inter-institutional strength that increases presidential policy power. Yet beyond the accumulation of power, presidents also reap the benefits of spending authority. Like legislators, allocation decision making allows presidents to claim credit for federal projects and demonstrate to voters that the White House views their local interests as important.

The same basic political motives driving the behaviors of Members of Congress also drive the behaviors of presidents. Presidents allocate federal dollars strategically to facilitate an electoral connection to the people they represent. The debate over the propriety of porkbarrel spending (or more aptly the source of such spending) reveals a president who seeks to “... ‘decide to put it in some key district or state’ for political gain” (Calmes 2006).¹⁶ In fact, Office of Management and Budget official Barry

¹⁵ Biden, Joseph. “Remarks by the Vice President at the First Recovery Plan Implementation Meeting.” The White House, Office of the Vice President. 25 February 2009. Web. 18 October 2011.

¹⁶ In the quotation provided, Calmes is quoting Tom Schatz, President of Citizens Against Government Waste.

Anderson claims “presidents use earmarks much as members of Congress do” (as quoted in Calmes 2006).¹⁷

The view of the president as a political being may come as a surprise to many. The public view and the perspective of many political scientists often differ regarding the motives, behaviors, and role of the president in the American system. Throughout the history of the Republic and the study of the presidency in political science, presidents have been described in many ways ranging from a constrained executive to a powerful leader to a unique institutional actor facing distinctive political forces. These views prescribed precise expectations regarding presidential incentives. This dissertation seeks to (re)conceptualize the way in which we view presidents, their goals and their behaviors. In the context of federal spending, I explore how presidents are motivated by their own electoral goals and advance these goals through the formal and informal powers of their office. The expansive powers and complex institutional structure of the executive branch allow the presidency to be micro-level in nature, provoking the chief executive to be campaigner-in-chief engaged in particularistic policy rather than a national figure committed to universalistic policy.

Evolving View of the President

Over the history of the Republic views of presidential power, motives, roles, and duties have changed dramatically. Since the Founding, disagreements existed over the nature of the office of President of the United States and its role in the policy making

¹⁷ Calmes goes on to quote Anderson as saying that spending decisions are used “To reward political supporters, campaign contributors and sometimes members of Congress.”

process. Such conflict raged between parties, among the branches, in academic circles and among presidents themselves. Changes in presidential experience and practice, as well as important transitions in the size, scope, authority, and responsibility of the office have led to evolution in perspectives. Conflicts about and changes in the office of the president produced dramatically different scholarly views of motives and incentives. Because the nature of an institution shapes the incentives of those within it, these varied views of the presidency result in quite different presidential behaviors. Disagreements over the power and role of the president have begun to give way to a consensus view of broad presidential power and policy influence. Contemporary scholars argue that modern presidents share similar incentives and powers derived from their institutional role.

Disagreements over Defining the Presidency

The construction of Article II of the US Constitution and ratification of the document did little to settle what was a contentious debate at the Constitutional Convention. The design of the office of President of the United States, like many issues during the Convention, produced disagreement and ultimately compromise. Whereas term length, electoral procedures, and other executive branch concepts were plainly defined, the limits of power and scope of the office were far less clear.

The vague nature of Article II produced conflict as early as the Washington administration, reflected famously in the Pacificus-Helvidius debates that played out in the nation's newspapers. In response to Washington's *Proclamation of Neutrality*,

Alexander Hamilton and James Madison debated the scope of the president's power.

Hamilton (Pacificus) argued for an expansive view of the Executive, noting

because the difficulty of a complete and perfect specification of all the cases of Executive authority would naturally dictate the use of general terms—and would render it improbable that a specification of certain particulars was designed as a substitute for those terms, when antecedently used. (Pacificus No. 1)

More generally, this view reflected Hamilton's perception that the key to a powerful and successful nation was the creation of a potent executive. Meanwhile, Madison

(Helvidius) largely echoed his arguments from the Federalist papers, explaining that

Pacificus' view of the Executive would threaten the stability of the Republic. The conflict was rooted in philosophical differences over executive power. The text of the

Constitution—and particularly the (dis)use of the phrase “herein granted” generated

much of this lively debate. Whereas the Vesting Clause in Article I refers to “legislative powers herein granted,” Article II excludes that phrase in outlining presidential power.

Hamilton argues that such an omission signals broader, less bounded executive power,

while Madison claimed the text denotes limited presidential authority (Nelson 2008). In

fact, the view of the constrained president characterized Madison's writings of the period.

In his defense of the new constitution, Madison juxtaposes Congressional power with that

of the president in Federalist No. 48, describing “the executive power [as] being

restrained with a narrower compass, and being more simple in its nature...” The public

exchange between the Treasury Secretary and the future president framed not only a

disagreement between nascent political parties but a continuous debate that ignited

passions for generations.

Conflict over the role of the president in the affairs of government was not merely philosophical in nature. It also affected the manner in which presidents exercised the powers of their office. Before the 20th century, presidents varied dramatically in terms of the assertion of power and involvement in affairs, foreign and domestic. Disagreement over the proper role and scope of the presidency include famous and contentious disputes between Congress and the president, including Jackson's efforts to close the National Bank and Andrew Johnson's removal of his Secretary of War. In this context, an expansive view of presidential power motivated the chief executive to engage Congress in a power conflict.

However, expansive presidential power and a defense of the strength of the executive were not uniform throughout history. Several presidents spoke out against presidential power and warned of its risks. In his Inaugural Address, William Henry Harrison warned of a president's constitutional ability to seek additional terms in office, claiming

that republics can commit no greater error than to adopt or continue any feature in their systems of government which may be calculated to create or increase the lover of power in the bosoms of those to whom necessity obliges them to commit the management of their affairs.¹⁸

For President Harrison, his view of limited presidential power drove him to swear off seeking a second term (had fate allowed the decision to be within his discretion). He also went on to note the limited policy role of the president arguing

I can not conceive that by a fair construction any or either of its (the Constitution's) provisions would be found to constitute the President a part of the legislative power...In the language of the Constitution, "all legislative powers" which it grants "are vested in the Congress of the

¹⁸ Harrison, William Henry. "Inaugural Address." Washington, DC. 4 March 1841.

United States.” It would be solecism in language to say that any portion of these is not included in the whole.¹⁹

This view places presidents as bystanders in the legislative process, empowered solely through the use of the veto.

Indeed, Harrison was not alone among presidents. In a book penned after the conclusion of his term as commander-in-chief, William Howard Taft famously argued for the “literalist” theory of presidential power.²⁰ Literalist theory reflects the Madisonian view that presidential power was limited to that which is expressly granted constitutionally. Taft wrote in contrast to Theodore Roosevelt who promoted the “stewardship theory” of presidential power.²¹ Under this theory, Roosevelt envisioned the president to be charged to do anything in response to national needs not explicitly forbidden constitutionally. The views reflect dramatically different perspectives on presidential power, even from those who personally exercised it.

Scholars of the presidency also carried the debate over presidential power into academic circles. Disagreement over the power of the president motivated some of the early research and writings in the embryonic field of American political science, and no scholar exemplified both topical debate and evolution more than Professor Woodrow Wilson. In his preface to his 1885 text *Congressional Government*, Wilson writes that his essays, “take[e] Congress as the central and predominant power of the system” and that the purpose of the book “is to illustrate everything Congressional” (i). Early in his career, Wilson wrote powerfully of the authority of Congress in American political affairs and

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Quoting the president, Nelson writes, “Taft...believed that ‘the President can exercise no power which cannot be fairly and reasonably traced to some specific grant of power...’” (2008, 127). This quotation is drawn from Taft, William Howard. 1916. *Our Chief Magistrate and His Powers*. New York: Columbia University Press.

²¹ See Roosevelt, Theodore. 1913. *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography*. New York: MacMillan.

policy making. Even when acknowledging the role of the president, Congress was viewed as the superior force of power and the “foreman set over the forces of government” (Wilson 1885, 302). The implication of this view is that of a president largely divorced from policy making, at least in the domestic context.²²

Wilson’s view of the role of the president as secondary in the American system did not persevere. In fact, in the preface to the second edition of *Congressional Government* just 16 years later, Wilson notes “The President of the United States is now, of course, at the front of affairs, as no president except Lincoln, has been since the first quarter of the nineteenth century” (1901, xii). However, Wilson remained wary of the permanence of this power dynamic, skeptically writing, “the new leadership of the Executive, inasmuch as it is likely to last...” (1901, xii). By 1908, Wilson’s view of the president had transformed dramatically. In *Constitutional Government in the United States*, he writes, “there can be no mistaking that we have grown more and more inclined...to look to the President as the unifying force in our complex system, the leader of both his party and of the nation” (1908, 60). During a 23 year period, Professor Wilson endures a transformative view that many scholars, observers and citizens shared. Formerly, scholars believed the exercise of presidential power often depended substantially on the personality and “initiative” of the officeholder and that successful and forceful use of presidential power was exceptional.²³ What became clear early in the 20th century was that the presidential role was changing, and it was unclear whether

²² In *Constitutional Government in the United States* (1908), Wilson distinguished the president’s role in foreign policy writing, “One of the greatest of the President’s powers...[is] his control, which is very absolute, of the foreign affairs of the nation. The initiative in foreign affairs, which the President possesses without any restriction whatever, is virtually the power to control them absolutely” (77).

²³ Chamberlain writes in 1946, “during periods when the Chief Executive assumes the initiative, the partnership between the executive and the Congress operates more efficiently. This does not mean the Congress has become less important...[I]t should be kept in mind that the President’s contribution was fundamentally that of making Congress effective, rather than of creating something himself” (14).

Congress would reclaim its position of prominence. Wilson argued that as the presidential role transformed, the president became incentivized to take more active, central and public investment in politics and policy.

The transitions in views over presidential power and scope of influence that began in Wilson's writings continued into his tenure as president and beyond. In many ways, these views of the presidency transformed because of events and changes in American politics and society. Crises of economics and foreign policy during the first half of the 20th century drove changes in the view of presidential power and put greater demands on government, generating new citizen expectations. The first half of the 20th century included crises that threatened both democracy and capitalism, and the presidential response involved a profound exercise of executive power in an effort to meet both challenges and public need.²⁴ In fact, the New Deal/Roosevelt era expanded presidential power in multiple ways. Beyond simply the exercise of power during crisis, Congress and eventually the Supreme Court ultimately delegated and codified increased presidential power in concert with the expansion of the federal government role in domestic affairs. The president came to be viewed as a unitary actor who acquired wide-reaching power to affect outcomes in the national interest. Congress formalized this new role by expanding presidential staff in creating the Executive Office of the President (EOP). The EOP quickly grew and over time included the Office of Management and Budget (formerly the Bureau of the Budget), the White House Office, the National Security Council, the Council of Economic Advisors, and several other policy-relevant institutions. Rather than a return to the old, after World War II, a new equilibrium was set and the president

²⁴ In this context, the Supreme Court ruled some powers unconstitutional. See *Schechter Poultry Corp. v. United States* (295 US 495) and *Panama Refining Co. v. Ryan* (293 US 388).

remained a powerful and dominant force in American political life. This permanent institutional transformation led to dramatic change in the way citizens view their president, how scholars study the office, and presidents are driven to behave.

The Modern View of the Institutional Presidency

Modern scholars of the presidency particularly focus on how the institutionalization of the office and increased citizen demands on government shape the behavior of all modern presidents. Modern presidents, as the only nationally elected political official (save the vice president) must be intimately involved in policy making and motivated by broad-based, national goals. The profound socioeconomic and political changes that occurred during the New Deal and World War II era dramatically transformed the office and fundamentally shaped the incentives and behaviors of all presidents from that point forward. No longer would presidents have a restrained role or one secondary to Congress. Instead, the president would become the singular leader of the American government. In fact, Neustadt (1960) notes,

A striking feature of our recent past has been the transformation into routine practice of the actions we once treated as exceptional. A President may retain liberty, in Woodrow Wilson's phrase, "to be as big a man as he can." But nowadays he cannot be as small as he might like. (5)

Part of what defines the modern presidency is agreement about some aspects of the power of the president and his role in government, laying to rest much of the previous debate on the subject. One element of this consensus is an institutional view of the

presidency.²⁵ With the institutional presidency scholars focus less on individual presidents and more on how the office and the unique position shapes presidents. The phrase “White House” serves not as a convenient synonym for “president,” but as a moniker more representative of the reality of the position and conceptualization of the office.

The institutionalization of the presidency emerged in response to greater demands on the office. Beginning with President Wilson’s active legislative role and solidified with the efforts of President Roosevelt’s New Deal, presidents actively engaged in domestic policy in addition to foreign policy.²⁶ The public, responding to expectations set clear by FDR at the start of his presidency, increasingly viewed presidents as the official held to account for national problems. Presidents responded by playing a greater role in issues like transportation, social welfare, education, scientific research, race and equality issues, and tax and economic policy. In fact, Moe and Howell note that as the presidency transformed,

the public began to demand positive governmental responses to pressing social problems and to hold the president, as the symbol and focus of national leadership, responsible for the successes and failures of government. (1999, 136)

²⁵ Huntington (1965) eloquently explained the institutional features of the presidency in an effort to shift from personal assessments of presidents (but see Greenstein 2000, 2009), and this work spurred much of the writing on the topic. The new demands and expectations of presidents to serve as national policy figures drove that the creation, expansion, and entrenchment of the EOP. The offices of the EOP became a routine part of administrative and political process and encouraged presidents to behave more strategically with regard to policy making and administration. The growth of government also motivated an expansion of the presidency through strategic staffing of appointees (Clayton 1992; Lewis 2008; Nathan 1986; Stewart and Cromartie 1982) and careerists (Pfiffner 1999; Wilson 1989).

²⁶ The expanded executive branch role in budgetary politics encouraged and aided the president’s foray into, and eventual takeover of domestic policy (Pfiffner 1996; Schick 2000).

Through time, presidents became more successful at implementing a broad and coordinated legislative agenda and affecting policy outcomes in substantial ways.²⁷ In fact, presidency scholars took hold of this conceptualization of the presidential effort, leading Stephen Wayne to title his 1978 book, “The Legislative Presidency.” The burgeoning institutional presidency allowed the White House to develop and advance legislation that was broad-based and programmatic (Baumgartner and Jones 1993).

Institutionalizing Incentives: The National President

A widely held view has developed in which modern presidents have a unique vantage point in the policy process and as the only nationally elected representative in government *must* focus on matters of broad public significance and import to be effective. This national constituency shapes views of governance and the choices of public policy issues. Scholars of the modern presidency argue presidents are distinctive as “they are the only governmental officials elected by a national constituency in votes on general, rather than local, policy issues” (Kagan 2001, 2334). Because of the nature of this constituency, presidential elections are “focused on broad public policy questions” (Kagan 2001, 2334). At the service of this constituency, presidents are charged with and held responsible for the creation and execution of public policy that is more universalistic in nature. Thus, constituency incentivizes the exercise of power.

Even presidents note their distinct role. For “a question of transcendent importance,” Andrew Jackson defended presidential decision making as “in justice to the

²⁷ Research into the presidents legislative initiative and power include Bond and Fleisher 1990; Kernell 1993; Light 1991; Pfiffner 1999; Wayne 1978. In fact, even the Congressional literature acknowledged this approach to presidential behavior and decision making (see Lowi 1969; Mayhew 1974).

responsibility which he owes to the country.”²⁸ Herbert Hoover explained that “the President must represent the nation’s ideals,”²⁹ while Harry Truman explained presidents try to “accomplish something that will be for the benefit of all the people of the Nation.”³⁰ Thinking on the presidency always contained a strain that the president is a unique actor in the American system and is alone in having an electoral connection to a national constituency. This institutional position means presidential policymaking “is occupied with numerous and important national problems,”³¹ while parochialism must be left to the humors of legislators. In describing presidential interests, Moe notes of presidents,

the heterogeneous national constituency leads them to think in grander terms about social problems and the public interest...Reelection, moreover, does not loom so large in their calculations (and in the second term, of course, it is not a factor at all). They are more fundamentally concerned with governance. (1993, 363)

In fact, Moe proceeds to explain, “[i]f there is a single driving force that motivates all presidents, it is not popularity...it is leadership” (1993, 364). Peterson and Greene explain,

Because the executive has a national constituency, it is primarily concerned with matters of national policy. Members of Congress, who have smaller, more homogeneous constituencies, are more concerned with the geographically distributive effects of these policies...Similarly, when issues have important distributional impacts but do not seriously affect the country as a whole, members of Congress will have more at stake than executive officials. To preserve scarce resources, presidents and their advisers will often defer to congressional wishes on these issues. (1994, 34)

²⁸ Jackson, Andrew. “Message Read to the Cabinet on Removal of the Public Deposits.” September 18, 1833.

²⁹ Hoover, Herbert. “Radio Address to the Nation From Elko, Nevada.” November 7, 1932.

³⁰ Truman, Harry S. “Rear Platform and Other Informal Remarks in Oregon.” June 11, 1948.

³¹ Roosevelt, Franklin Delano. “Letter on the Misuse of the President’s Name in the Pennsylvania Political Campaign.” October 26, 1938.

The different motivations of presidents and legislators are regarded almost as a truism and as an obvious implication or consequence of constitutional design and policy design. While “legislators are driven by an almost paranoid concern for reelection,”³² “reelection obviously cannot explain the behavior of (modern) presidents during their second terms, since they cannot run again. And even in their first terms, presidential behavior seems to be driven more centrally by other things.”³³

In fact, compared to the local and varied nature of the legislature, the unitary nature of the American executive suggests that presidents are resource restricted from dealing with policy minutiae.³⁴ In a sense, the responsibility of one individual to oversee the scope of executive and administrative duties in the United States is a profound expectation, often viewed as beyond reach. As such, the legislative branch and the vast bureaucracy ensure that the details of policy are sustained, while the president focuses on the bigger picture of government function and public policy making.

Under close scrutiny, the view of the “national” president depends on four common assumptions about presidential elections, behavior, and motives. First, with few exceptions, presidents are implicitly assumed to be responsive to a national constituency. Unlike legislators who represent small portions of the American electorate, presidents are seen to be elected by the whole, represent the whole, and thus, must be responsive to the whole, often in the form of satisfying the national median voter. Second, the presidential concern over elections is often viewed as a secondary consideration that is outranked by

³² Moe and Wilson (1994), p. 8

³³ Moe and Howell (1999), p. 136

³⁴ Adding to this charge is a literature on executive branch management and the problems that can ensue for presidents seeking to advance specific policies and control the bureaucracy (Miller 1992; Rourke 1984; Wilson 1989). In fact, some claim that the president’s “ability to direct that bureaucracy toward the achievement of the administration’s policy objectives and program goals is actually limited” (Pika and Maltese 2006, 219).

concerns such as historical legacy, policy making, and institutional power. Third, if presidents have electoral interests, they evaporate during the second term. Light notes, “we expect the (reelection) goal to dissipate in the second four years. Theoretically, the search for electoral success declines” (1999, 66).³⁵ Fourth, and connected to the national constituency thesis, presidents are resource constrained from engaging micro-level policy and constituency-centered electoral politics. Legislators with individual, local staffs and smaller constituencies have greater freedom and drive to deal with localized politics, a luxury presidents do not share.

These four assumptions drive much of the theory about presidential goals and behaviors. However, when each assumption is unpacked it is questionable and is at odds with much of what we know about presidential preferences. These assumptions generate a view of presidents not as politicians but of strictly policy-driven actors with little interest in or powerless in engaging in electoral politics and disengaged from the election of their successor.

Reconceptualizing the American Presidency: The Election Driven President

The president's unique electoral environment and unitary place atop a coequal branch can certainly create incentives for presidents to focus on broad public policy. However, the common view of presidents as policy-driven actors dramatically underestimates the effect that electoral politics has on presidential incentives and behaviors. Scholarship that employs this view rests upon a misconception of the

³⁵ In fact, Light suggests that while “presidents may continue to court the public” (1999, 66), this behavior emerges mainly out of habit.

institution and misses other critical forces acting on presidents. Indeed, presidents consistently influence and direct micro-level policy and do so to advance their electoral interests. The institutional structure of presidential elections and the position of presidents within the executive branch uniquely position them as such. Presidents are politicians just like legislators and are driven by the same electoral motivations to influence policy.

Although constituency size can surely affect the manner in which an individual campaigns, the meme that the president faces a broad, national constituency fails to reflect the institutional design of presidential elections and the reality of such campaigns.³⁶ The national constituency thesis implicitly assumes that presidents consider the interests of the median voter of the entire nation, much like legislators try to please the median constituent in their districts. If true, a focus on the national median voter provides clear incentives for presidents to pursue broad policy initiatives or risk electoral defeat. Such an electoral constraint may be true for a president chosen by national plebiscite; however, the American president is not.

The institutional structure of the Electoral College dictates what is required for electoral success. Presidential candidates must compete not in a national plebiscite, but in 50 individual elections for each state's electoral votes. The "national" presidential constituency is truly a series of individual state constituencies. During the campaign, candidates choose which states they will target, often not appearing or expending campaign funds in many (Shaw 2006). Instead, candidates spend time and compete in competitive or swing states—a small subset of all states. Shaw notes in describing the focus of presidents in the electoral context that candidates "identify those states most at risk and most critical to amassing 270 electoral votes" (2006, 52). In this way, presidents

³⁶ See Nzalibe, Jibe (2006) "The Fable of the Nationalist President and the Parochial Congress."

face a much smaller electoral constituency that generally excludes both states they are nearly certain to win as well as states they will surely lose. Because constituency size affects the electoral behaviors of officials, this view of a substantially narrowed presidential constituency affects the understanding of presidential behavior.

The structure of the Electoral College incentivizes the constituency focus of presidents. Whereas an executive selected through a national vote must focus on the median voter of the nation, the American president cannot. For example, if the median voter in the United States resides in San Diego, California, it would be useless for presidents to work for her vote. Instead, presidents are often committed to motivating substantial base turnout in swing states. Presidents do seek to appeal to independent and moderate voters and need to win median voters in swing states in order to be successful. However, the strategy must be more complex. Depending on turnout, the characteristics of a swing state's median voter can vary dramatically. Moreover, the political views of the median voter in Pennsylvania or New Hampshire or Colorado may differ dramatically from the nation's median voter. As a result, appealing to a voter similar to the nation's median may actually be a defeating strategy that presidents must avoid.

The design of electoral institutions has serious implications for the behaviors and pursuits of elected officials. The failure of previous research to account for the structure of the Electoral College—resorting instead to a stylized view of a plebiscitary president—has serious theoretical and empirical consequences. It is only through the incorporation of the Electoral College system into analysis of presidential behavior can research fully explore presidential goals, incentives, and preferences.

For decades, scholars have argued that electoral interests, broadly defined, influence presidential behavior. As a politician and an elected official, it would be surprising if presidents do not allow electoral considerations to enter their political calculus. However, the engagement of these electoral motives is seen as unique as the office itself. While legislators fervently engage in more base particularistic politics, presidents participate in position taking (Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004; Canes-Wrone, Herron, and Shotts 2001) or the pursuit of broad public policy in an effort to connect with voters.

It is certain that electoral interests are among a host of forces that induce behaviors among chiefs executive. In fact, this claim finds support in the literature that outlines Congressional behavior, as well. Mayhew writes, “a complete explanation (if one were possible) of a congressman’s or any one else’s behavior would require attention to more than just one goal” (1974, 14). Members of Congress may value good public policy or institutional power, but are primarily motivated by their electoral interests. Presidents operate in the same way. Before presidents can achieve any other goals, they first need electoral success. Presidents seek election, reelection, and ultimately the election of a successor from their own party. Essentially, electoral success “has to be the *proximate* goal of everyone, the goal that must be achieved over and over if other ends are to be entertained” (Mayhew 1974, 16). Once again, Mayhew’s reference to legislators’ goals must, too, extend to presidents.³⁷

³⁷ Although the quotation from Mayhew suggests that reelection must be repeated, an effort from which presidents are, technically, constitutionally barred, this presidential goal can remain salient in the second term. This point will be addressed later. In fact, I argue that presidents should maintain electoral interests in their second term, as it is a necessary condition for the continuation of other goals.

Moreover, the primacy of presidential electoral interests is observable in practice. Presidents are highly political and constantly campaigning, leading Sidney Blumenthal to describe the process as *The Permanent Campaign*.³⁸ Sitting presidents become consumed with electoral considerations as “reelection remains a critical goal through much of the first term. Both the President and his staff have considerable energy invested in returning for a second term” (Light 1999, 64). In fact, media coverage and campaign staff note the profound amount of time, energy, and resources that presidents expend on campaigning (see Shaw 2006 for a comprehensive description of such campaign activity). This drive for electoral success and support is not simply reserved for the campaign trail but also dominates behaviors inside the White House (Tenpas 2000).

The 22nd Amendment often provides an argument against a president’s interest in electoral politics and micro-level policy. A president’s personal electoral interests are limited to a single reelection, after which he is barred from seeking the office. Scholars and observers often note the focus of second term presidents on a policy agenda, the access to and exercise of institutional power, and even the solidification of an historical legacy. For example, President Clinton devoted a fair portion of his second term to Mideast peace, hoping resolution of the conflict would bolster the historical account of his presidency. However, this did not prevent Clinton from working to aid his vice president’s efforts to win the office.

For presidents, the term limits instituted by the 22nd Amendment certainly create a unique institutional dynamic that must be accounted in the assessment of the electoral motive. Although scholars argue that it recedes electoral incentives presidential electoral interests should persevere (Rottinghaus 2006). This is true particularly when operating

³⁸ Blumenthal, Sidney. 1992. *The Permanent Campaign*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

from the perspective that electoral success facilitates the achievement of other goals. Presidents are motivated to see their party's standard bearer succeed to the White House for both personal and partisan reasons. The same-party successor ensures policy making by a president with similar preferences. While presidents of the same party may not be ideological clones, they are certainly ideologically proximate. Presidents will seek to create an electoral environment in which voters will credit the incumbent party of the president and its standard bearer with success. To this end, retiring presidents who facilitate a same party successor benefit from a continuation of similar policy initiatives as well as possible benefits to historical legacy.³⁹ Thus, the assumption that presidential electoral interests fade when term limits are salient is unfounded. The transition from personal to party-centered interests may make the electoral incentive *moderate* but not *dissipate*. Instead, the motivation remains.⁴⁰

Finally, presidents not only have the desire and the institutional motive to participate in electoral politics, but often he has the resources to engage in porkbarrel politics—targeting federal funds to key constituencies.⁴¹ The president, though singular in nature, governs the largest, most diverse branch with the highest levels of expertise.

³⁹ Generally, electoral success is a necessary but not sufficient condition to achieve these secondary goals (perhaps except for the exercise of institutional power). Of particular note is historical legacy. While an improved legacy is not assured by the achievement of a second term, most one term presidents face a reduced historical legacy.

⁴⁰ One could argue the magnitude of that interest may decrease in the second term. That, as Light (1999) suggests, it sustains because of habit must be reconsidered. Light takes great care to suggest that presidents are rational actors who weigh benefits in costs in calculating actions, seeking the highest possible payoff. However, his note that continued constituency-centered politics lies beyond rationality is unnecessary, as presidents can accrue benefits from facilitating the election of their party's standard bearer.

⁴¹ Often the literature argues that presidents are resource-constrained actors, restricted from engaging in micro-level and particularistic policy (see Light 1999, Chapter 1). Unlike the locally knowledgeable, particularistic politics-centered legislator who knows her district and deals effectively with micro-level policy (see Fenno 1978), presidents are often believed to focus on broad-based public policy. In fact, even within the legislative literature, it has been argued that constituency size can induce different legislators to choose between particularistic benefits and more macro-policy-oriented presentations of self (Lee and Oppenheimer 1999, 124-5).

The structure and size of the executive branch not only facilitates the ability of the president to affect micro-level policy initiatives, but may make him better-positioned than Congress to be effective in such areas.

Congress empowers the president and the executive branch to make decisions over broad areas of federal policymaking. Presidents are not only delegated power to deal with macro-issues, but are directed by Congress to deal with the minor policy details that are necessary in the daily administration of government.⁴² To this end, the president and his subordinates are required by law to deal with the type of personal-level policies and politics for which credit is often given to Congress. Lost in that narrative is the expansive, micro-level role of the executive branch in the daily lives of all Americans.

Among the reasons Congress delegates decision making authority to the executive branch are time and expertise (Epstein and O'Halloran 1999). The sheer size of the executive branch means that it is better equipped and more effective than Congress at dealing with the large number of policy decisions that must be made daily. Although congressmen and senators seek to claim credit for distributive policy, such outcomes are often determined off Capitol Hill. To this end, presidents have a host of micro-level projects and policies to reference before key and targeted constituencies. For example, a president seeking voter support in Ohio can hold a press conference beneath a bridge in Cleveland that *his* Department of Transportation constructed. Like Members of Congress, presidents can ensure that funds are targeted, local needs are addressed, and credit is claimed.

⁴² In fact, one can argue that Congress is more likely to delegate power to the executive to make decisions over micro-level policy rather than macro-level policy and broad-based or universalistic initiatives.

Policy areas that include federal spending empower presidents in two distinct ways. First, presidents are not passive recipients of discretion. Instead, presidents can negotiate greater discretionary authority over the allocation of federal funds in exchange for their support of legislation. Second, once legislation is enacted, presidents are able to shape, in profound ways, the manner in which it is implemented. This multi-faceted role allows presidents to influence policy at several stages.

Although the executive branch administers most federal policy, many such actions are performed by career-level bureaucrats far removed from the walls of the White House. The president surely cannot engage in every administrative decision that the executive branch makes. However, this limitation should not be conflated with a lack of influence. Presidents are well-positioned to affect even micro-level policy decisions because of the president's appointment power and the structure and hierarchy of the executive branch. Presidents are constitutionally and legally empowered to select thousands of political appointees to head executive branch institutions. These institutions, ranging from policy offices in small agencies to Cabinet departments, are responsible for policy decision making. Presidents are able to convey their preferences and those preferences are directed down chains of command from officials selected by the White House to other appointees and bureaucrats. Moreover, many policy decisions, once recommended, often require final approval from a political appointee and often additional checks by the Office of Management and Budget. This executive branch decision making apparatus creates an institutional environment that facilitates presidential influence even over micro-level policy.

In sum, presidents are much like other politicians. Their electoral interest serves as a key motivation for presidential behavior. In order for presidents to achieve any goals, they must first be successful campaigners. The institutional design of the executive branch as well as the electoral structures that select its leader encourage presidents to focus on their electoral goals. To accomplish this task, the nation's chief executive needs not exclusively focus on broad issues, but can seek to influence micro-level particularistic policies. This fundamental drive combined with the nature of executive branch decision making motivates presidents to engage in the same behaviors as legislators but with a unique set of powers.

Presidents and Distributive Politics

Spending authority is an important public policy power and it provides an excellent place to test theories of the election driven president. Presidents extract discretionary authority from Congress, and they and their surrogates make decisions over the allocation of hundreds of billions of federal dollars each year. This discretionary power provides presidents the opportunity to engage in porkbarrel politics, strategically allocating funds to key constituencies at critical times. By doing so, they influence policies ranging from agriculture to transportation to defense to housing.

In this way, President Obama's approach to crafting and influencing the Recovery Act was not unusual or unprecedented behavior. Instead, such actions are part of a larger pattern of presidential attitudes toward policy making. Rather than policy simply being an end in its own right, it can also be used as a tool of electoral politics. Essentially,

presidents frequently use federal spending as a campaign tool, much like Members of Congress do.

Dissertation Outline

The remainder of this dissertation is composed of five chapters. Chapter II will introduce the detailed theoretical contribution of this dissertation. I explain how the powers of the presidency allow for the targeting of federal funds to key constituencies—swing states—in advance of elections. In so doing, I describe both the executive branch institutional opportunities that facilitate presidential porkbarrel politics and how the institutional structure of the Electoral College will affect the precise distributive strategy.

The chapter introduces the core data used in this dissertation. I have constructed a comprehensive data set that includes all federal discretionary grant allocations from 1996-2008. The data on allocations are drawn from the Census Bureau's Federal Assistance Award Data System (FAADS) and are complemented with a host of institutional, electoral, political and demographic data to assist in this empirical endeavor. In introducing these data, I also present descriptive statistics to acquaint the reader with precisely what is represented and how it informs our understanding both of the institutional presidency and distributive policy in the United States. These data allow me to answer the overarching research question for this project: *Do presidents influence the distribution of funds to advance their electoral interests?* I evaluate presidential electoral influence on annual state-level federal grant allocations while controlling for other factors such as the influence of Congress and other electoral and institutional considerations.

Chapter II demonstrates that swing states receive a significantly higher number of grants and grant dollar allocations. This swing state benefit increases in the two years leading up to a presidential election, suggesting that presidential strategy influences policy outcomes both geographically and temporally. The findings support the notion that presidents and their surrogates use their spending authority to advance presidential electoral interests at key times. In the end, Chapter II offers preliminary evidence of the presidential porkbarrel.

Chapter III considers the same question at the agency level. Critical to understanding the precise means of presidential control requires knowledge of agency characteristics. The bureaucracy is not a homogeneous institution in which presidential power and influence is uniform. Instead, the executive branch of government is a diverse array of administrative units that, in many cases, is designed to facilitate or hinder presidential influence. I explain how institutional characteristics of the bureaucracy—namely agency location, politicization, and agency ideology—affect presidential distribution.

Chapter III demonstrates that agency characteristics condition presidential power and the pursuit of electoral goals. In cabinet agencies—as one would expect—presidential power is more pervasive, and these institutions are highly responsive to the president’s electoral interests. Broadly, cabinet agencies direct federal grants to swing states at the expense of non-swing states. This electoral-goal responsiveness occurs regardless of the saturation of political appointees within an agency and the ideology of an agency. However, in independent institutions, presidential power is conditioned. Chapter III shows that in independent agencies, presidents rely heavily on the saturation

of political appointees—politicization—within the institution to advance their electoral efforts and direct funds to swing states. However, consistent with expectations, more insulated independent commissions are less responsive to presidential preferences, and presidents struggle to reap the electoral benefits from commissions’ spending power.

In addition, Chapter III adds nuance to the understanding of the legislative role. While the literature suggests that Congressional authority in the area of spending policy is unmatched, the results show how legislative constituencies benefit in the distribution of federal grants. Specifically, executive branch agencies tend to allocate more funds to states represented by legislators serving on Congressional appropriations subcommittees with oversight over those agencies. In fact, this finding serves as the only means by which legislative interests are satisfied through discretionary fund distributions. The chapter suggests that presidents seek to satisfy key legislative constituencies in an effort to maintain discretionary authority and keep alive the policy power to allocate pork.

Chapter IV examines the role of presidential power over the distribution of federal funds, but approaches the general research question from a different perspective. I evaluate the internal agency processes and staffing decisions that empower presidents to control outcomes and induce responsiveness from bureaucratic actors. I seek to drill down beneath the aggregate level and ask several questions about the specific institutional mechanisms of presidential power and influence. *How do presidents get control of distributors? Who are the distributors—those charged with allocating federal funds? What type of political, institutional, and administrative environments do distributors face?* To approach these questions, I employ a different data set: the Survey

on the Future of Government Service.⁴³ Conducted from 2007-8, this extensive survey of queries career and appointed federal government executives. The Survey provides data on numerous issues facing executive branch employees and decision makers, including internal agency environment, policy making power, contact with political institutions, and the structure of decision making. Additionally, the Survey gathers data on respondents' background characteristics, work and political experience, and other demographic data.

One challenge to the assertion that presidents influence federal grant distribution emerges from the charge that presidents are too busy to deal with such individual-level policy decisions. Chapter IV addresses this concern and shows how presidents influence personnel and processes to affect outcomes and wield political control. Moreover, the chapter is centered on the claim that presidents will seek political responsiveness from agencies that provide him with key political and electoral benefits and a reduced risk of policy failure. I argue that distributive institutions are ideal in offering presidents the benefits of porkbarrel politicking at a low cost. Federal executives with distributive authority not only exhibit characteristics likely to generate greater responsiveness to the president, but they are also subjected to more politicized environments than those without distributive authority.

This chapter engages theories of presidential control to examine how strategic staffing, administrative organization, and the creation of a politicized decision making environment induces policy responsiveness from even apolitical technocrats. Specifically, this chapter shows that presidents politicize the leadership of the executive branch with individuals who are more politically experienced and ideologically aligned with the

⁴³ See Clinton, et al (2012).

White House. Moreover, this effort is enhanced for positions with distributive authority. In order to empower politically responsive individuals, administrative processes are structured so that political actors in the White House and OMB and political appointees have key policy influence, particularly over federal spending. This finding illustrates not only the strategy behind the administrative efforts of presidents, but the unique attention presidents pay to distributive policy. Finally, Chapter IV shows that presidents seek to apply political pressure throughout the bureaucracy and significantly stronger pressure to those with spending authority.

This chapter illuminates precise mechanisms and processes that presidents use to influence and direct micro-level decision making in the executive branch. Moreover, the specific presidential attention that is paid to distributive policy suggests both that presidents can influence the distribution of federal funds in key and strategic ways and that presidents recognize the political and electoral importance of such policy. Chapter IV complements the previous two analyses with a more detailed, process-centered evaluation of presidential power, offering additional evidence of the salience of presidential electoral interests in the administration of policy.

Chapter V continues to drill down toward the individual level to assess presidential influence over policy in advancing his electoral interests. This chapter evaluates the specific processes that presidents use to inject electoral politics into the administration of policy. In testing theories of the election driven president, I seek to describe and demonstrate how a politicized decision making context and environment in grantmaking institutions dramatically affects the experience of bureaucrats and the geographic distribution of federal funds. To approach this question, I rely on extensive

original interviews with federal bureaucrats and appointees in agencies that distribute federal discretionary grants. I further complement this work by conducting interviews with state bureaucrats who apply for federal funds and interest group lobbyists who specialize in federal grants policy.

The data from interviews and the subsequent conclusions add texture and understanding to the federal grants process and allow both a confirmation of the findings from the systematic analysis and the extension of a causal argument. By observing, through interviews, the precise manner in which presidential influence manifests and the effects of that influence for public policy outcomes, I provide a critical bridge between systematic regularity and causal effect. This chapter serves as a key means of *demonstrating* presidential power, motives, and behavior in the context of the broader research question of this project.

In clear terms, I illustrate how presidential preferences influence the federal grants process and how the White House, OMB and political appointees serve as presidential surrogates who have a profound role in deciding where federal grant dollars are sent. This chapter details how presidential surrogates, in many cases, position themselves into key decision making roles with regard to fund allocations. Moreover, appointees and OMB also create an information environment in which presidential and administration preferences are clear and career-level decision makers are expected to incorporate those wishes into policy outcomes. I also describe how political actors design grant programs and, more importantly, program eligibility criteria in strategic ways. Criteria design allows political influence *ex ante* through the inclusion of targeted eligibility requirements or *ex post* by allowing appointees to use discretionary or administrative

points to affect the evaluation and scoring of proposals. Additionally, political actors often reserve for themselves final allocation authority as another means of ensuring political control. In the end, this chapter shows the precise and comprehensive processes and mechanisms that presidents use to affect micro-level policy outcomes and advance their own electoral interests.

Finally, Chapter VI concludes. I include a detailed discussion of the necessity to consider presidential electoral interests as a primary, motivating factor when assessing the behavior of the chief executive. I explain how the findings in this dissertation describe a system of presidential influence that is unique in our understanding of the behavior of the chief executive. First, presidents are not simply able to influence policy in broad national terms, but the structure of the executive branch actually allows an impact on micro-level policies. Second, I note that presidents use this power to participate in porkbarrel politics to advance their own electoral interests—a behavior rarely associated with presidents. Finally, Chapter VI discusses the policy implications of the empirical findings of this project and the reconceptualization of presidential behavior and policy influence.

CHAPTER II

PRESIDENTIAL SWING STATE STRATEGY: FEDERAL GRANTS AS A CAMPAIGN TOOL

Between October 8, and October 14, 2004, presidential appointees in the US Department of Energy, including Secretary Spencer Abraham, scheduled and attended ceremonies announcing nearly \$300 million in alternative energy grants. While such a disbursement of grants may seem like a routine part of the bureaucratic process, these grants were not evenly distributed across the states. Instead, hundreds of millions of dollars in grants were announced in five of the most competitive states in recent electoral history: Michigan, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Florida.⁴⁴ Moreover, these grants were announced only weeks prior to a highly competitive presidential election. These announcement ceremonies occurred as President Bush campaigned heavily throughout these states.

How does the president's drive for electoral success influence the distribution of federal grants? Each year, the agencies of the federal bureaucracy, headed by presidential appointees, distribute billions of tax dollars to the states through grants. Despite the prominent role of the executive branch in this process, research often ignores the influence of the president and other executive branch officials, instead focusing on the role of Congress. In order to understand how federal money is distributed, it is vital to know how presidents influence the grants process and what preferences drive this influence.

⁴⁴ "DOE Swing State Visits Continue in Fla. As Abraham Unveils \$235M Coal Grant." *Inside Energy with Federal Lands*. 15 Oct. 2004:A3; also see Loveless 2004.

This chapter develops the idea that presidents, like members of Congress, are primarily driven by electoral concerns. The presidential electoral motive informs theoretically much of this work. However, presidential elections offer a different set of rules than do Congressional elections. I address those differences in building my argument. In particular, I develop hypotheses that arise from the structure of the Electoral College, contending, for example that swing states are more likely to be benefactors of federal money than states that the president (or his party) has no chance (or is certain) of winning. The results of this analysis clearly demonstrate that through the strategic use of discretion, presidents influence the distribution of federal funds, essentially using them as a campaign resource.

This chapter proceeds as follows. First, I review the literature on porkbarrel politics and federal spending policy, drawing specific attention to how American political elites direct federal funding in electorally strategic ways. Second, I present a theory of the presidential porkbarrel. I explain how electoral interests serve as a primary motivating force in presidential behavior. The electoral motive, thus, induces presidents to engage in particularistic politics, capitalizing on their spending authority. From this theory, I derive a series of hypotheses about the relationship between presidential preferences and the distribution of federal discretionary grants. Next, I provide a comprehensive overview of the core data used in the dissertation, broadly and this chapter, specifically. The data include all federal discretionary grant allocations to the states from 1996-2008, and this section introduces the reader to the manner in which many of the concepts and variables are measured. In the following section, I introduce the methodological approach used in this chapter and present the results of the analysis. The results show that presidential

electoral interests influence grant allocations both with regard to the geographic distribution of funds and the timing of disbursements. Finally, before concluding I discuss the implications of these findings for public policy and the theoretical understanding of presidential power, motives, and behaviors.

Federal Money as a Campaign Tool

In the pursuit of electoral success, political elites use myriad means to gain and secure constituent support. Among these means is the targeted distribution of government funds (Bickers and Stein 2000; Cox and McCubbins 1986; Dixit and Londregan 1998). Mayhew (1974) describes the process by which Members of Congress claim credit for the distribution of particularized benefits, often including federal spending. Political elites are motivated to secure their constituents' fair share (or more) of federal spending, as it is an easily demonstrable example of elected officials' work (Arnold 1979; Fenno 1978; Ferejohn 1974; Fiorina 1977; Lowi 1969). Money that helps expand a hospital, equip a fire department or sustain a military installation all aid a locality while padding a politician's resume.

Research into porkbarrel politics typically focuses on Congress, arguing legislators' "almost paranoid concern for reelection" and control of the government pursestrings encourage such behavior (Moe and Wilson 1994, 8). Scholars have noted that Congress strategically allocates funds to districts and states for several reasons. They include electoral competitiveness (Bickers and Stein 2000; Stein and Bickers 1994, 1995), partisanship (Balla, et al 2002; Hurwitz, Moiles and Rohde 2001; Levitt and

Snyder 1995), members' institutional power (Carsey and Rundquist 1999; Lee and Oppenheimer 1999; Rundquist and Carsey 2002; Rundquist, Rhee, and Lee 1996), and as a means of legislative coalition building (Stein and Bickers 1994; Lee 2000, 2003; Lee and Oppenheimer 1999). This behavior is considered a pervasive and accepted (even expected) practice among members of the legislative branch.

However, other research examines the role of the executive branch in this process. Specifically, scholarship of late essentially asks whether and to what extent the presidential porkbarrel exists. Examining aggregate federal spending programs, research demonstrates that congressional and gubernatorial partisan alignment with the president translates into greater distributive benefits (Berry, Burden, and Howell 2010; Gasper and Reeves 2011; Larcinese, Rizzo, and Testa 2006). In fact, Berry, et al (2010) suggests that this effect of partisan alignment serves as a dominant influence in distribution, trumping even traditional Congressional effects. Similarly, Bertelli and Grose (2009), in an examination of contracts from the Departments of Defense and Labor, finds that the ideological position of select cabinet secretaries influences federal grant distribution.

These works demonstrate that the president's political interests drive the allocation of funds. More clearly, presidents actively seek to create a friendlier policy making space by supporting copartisans in Congress and in governors' mansions with a stream of federal dollars. Underlying these claims is an understanding that presidents seek to use federal funds in an effort to influence copartisans' electoral fates.

In a related way, other research considers how presidents use pork to advance their own electoral interests. Shor (2006) tests whether electoral considerations such as number of Electoral College votes and state competitiveness influence which states

receive more grants. More recent work engages the constituent connection more precisely. Chen (2009) in an examination of FEMA disaster grants finds that local Florida neighborhoods that supported President Bush's 2004 reelection fared better than similarly affected Democratic localities. Here, Chen suggests that disaster aid was associated with political support, and the distribution served, in part, to reward core voters for their electoral support. Mebane and Wawro (2002) explores how different types of funds during Reagan's second term were effectively targeted to constituencies in order for the president to claim credit for such spending.

Additional work argues presidents introduce an electoral strategy not in geographic terms, but through timing. Presidents strategically time grant allocation announcements in order to reap the maximum benefits in terms of credit claiming (Anagnoson 1982; Hamman 1993). This research speaks to an important aspect of presidential electoral strategy that is often overlooked in scholarship on the presidential porkbarrel. While it is important to examine the geographic nature of electoral strategy, strategic timing is also critical.

Although several scholars examine the role of the president in porkbarrel politics, many of these studies are limited in a variety of ways. First, much research focuses on a small number of grant programs and agencies or examine a narrow time period. Second, systematic studies of presidential influence often fail to consider the effect of a presidential electoral strategy in the distribution of federal funds. Finally, those studies that do consider presidential electoral strategy consider *either* the geographic or temporal nature of such strategy.

In order to evaluate thoroughly how presidents influence the distribution of federal funds, it is vital to examine both the location and timing of allocations. Particularly in the context of electoral influence, both concepts are essential aspects of campaign strategy and success. However, before considering why and in what way presidents affect federal fund distribution, it is first necessary to understand how presidents have the opportunity for such influence. To examine this question, I explore presidential spending power.

Presidential Spending Power Examined

Federal spending comes in several forms. Some types of spending are strictly controlled by legislation and offer Congress substantial control over distribution. For example, formula grants are allocated according to an often complex statutory equation. These formulas factor population, capacity and need into their allocation schemes. However, political considerations such as legislative seniority and coalition building considerations also influence these formulas (Lee and Oppenheimer 1999). Other areas of spending offer presidents the discretion to control outcomes. Executive agencies allocate discretionary federal grants totaling about 100 billion dollars yearly.

Congress often delegates power to the executive branch because it increases the time members can spend on other issues. Moreover, presidents are not passive recipients of delegated power, but they and their copartisans in Congress often have a preference for greater discretion. Through the president's role in the legislative process, he can gain discretionary concessions in exchange for his signature (Cameron 2000; Krehbiel 1999;

McCarty 2000; Volden 2002). When presidents are given discretion, they have a direct impact on policy areas (Epstein and O'Halloran 1999; Huber and Shipan 2002).

Beyond simply having the discretionary authority to influence distributive politics, the president may be best positioned and equipped to deal with these micro-level allocation decisions. In fact, presidents have both active and indirect means of influencing distributive outcomes in a manner consistent with his electoral preferences. First, the president oversees a bureaucracy that is large and filled with experts on every policy issue. The expertise and ability of the bureaucracy to handle micro-level policy decisions is one reason Congress delegates certain powers to the executive branch. These individuals serving beneath a web of political appointees who serve at the pleasure of the president and in many institutions wield final decision making authority over fund distribution. These actors are more responsive to presidential preferences and help ensure policy outcomes are, as well.

What is further required of presidents to influence the distribution of government revenues is for distributive decision makers within the bureaucracy to have knowledge of presidential preferences. Specifically, those appointees and bureaucrats who have final spending authority must be keenly aware of the how presidents want money spent. In the context of presidential porkbarrel politics, it is necessary for distributors to be aware of presidential geographic and electoral preferences. Presidential geographic preferences are not only easily conveyed, but are widely known. In general terms, it is little mystery which states are considered competitive in presidential elections. Such information is nearly universally reported in the media, broadly understood within the electorate, and most importantly, is common knowledge among politically savvy individuals. Political

appointees and decision makers who hold positions in the Washington establishment surely know presidential electoral preferences and the geographic means of employing discretionary spending authority to target constituencies.

In addition to reliance on political appointees, presidents have a host of tools to control the bureaucracy, including presidential directives, executive orders, and signing statements. Further, presidential preferences are easily communicated and carried out through pressure from the White House, the Office of Management and Budget and political appointees (see Gordon 2010; Lewis 2008; Wood and Waterman 1991). In fact, Gordon demonstrates that White House staff can effectively convey the preferences of the president to political appointees regarding the allocation of federal funds and that such pressure can have an impact on distributive outcomes.⁴⁵ Moreover, OMB or its subsidiary branches within federal agencies approve many discretionary grant criteria and the language used in requests for proposals, adding an additional layer of influence the grants process.

Indirect mechanisms in the process can also facilitate presidential control. Agencies understand the value of presidential support in terms of maintenance of funding levels, protection from reorganization or closure, and attention to priorities. Responsiveness to presidential electoral interests could function as means of continuing, gaining or rehabilitating presidential support. Further, shared ideological or policy goals between a president and agency can also motivate enhanced agency responsiveness. This

⁴⁵ Gordon, Sanford C. 2010. "Executive Control vs. Bureaucratic Insulation: Evidence from Federal Contracting." Working Paper, New York University. In this piece, Gordon argues in the context of the 2006 GSA scandal that GSA appointees had not "internalized the administration's political goals" and instead needed them spelled out (3). The political goals in that study involved a puzzlingly patterned set of Congressional districts labeled "marginal." The precise reasoning for inclusion/exclusion from this group was not entirely clear, making such goal internalization nearly impossible. However, I argue even an observer with mild political interest—no matter the interest of appointees—can easily identify which states are competitive in presidential elections.

ideological alignment means a conservative agency such as the International Trade Administration (ITA) would prefer to work with a Republican president rather than a Democratic one. As such, ITA decision makers may be more willing to use the levers of policy making to support a friendly president's electoral goals.

For these reasons, presidents are well positioned to engage in the micro-level policy decisions involved in the distribution of federal funds. Moreover, legislative discretion offers presidents the power to influence distributive outcomes in order to pursue their goals. Finally, the electoral pressures that presidents face provide the incentive to rely on the powers of their office and access to resources in order to enhance their electoral prospects.

Federal Grants and the Presidential Campaign

Presidents pursue a series of goals during and after their tenure in office including good public policy, expanded institutional power, and enhanced presidential legacy (Cooper 2002; Moe and Howell 1999; Neustadt 1960). However, before any of those goals can be secured or even pursued, presidents need electoral success. Like all political elites, presidents are electorally-driven individuals who seek election, reelection, and ultimately, the election of their same party successor (Brams 1978; Rottinghaus 2006; Shaw 2006).

Beyond the obvious benefits of an individual's initial election to the office of president, reelection allows the president the most immediate and continued influence over public policy. His will and preferences continue to be a pivotal part of the policy

process. Moreover, sitting presidents are the only individuals able to exercise unilateral, institutional power and are best positioned to expand those powers. Finally, while a second presidential term does not guarantee an enhanced legacy, one term presidents are almost always guaranteed a reduced legacy. The reelection goal is a primary force in presidential behavior, and this claim is evidenced, in a very basic way, by observing that presidents almost always seek reelection.

Although the electoral motive of presidents is strong and personal during the first term, it remains active in the second term as well. Presidents are motivated to see their party's standard bearer succeed to the White House for both personal and partisan reasons (Rottinghaus 2006). The same-party successor ensures policy making by a president with similar preferences. While presidents of the same party may not be ideological clones, they are certainly ideologically proximate. For example, Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush did not have identical policy preferences, but Bush's policy impact was more consistent with Reagan's preferences than Michael Dukakis' would have been. Moreover, even during the 2000 presidential election when Vice President Gore sought to distance himself from President Clinton, the sitting president went as far as giving the Gore campaign final approval of his travel schedule in an attempt to enhance Gore's chances.⁴⁶ Thus, while self-interest may motivate a stronger electoral motivation during a president's first term, institutional and ideological forces ensure that this incentive endures throughout a president's tenure and does not dissipate in the second term.

Presidents employ active strategies to seek electoral support. Shaw and Roberts (2000) offers an examination of presidents harnessing the power of local media in order

⁴⁶ Lacey, Marc. "Gore Puts Limit On Politicking By the President." *The New York Times*. 28 October 2000.

to conduct a messaging campaign and to cover campaign events. Their work shows that candidates' active use of campaign press coverage and debates in the months leading up to an election influences a measure of the likelihood of candidate electoral success. Moreover, Shaw and Roberts detail the way in which campaign events, rallies, and public announcements influenced a campaign's electoral prospects (2000). Further, Shaw (2006) demonstrates how campaign resources in the form of advertising, campaign stops, and events are predominantly funneled to key constituencies at the expense of others. Specifically, Shaw explains that the academic- and media-driven idea that campaigns are rational allocators of resources "leads one to (correctly) presume that candidates seek to identify those states most at risk and most critical to amassing 270 electoral votes when they decide where to campaign" (2006, 52).

Federal grants serve presidents in a similar way. Given the large sum of grants appropriated each year and the level of discretion granted to the executive branch, they are an ideal electoral tool. Like campaign funds, federal grants can be allocated in strategic ways to appeal to key constituencies for their support. While the goal of much campaign spending is to get a candidate's message, qualifications, and accomplishments into the consciousness of voters, the benefits of grants are two-fold. First, grants provide advertising as their announcement and disbursement are covered by local media, providing free publicity for a presidential candidate. Second, grants serve as a direct transfer from the federal largesse to a state's economy. Grants can provide a host of improvements, services, or aid. They offer short term support to a community in a way that provides little additional cost to a local constituency. Chubb (1985) describes grants as ideal for localities because they provide a good (or service or both) without raising

local taxes. This low cost-high benefit spending is particularly true for grants that have few conditions or expectations for local government matching (Chubb 1985). Presidents are able to claim credit for these grants among the state's voters, while relieving constituents of the prospect of local tax increases.⁴⁷

Typically, the scope of a president's national constituency makes porkbarrel politics appear to be an ineffective electoral strategy. However, because of the institutional design of the Electoral College, presidents do not face a national electorate, but instead a series of sub-national, state-level electorates. Moreover, only a handful of states is competitive in presidential elections, reducing a huge national electoral to a much smaller set of competitive races (Shaw 2006). The small size of the truly competitive presidential electorate makes an electoral strategy that utilizes the distribution of government funds a feasible and appealing tactic.

Thus, presidents will use their power and discretion within the federal grants process to enhance their electoral chances. In practice, this means targeting the distribution of federal grants to key constituencies at key times in order to gain and secure support. Because there is a fixed sum of grant funds to be distributed each year, the president must target funds in an electorally strategic manner. In this way, he has the strongest incentive to deliver grants to states where victory is not certain for either political party. These states are often referred to as swing states, toss-up states, or battleground states. In a swing state, the population is typically politically divided and the infusion of resources, including federal grants, into these states may affect electoral

⁴⁷ Unlike formula and block grants, discretionary grants often come with few conditions or contingencies.

outcomes.⁴⁸ Research on the presidency demonstrates that presidents and presidential candidates spend disproportionate levels of their campaign resources in swing states (Shaw 2006).

For the purpose of this chapter, I divide states into three categories: swing states, core states, and lost cause states. Core states are those almost certain to support the incumbent presidential candidate. Lost cause states are those almost certain to support the non-incumbent party's candidate. Shaw explains that "states in the battleground (swing) category received the most resources" (2006, 46).⁴⁹ In modern presidential politics, Vermont is a core state and Mississippi is a lost cause state for Democrats. Presidents will direct the most funds to swing states, where the ultimate electoral payoff will be its highest.

H1: Swing states will receive more in grants than core states or lost cause states.

Swing states are key because their electoral fate is not just unknown, but may be malleable. Presidents will concentrate resources in order to influence the outcome. Engaging in advertising, making campaign stops, and directing federal grants may have an impact on a sufficient number of voters to allow the president to win a given state. Additionally, grants allow presidents to connect with and gain support from local officials who will publicly support, endorse, and work for him. In this way, presidents

⁴⁸ This research strictly engages presidential strategy without commenting on the success of that strategy. The distribution of government funds as a means of advertising and credit claiming serves as a strategy utilized by many elected officials. An additional and interesting question, that cannot be addressed in the confines of this chapter would consider the impact of grant allocations on presidential electoral outcomes in the states.

⁴⁹ Shaw explains that "base states"(core states) receive less. Discussion of the opposing party's "base states" (lost cause states) suggests that they are largely reserved for the lowest level of resource allocation.

recognize that elections are won or lost in these key states and seek to utilize resources in a way to maximize their chance of winning.

Beyond a geographic understanding of the electoral nature of grant allocation, it is important to evaluate presidential strategy in terms of time. An electorally strategic distribution of federal grants should not be uniform throughout presidential tenure. Instead, time should affect grant distribution in two important ways. First, grants are more appealing as an electoral tool as an election nears. Because voters tend to use more recent events in their judgment of elected officials (Zaller 1992), effective credit claiming and advertising should occur in the period preceding an election (Fiorina 1981; Shaw 2006; Shaw and Roberts 2000).

Moreover, Alesina and Rosenthal (1989) in a discussion of macroeconomic policy distinguish between policies that have long and short term impacts. They argue that long term policy should be utilized in the first two years of a presidential administration as their effectiveness should coincide with the presidential election. Meanwhile, other policies that have short term impact should be used in the final two years of the administration as the immediacy of their impact will enhance electoral chances.

Although Alesina and Rosenthal rely on a formal model in which completely informed voters reward presidents for observed economic growth and success, Hetherington (1996) demonstrates that the mere perception of economic conditions may motivate voters to punish or reward presidential candidates. Because the grants being analyzed in this project are typically short term in nature, they are more likely to be used as a presidential election draws near. These grants either provide immediate impact or at least provide the perception of positive impact in voters' recent memory.

H2: Swing states will receive more grants in the two years prior to a presidential election than in the two years after.

Second, while presidents are motivated not only by their own reelection, but the electoral success of their same party successor, self-interest should trump partisan interest. Rottinghaus argues that presidential electoral interests can extend to the second term, as a president seeks a partisan hold on the Oval Office (2006). In this way, the two term limit does not deconstruct the electoral drive, as presidents still maintain electoral preferences regarding the next occupant of the White House.

Despite a continued electoral interest for presidents, other research suggests the salience of personal electoral considerations can influence behavior. Broadly, research finds that the salience of personal electoral motivation will influence the behavior of US Senators (Kuklinksi 1978). Moreover, Canes-Wrone and Shotts (2004) finds that while presidents are responsive to the public across presidential terms, the effect is enhanced during the first term when personal electoral preferences inform behavior. This argument emerges from a view in which a president's personal electoral interest serves as a salient force in guiding behavior. Although interest in the success of their party's standard bearer will influence presidential behavior across terms, this concern may not influence behavior as strongly as would one's own electoral interest. As a result, a president's commitment to the electorally-motivated distribution of grants should be stronger in his first term than in his second.

H3: Swing states will receive a larger benefit in grant allocations in a president's first term than in his second.

These hypotheses help explore more clearly presidential influence in the aggregate distribution of federal grants. By examining both the geographic and temporal influences on the distribution of these federal funds, this project paints a clearer picture of the motives behind their allocation. An allocation strategy that significantly increases funding to swing states, particularly as a presidential election approaches and in a president's first term, suggests that a president's electoral preferences are a consideration in the distribution of these funds. Like Members of Congress, election-driven presidents use their spending power to advance their goals.

Measuring Presidential Power over Federal Grants: An Introduction

To approach the question of presidential influence over the federal fund allocations, I focus on a subset of federal spending: federal discretionary grants. Discretionary grants are an appealing segment of the federal largesse for several reasons. First, discretionary grants are allocated based on decision making in the executive branch. The “discretion” that distinguishes these grants is power delegated from Congress to federal agencies to determine not only the distribution of these funds, but often the nature of the programs that will govern them. These grants provide the executive with a clear avenue to influence allocations and provide the president a clear context in which to advance his electoral goals.⁵⁰ Second, like many fund allocations, the federal government

⁵⁰ Discretionary grants by no means offer the “hard case” in demonstrating presidential influence. However, given that political influence over the distribution of federal funds is already biased toward legislative effects and because Congress influences distributive politics in so many areas, it is important to focus on a setting that can facilitate executive influence. Discretionary grants provide that ideal setting.

keeps quite meticulous records on the allocation of discretionary grants that have at different times been publicly available for various years.⁵¹

Dependent Variables

Federal discretionary grants serve as the basis for the dependent variables used in the next two chapters (and the central focus in the qualitative analysis in Chapter V). Data on federal discretionary grants are drawn from the Federal Assistance Award Data System (FAADS) which is compiled by the Office of Management and Budget and subsequently maintained by the United States Census Bureau. The data found in FAADS are extensive, including information not only on discretionary grants but a series of other types of federal funding including formula and block grants, government insurance, cooperative agreements and more. The data set allows for a straightforward isolation of funding by numerous categories, including funding type, and to this end, I isolate by discretionary grants.⁵² The data on grant allocations include every discretionary federal grant distributed to the 50 states from 1996-2008. During this period of time, the bureaucracy doled out more than \$962,000,000,000 in grants. This money was allocated through 3,692,084 grant disbursements.

The data available through FAADS offers a wealth of information about each grant allocation including location, amount, program, agency, date of distribution, among other details. Each of these can offer insight into the structure of an allocation or serve as part of a critical set of explanatory variables (and in many cases I capitalize on this

⁵¹ For some of the data, they are available for a fee and may require a Freedom of Information Act request. However, the data, in whatever context they are available, are maintained in clear, consistent, and reliable data sets.

⁵² For purposes of clarification, FAADS labels discretionary grants “project grants.”

additional information in just that way). The data allow for a substantively important distinction in the conceptualization of grant allocations. In a basic way, grants are easily understood in terms of dollars. Dollars serve as a unit that is comparable across space and over time, and as such is an appealing quantitative measure of the basic variable of interest. However, grants can also be understood as a number of allocations, independent of dollars.

For example, the state of Rhode Island may receive a single grant to construct several new fire stations in Providence. That grant may be worth \$3 million. This allocation will help the city of Providence and the surrounding communities and provide an economic stimulus to the area. The elected official responsible for this grant may receive media attention and the appreciation of Rhode Island voters for bringing this money to the state for much needed improvements. Grants may take a different form, as well. The state of Arizona may receive a series of 12 grants each valued at \$250,000 to purchase fire equipment for Maricopa County. The area will receive a similar \$3 million dollar economic stimulus, but the residents of the area may perceive the funds differently. Rather than media coverage of a single \$3 million dollar grant, *The Arizona Republic* may publish a steady stream of monthly grant allocations, constantly keeping voters aware of the flow of federal funds to the area.

These examples capture the idea that it is critical to measure grants in two different ways, as their use in terms of credit claiming can differ depending on the number or value of grants. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 illustrate real federal grant dollar and population-controlled number of grant allocations annually from 1996-2008. The figures

demonstrate there is substantial variation in both grant and grant dollar allocations over time.

To capture accurately each concept, I measure both grant and grant dollar allocations in specific ways. First, for the purpose of this project I measure grant dollars as the logged real grant dollars per 100,000 people per state-year. This measure is

Figure 2.1 Inflation-Adjusted Discretionary Grant Dollars to the States, 1996–2008

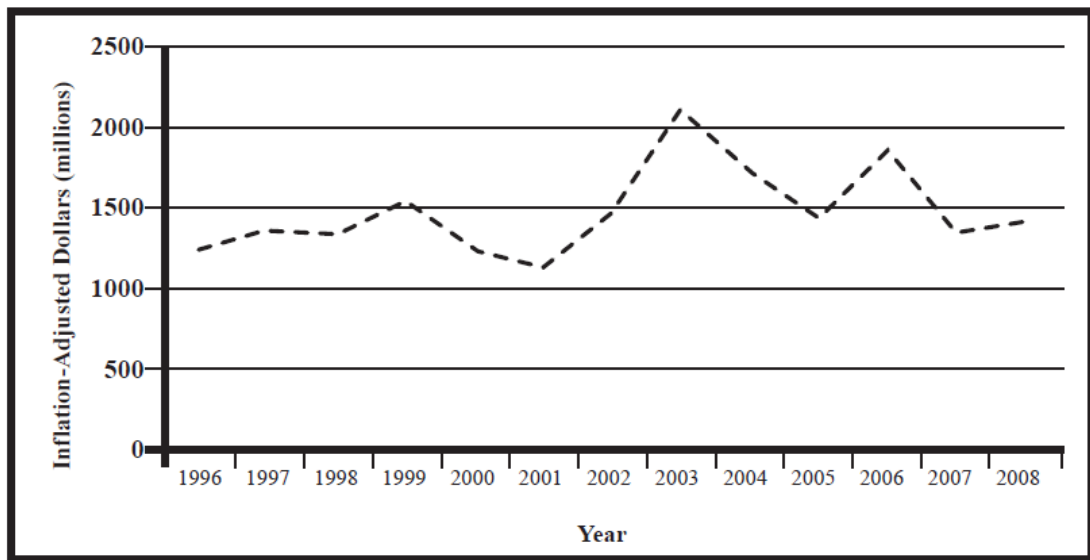
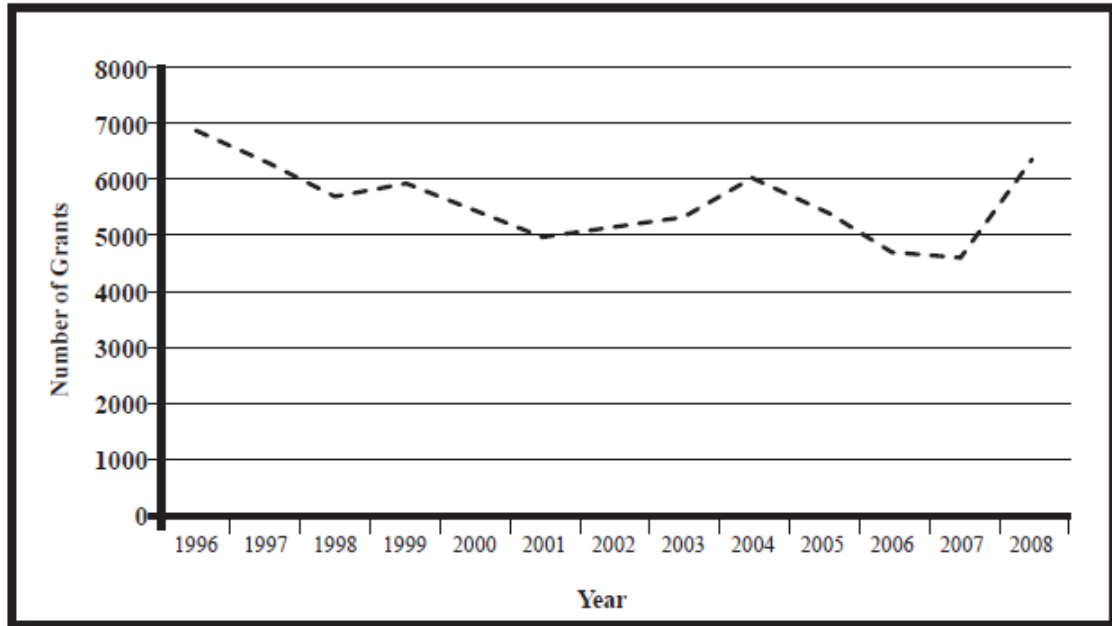


Figure 2.2 The Number of Discretionary Grants Allocated to the States, 1996-2008



methodologically appealing for several reasons. First, it naturally controls for population, which is key given dramatic population differences across states and their expected effect on the distribution of federal funds. Next, I control for inflation by indexing allocations for prices, using 1996 dollars. Because grants can have an economic impact and that the perception of the value of grants can have an impact on the perceived effects of allocations, it is critical to make sure that funds are comparable, not simply across space (as population controls allow) but also over time. Finally, while the population and inflation controls help reduce the impact of outliers (smooth the data), these efforts fail to control sufficiently for such a concern. To overcome this challenge, I use the logarithmic value of the population-adjusted real grant dollars per state year, as a means of standardizing the measure and limiting the effect of outliers.

To measure the number of grants, I employ a similar approach to overcome some characteristics in the data that can present analytical challenges. I measure this dependent variable as the logged number of grants per 100,000 people per state-year.⁵³ Essentially, and for the same reasons, this variable is measured identically to the grant dollars variable with the omission of the unneeded inflation adjustment.

*Characteristics of the Data and Key Independent Variables*⁵⁴

The key means of conceptualizing presidential electoral influence emerges from the competitiveness of states in presidential elections. As mentioned previously, presidents who seek to advance their electoral interests are best served to target resources to swing states. Swing states are the most competitive in presidential elections, and of greatest import, they have an electoral fate that is uncertain. Although debate exists in the literature on porkbarrel politics regarding which type of constituency an elected official should target,⁵⁵ both empirical regularities (see Shaw 2006) as well as a theoretical foundation demonstrates clearly that the institutional nature of the Electoral College motivates presidents to focus on swing constituencies (states).⁵⁶

⁵³ As a note of clarification, for both dependent variables in Chapter III, the unit of analysis is the agency-state-year, the grant allocations by an agency to a state in a given year. In this analysis, the measure of the number of grants no longer controls for population because the values become so small that interpretation is difficult. Instead, I include an independent variable that measures population as a means of controlling for such effects.

⁵⁴ The discussion of these data is by no means exhausting for the purpose of the systematic analysis in the dissertation. This discussion serves, instead, as an introduction to the core data used in this project. Additional independent variables used as controls and to assess alternative hypotheses are used throughout the dissertation and will be discussed in the context of the relevant analysis in the proceeding chapters. An overview of the measurement of the variables relevant for this chapter can be found in Appendix 2.A1.

⁵⁵ See Dixit and Londregan (1996) for a discussion of the debate between swing and core hypotheses.

⁵⁶ It should also be noted that the presidential campaign focus on swing constituencies is true at the state level, but may not be true at the sub-state level. Because of the winner-take-all and first-past-the-post nature of state electoral vote allocations, presidential candidates focus on winning states and concentrate resources (campaign or pork) on swing states. However, the means of winning swing states or the strategy by which presidential candidate achieve success within swing states must not necessarily reflect the swing

To measure state electoral competitiveness, I use a common data source: the incumbent share of the two-party vote in the previous presidential election. This measure is quite appealing for understanding the presidential motivation in porkbarrel politics. While scholars have sought to use other measures of competitiveness in evaluating campaign behavior, these measures are temporally limited for the purpose of this project (even if they are useful for the research in which they are employed). For example, Shaw (2006) uses lists compiled by campaigns in the months leading up to a presidential election to understand competitiveness and electoral strategy. These lists are incredibly useful and are often updated rapidly in advance of elections based on timely information. For Shaw, such a measure was key in understanding salient campaign behavior in the months prior to Election Day.

For this project, such a measure is insufficient. Because I hypothesize that presidents will engage in grant-centered porkbarrel politicking throughout their tenure, the campaign lists are unavailable to inform a president as to the competitiveness of states during much of that time. Instead, the vote results from the previous election are immediately available to an incumbent president and can serve as a useful guide in the effort to influence the allocation of funds to key states. This measure also serves as a stable reflection of competitiveness, not subject to revision based on polling results or media information.

Specifically, I operationalize state competitiveness as two and three category measures. The two category—dichotomous—measure indicates whether a state is a swing state. I denote a state as swing if it was decided by 10 percentage points or fewer in

hypothesis. In fact, one can imagine that within a swing state, a presidential campaign may target core voters in an effort to win that state (see Chen (2009) for an example of a core constituency strategy being implemented within a swing state, [Florida]).

the previous presidential election and as non-swing otherwise. The 10 percentage point measure is a standard in the literature on elections and maintains a level of face validity, as well. Table 2.1 lists the swing states for each approaching presidential election year analyzed in this project. Although the measure can be blunt, including a few states that are not typically competitive and excluding a few that are, the table below demonstrates that this measure generally reflects competitiveness in an accurate way. Like any measure, it is imperfect, but generally captures well the concept of state electoral competitiveness in presidential elections. Furthermore, while ten percentage points can reflect a large number of votes, political fortunes can be reversed by simply changing the minds of just over five percent of a state's population. Moreover, a state decided by a margin of 55-45 or less is commonly viewed as a competitive state.⁵⁷

Although as noted above and in Chapter 1, the swing hypothesis is theoretically and empirically consistent with the institutional nature of the Electoral College, the dichotomous measure of state electoral competitiveness does not allow for a straightforward evaluation of the core state hypothesis (a key alternative explanation in the study of distributive politics). To overcome this limitation, I also include a three category measure of state electoral competitiveness. The categories for this variable are swing state, core state, and lost cause state. A core state serves as one that the party of the

⁵⁷ For much of the analysis, I use a measure of an eight percentage point or fewer difference as an alternative. Some literature considers this measure more conservative as it includes fewer states. However, the conservatism of this measure is up for debate given that it offers greater weight to the most competitive states at the expense of moderately competitive states. Additionally, in terms of face validity, the reduction of the competitiveness margin to eight percentage points excludes in several cases states that are widely considered (publicly and by campaigns) to be swing states. The expansion of the margin to ten percentage points often captures these states. Another alternative, the use of a continuous (folded) measure of state electoral competitiveness may be appealing, but it fails to capture the manner in which presidential campaigns conceptualize states. While states are seen as more or less competitive, Shaw (2006) clearly demonstrates that presidential campaigns think of states in terms of being swing or non-swing and less in terms of a continuous measure.

Table 2.1 Swing States by Presidential Term 1996-2008

Clinton's 1 st Term 1996	Clinton's 2 nd Term 1997-2000	Bush's 1 st Term 2001-2004	Bush's 2 nd Term 2005-2008
<i>Alabama</i>	<i>Alabama</i>	<i>Arkansas</i>	<i>Arkansas</i>
<i>Arizona</i>	<i>Arizona</i>	<i>Arizona</i>	<i>Colorado</i>
<i>Colorado</i>	<i>Colorado</i>	<i>Colorado</i>	<i>Delaware</i>
<i>Connecticut</i>	<i>Florida</i>	<i>Florida</i>	<i>Florida</i>
<i>Florida</i>	<i>Georgia</i>	<i>Iowa</i>	<i>Hawaii</i>
<i>Georgia</i>	<i>Indiana</i>	<i>Louisiana</i>	<i>Iowa</i>
<i>Iowa</i>	<i>Kentucky</i>	<i>Maine</i>	<i>Maine</i>
<i>Indiana</i>	<i>Mississippi</i>	<i>Michigan</i>	<i>Michigan</i>
<i>Kansas</i>	<i>Missouri</i>	<i>Minnesota</i>	<i>Minnesota</i>
<i>Kentucky</i>	<i>Montana</i>	<i>Missouri</i>	<i>Missouri</i>
<i>Louisiana</i>	<i>Nevada</i>	<i>Nevada</i>	<i>Nevada</i>
<i>Michigan</i>	<i>New Mexico</i>	<i>New Hampshire</i>	<i>New Hampshire</i>
<i>Mississippi</i>	<i>North Carolina</i>	<i>New Mexico</i>	<i>New Jersey</i>
<i>Montana</i>	<i>North Dakota</i>	<i>Ohio</i>	<i>New Mexico</i>
<i>Nevada</i>	<i>Ohio</i>	<i>Oregon</i>	<i>Ohio</i>
<i>New Hampshire</i>	<i>Oklahoma</i>	<i>Pennsylvania</i>	<i>Oregon</i>
<i>New Jersey</i>	<i>Oregon</i>	<i>Tennessee</i>	<i>Pennsylvania</i>
<i>North Carolina</i>	<i>South Carolina</i>	<i>Virginia</i>	<i>Virginia</i>
<i>Ohio</i>	<i>South Dakota</i>	<i>Washington</i>	<i>Washington</i>
<i>South Carolina</i>	<i>Tennessee</i>	<i>West Virginia</i>	<i>Wisconsin</i>
<i>South Dakota</i>	<i>Texas</i>	<i>Wisconsin</i>	
<i>Tennessee</i>	<i>Virginia</i>		
<i>Virginia</i>			
<i>Wisconsin</i>			
<i>Wyoming</i>			

incumbent president can be nearly certain of winning; a lost cause state is one that the party of the incumbent president can be nearly assured of losing. In modern and contemporary presidential politics, Massachusetts is a core state for a Democrat, while Oklahoma is a lost cause state. Table 2.2 demonstrates the manner in which each competitiveness category is measured.

Table 2.2 Measurement of State Electoral Competitiveness

	Incumbent Share of the Two-Party Vote in Previous Presidential Election
Swing State	45% ≤ Vote Share ≤ 55%
Core State	Vote Share > 55%
Lost Cause State	Vote Share < 45%

Table 2.3a shows the average number of grants and grant dollars allocated to each type of state. The results appear inconsistent with the theoretical predictions of the project. Lost cause and core states receive far more in grants than do swing states. However, a deeper look at the data shows that a few data points are driving these results. First, California and New York are extreme outliers and in every year in the data set are coded as either a core state or a lost cause state. These states' grant allocations far exceed all other states. In fact, in some years, their grant allocations are more than six standard deviations above the mean of all allocations. Additionally, during the period under analysis two exogenous shocks affected certain states that should be expected to drive up grant receipts to those areas. The first is New York in the few years after the September 11th terrorist attacks. The second comes with Louisiana and Mississippi in the years following Hurricane Katrina. Examining the data show that grant receipts increase dramatically in these years. In fact, California, New York and these disaster years drive almost a fifth of the variation in the grant allocation means, despite making up less than five percent of the data points.⁵⁸ While these data are not irrelevant, their exclusion provides a different view of the remaining 95.1% of the data.

Table 2.3b shows the means when the California, New York and disaster state-year data are excluded. These data show greater consistency with the theoretical expectations of this project. Both in terms of the number of grants and grant dollars, swing states receive more than other states and substantially more than average. In fact, on average, swing states receive \$240 million more in grants per year than core states and nearly 900 more grants annually. This examination of means suggests that a more

⁵⁸ In this description of the data, New York is coded as a disaster for 2002, 2003 and 2004. In these years, the states are even greater outliers than New York is typically. However, the non-disaster years for New York are outliers in their own right.

Table 2.3a. Mean Yearly Grant Allocations by State Competitiveness

	Grant Dollars (Millions)	Number of Grants
All States	148	5680
Swing States	131	5486
Core States	135	5286
Lost Cause States	226	7177

Note: Swing states are those decided by 10 percentage points or fewer in the previous presidential election. Core states are those in which the party of the incumbent president receives more than 55% of the vote. Lost Cause States are those in which the party of the incumbent president receives less than 45% of the vote. Source: The Federal Assistance Award Data System.

Table 2.3b. Mean Yearly Grant Allocations by State Competitiveness excluding Outlier States

	Grant Dollars (Millions)	Number of Grants
All States	120	4994
Swing States	131	5486
Core States	107	4618
Lost Cause States	121	4523

Note: The data exclude New York and California, as well as Mississippi and Louisiana from 2005-2007, as they are extreme outliers. Swing states are those decided by 10 percentage points or fewer in the previous presidential election. Core states are those in which the party of the incumbent president receives more than 55% of the vote. Lost Cause States are those in which the party of the incumbent president receives less than 45% of the vote. Source: The Federal Assistance Award Data System.

comprehensive examination of the relationship between state competitiveness and grant allocations is warranted. On its face, this bivariate relationship offers the first systematic evidence of grants being allocated according to presidential electoral calculations.

In addition to the geographic nature of federal fund allocations, I also include variables that measure the strategic timing involved in the distribution of grants. To measure this concept I rely on two measures. The first denotes the salience of elections. This measure of electoral proximity is a dichotomy indicating the two years leading up to a presidential election (and after a midterm Congressional election). The second dichotomous measure indicates a president's first term, reflecting expectations that term effects may exist in the data.

Table 2.4 also captures various characteristics in the data that are important in the evaluation of political behavior and inter-branch relations. The data cover two presidencies, and at least one year in each term of those two presidencies. The two presidents under analysis—Bill Clinton and George W. Bush—hail from different parties and governed during varying partisan relations with Congress including unified government, semi-divided government, and divided government. Additionally, the data include divided government for both presidents. This variation allows for the evaluation of presidential behavior in the midst of their own reelection efforts and as lame ducks supporting their eventual party’s standard bearer. Thus, although the data include only 13 years, this time period allows for remarkable variation in terms of national leadership.

Table 2.4 Party Control of the Elected Branches of Government, 1996-2008

	President	House	Senate	Style
1996	Clinton	Republican	Republican	Divided
1997	Clinton	Republican	Republican	Divided
1998	Clinton	Republican	Republican	Divided
1999	Clinton	Republican	Republican	Divided
2000	Clinton	Republican	Republican	Divided
2001	Bush	Republican	Democratic*	Semi-Divided
2002	Bush	Republican	Democratic	Semi-Divided
2003	Bush	Republican	Republican	Unified
2004	Bush	Republican	Republican	Unified
2005	Bush	Republican	Republican	Unified
2006	Bush	Republican	Republican	Unified
2007	Bush	Democratic	Democratic	Divided
2008	Bush	Democratic	Democratic	Divided

Note: During 2001, party control of the US Senate changed From Democratic control from the swearing in of the 103rd Congress on January 3rd until the conclusion of the Clinton presidency on January 20th (as Vice President Gore broke a 50-50 tie). Starting on January 20th, Vice President Cheney broke the 50-50 tie giving party control to Republicans. The Republican party controlled the Senate until June 3rd 2001, when Vermont Senator Jim Jeffords switch from Republican affiliation to Independent status and caucused with Democrats. This move gave Democrats a 51-49 majority which endured through the end of the 103rd Congress. I designate Democratic control in 2001 because Democrats controlled the Senate for a majority of the year (230 days).

State-Level Congressional Controls

In light of a substantial literature that argues that Congress is the solo player in distributive politics, it is of great import that Congressional effects be controlled. Although the aggregate state-year-level dataset can complicate the isolation of precise Congressional effects, I include a series of measures that seek to capture the influence of Congress in the distribution of grants. First, I use a dichotomous measure of state membership on the Senate Appropriations Committee. Because all funding bills pass through this committee, this measure will serve as an effective proxy for Congressional influence. It is likely that membership on this committee will allow a direct influence in the area of grant allocations.⁵⁹

Moreover, I control for whether it is an election year for a member of the Appropriations Committee, whether it is an election year for an incumbent Senator, whether there is a competitive Senate election in a state, whether the state is represented by a member of the Senate leadership, the number of majority party Senators representing a state, US House delegation partisan alignment with the president, and the Appropriations subcommittee power of states. To control further for the role of Congress, all models in this chapter are estimated using fixed effects for state. These fixed effects will control for the influence that individual Senators may have on fund allocations.⁶⁰ Because previous literature demonstrates Congressional influence, these variables will

⁵⁹ Different measures of Congressional influence were considered. This measure seemed theoretically and empirically sound. Membership on both Appropriations committees, offered almost no variation, as almost every state has a congressman or senator on the committee. Even membership on the House Appropriations Committee offers little variation, as most states maintain membership. Failure to seat a member on that committee in the House is biased against small population states. In the next chapter, the unit of analysis is agency-level allocations and I am able to introduce more textured Congressional controls in an effort to examine the influence of legislative factors in fund distribution.

⁶⁰ For example, Senators Ted Stevens (AK) and Robert Byrd (WV) were notorious for benefitting from the appropriation of government funds, using their unique individual influence to secure substantial money for their states.

subject the presidential influence hypothesis to rigorous testing. In the end, this chapter seeks not to argue that Congress is powerless to influence the distribution of federal grants, but instead to argue that presidents act as powerful players in a complex allocation system.

Intergovernmental Controls

Other research suggests that federalism is an alternative explanation for the distribution of federal funds (Berry, Burden and Howell 2010; Larcinese, Rizzo, and Testa 2006). This work often argues that the political environment that governors face influences how grants are distributed. As such, I include controls for whether it is an election year for a state's governor, whether there is partisan alignment between the president and a state's governor, and an interaction of gubernatorial election year and partisan alignment with the president. These measures will control for gubernatorial electoral concerns and their effects.

State Capacity/Demand

Measures of state capacity or demand likely also influence grant distribution. As such, I control for yearly real gross state product and the miles of roads within a state. These data offer stable and comparable measures of the economic capacity for each state. Next, because many federal grants fund research and development particularly in areas of education and health care, it is important to control for the amount of research conducted in each state. I control for the number of colleges, universities and hospitals. I further consider a measure of the elderly population as a proxy for demographic demands on

government. Additionally, there is a theoretical reason to believe *a priori* that a few cases will be profound outliers due to disaster circumstance and are controlled as a result. This variable, labeled “disaster,” accounts for New York in the three years following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and Louisiana and Mississippi after Hurricane Katrina.

Evaluating Influence

I estimate a series of models using ordinary least squares with fixed effects for state and year. The fixed effects serve as part of the larger effort to ensure that the results are robust even when controlling for a multitude of alternative hypotheses. The use of fixed effects offers a more conservative estimation by adding additional layers of controls beyond those used for Congressional influence, intergovernmental effects, and measures of state-level need and demand. Further all estimates are reported with robust standard errors.

The results of this study generally lend support to the hypotheses presented above. Presidents use their discretion over federal grants to institute an electorally-strategic process of distribution. This presidential strategy reflects both the geographic significance of constituencies as well as the salience of elections with respect to time.

Table 2.5 shows the estimates of the number of grants regressed on state competitiveness and timing and a set of controls. In this table, both models are estimated in identical fashion except that Model 1 uses a three-part measure of state competitiveness, while Model 2 employs a dichotomy. The analysis indicates that swing

states receive between 7.3% and 7.6% more grants than do other states. Additionally, using this measure of competitiveness, core and lost cause states are statistically indistinguishable, suggesting the executive branch focus in the distribution of grants is on electorally competitive states. This swing state benefit translates to substantial gains for a state. For example, Tennessee in 2007 was a core state and received 4110 federal grants. These results suggest that if Tennessee were a swing state it would see more than 300 additional grants in that year alone.

The proximity of an election is associated with an increase in grant allocations, as well. The estimates suggest that states will receive 10% more grants in the two years prior to an election than the two years following one. This finding offers additional evidence that the electoral interests of the executive branch influence the federal grant allocation strategy. An approaching presidential election initiates a change in the way the executive branch allocates federal grants. This finding lends support to a theory of presidential influence in another way. If the grant distribution process were Congressionally-dominated, one would expect the inability to reject the null hypothesis because of the frequency of Congressional elections. Instead, the two years approaching a presidential election see higher grant allocations than the two year approaching a midterm.

Beyond the analysis of the number of federal grants, I also examine the allocation of federal dollars. Table 2.6 presents the results of this analysis. In this table, the models are identical to those found in Table 2.5, except that they are estimated using the logged real grant dollars per 100,000 people as the dependent variable. The results of the grant dollars models echo the findings of the grants models. Swing states see a benefit of 5.7%

more grant dollars than other states. These findings provide further evidence that federal grant allocations reflect presidential electoral preferences over geographic distribution.

Table 2.5 Models of the Number of Federal Discretionary Grants 1996-2008

	(1)	(2)
<i>State Competitiveness</i>		
Swing State (0,1)	0.073** (0.029)	0.076** (0.029)
Lost Cause State (0,1)	-0.024 (0.032)	----
<i>Timing</i>		
First Term (0,1)	-0.006 (0.011)	-0.009 (0.011)
Election Proximity (0,1)	0.100** (0.008)	0.101** (0.008)
<i>State-Level Congressional Controls</i>		
Senate Appropriations Committee (0,1)	0.045 (0.031)	0.046 (0.032)
Appropriations Committee Election Year (0,1)	0.007 (0.018)	0.006 (0.018)
Incumbent Senator Election Year (0,1)	-0.007 (0.014)	-0.007 (0.013)
Competitive Senate Election (0,1)	-0.012 (0.023)	-0.011 (0.023)
Senate Leadership (0,1)	-0.043 (0.031)	-0.045 (0.031)
Majority Party Membership (0,1,2)	-0.001 (0.009)	-0.002 (0.009)
House Delegation with President (0,1)	-0.012 (0.021)	-0.005 (0.022)
Cardinals (0,1)	0.001 (0.030)	0.004 (0.030)
<i>Intergovernmental Controls</i>		
Governor's Election Year (0,1)	0.007 (0.017)	0.007 (0.017)
Governor-President Party Align (0,1)	-0.001 (0.020)	-0.0001 (0.020)
Gov. Election Yr. X Alignment (0,1)	-0.044* (0.022)	-0.044* (0.022)
<i>Controls and Constant</i>		
Real Gross State Product	-0.940** (0.115)	-0.949** (0.115)
Roads (miles)	-0.065 (0.228)	-0.082 (0.224)
Research Institutions	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.001)
Percent Elderly	-0.131** (0.039)	-0.126** (0.039)
Disaster (0,1)	0.023 (0.037)	0.019 (0.037)
Constant	6.783** (3.089)	7.000** (3.052)
R ²	0.44	0.44
Obs.	650	650

Note: The dependent variable is the logged number of grants per 100,000 people per state-year. **p<.01 (one-tailed test) *p<.05 (one-tailed test). Both models are estimated using ordinary least squares with fixed effects for state and year. Robust standard errors are reported. In model 1, the reference case for state competitiveness is Core State. In model 2, the reference case for state competitiveness is Non-Swing State.

Table 2.6 Models of Federal Discretionary Grant Dollars by State-Year, 1996-2008

	(1)	(2)
<i>State Competitiveness</i>		
Swing State (0,1)	0.057* (0.033)	0.056* (0.033)
Lost Cause State (0,1)	0.01 (0.048)	---
<i>Timing</i>		
First Term (0,1)	0.024 (0.022)	0.025 (0.020)
Election Proximity (0,1)	0.066** (0.014)	0.066** (0.014)
<i>State-Level Congressional Controls</i>		
Senate Appropriations Committee (0,1)	0.076* (0.038)	0.075* (0.038)
Appropriations Committee Election Year (0,1)	0.019 (0.027)	0.019 (0.027)
Incumbent Senator Election Year (0,1)	-0.043* (0.019)	-0.043* (0.019)
Competitive Senate Election (0,1)	0.013 (0.025)	0.013 (0.025)
Senate Leadership (0,1)	0.045 (0.056)	0.045 (0.056)
Majority Party Membership (0,1,2)	0.002 (0.017)	0.002 (0.017)
House Delegation with President (0,1)	0.029 (0.028)	0.026 (0.025)
Cardinals (0,1)	-0.007 (0.035)	-0.008 (0.034)
<i>Intergovernmental Controls</i>		
Governor's Election Year (0,1)	0.046* (0.021)	0.046* (0.021)
Governor-President Party Align (0,1)	-0.031 (0.026)	-0.032 (0.026)
Gov. Election Yr. X Alignment (0,1)	0.008 (0.031)	0.008 (0.031)
<i>Controls and Constant</i>		
Real Gross State Product	-0.113 (0.130)	0.109 (0.126)
Roads (miles)	0.164 (0.178)	0.172 (0.176)
Research Institutions	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)
Percent Elderly	-0.092* (0.039)	-0.094* (0.039)
Disaster	0.964** (0.282)	0.966** (0.282)
Constant	17.772** (2.728)	17.682** (2.649)
R ²	0.10	0.10
Obs.	650	650

Note: The dependent variable is the logged real grant dollars per 100,000 people per state-year. **p<.01 (two-tailed test). Both models are estimated using ordinary least squares with fixed effects for state and year. Robust standard errors are reported. In model 1, the reference case for state competitiveness is Core State. In model 2, the reference case for state competitiveness is Non-Swing State.

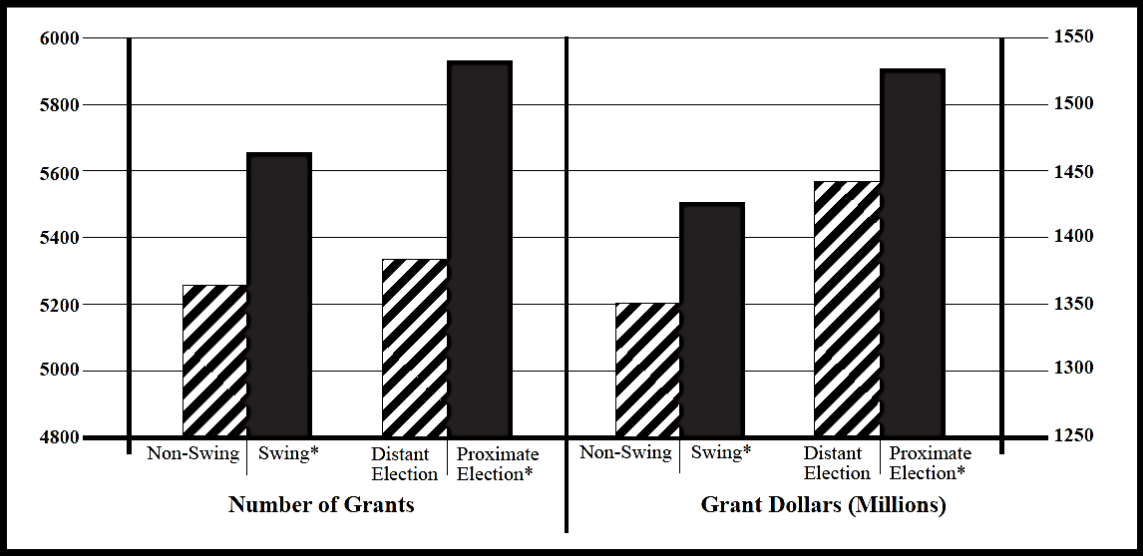
Once again, Tennessee in 2007 received about \$1.06 billion in grants. However, the results suggest that as a swing state, Tennessee would have reaped an additional \$60 million in grants in that year.

More to the point and similar to the grants models, states receive about 6.6% more grant dollars when a presidential election is approaching compared to when one is distant. In the dollars models, states receive more in a president's first. This is consistent with hypothesis 3 and offers a distinct finding from the grants model. In both the grants and grant dollars models, the estimates for term are imprecise and preclude rejection of the null hypothesis.

Figure 2.3 charts the substantive effects of these estimates for grant and grant dollar allocations. The strategic allocation of grants with regard to geography and time is immediately clear. State competitiveness and electoral proximity have not only statistically significant consequences for allocations, but those effects translate into substantively important effects for a state of average size. From the perspective of the average citizen or citizen group, living in a swing state, particularly in advance of an election translates into a huge influx of additional federal funds to your state.

In the grant dollars model, the results show that a senator's membership on the Appropriations Committee is associated with about a 7.6% increase in grant dollars. This finding is generally consistent with previous research that indicates a legislative influence in the distribution of federal dollars (Carsey and Rundquist 1999; Rundquist and Carsey 2002; Rundquist, Rhee and Lee 1996). The results, taken as a whole, suggest that there exist both executive and legislative pressures on the allocation of federal grants.

Figure 2.3 Estimated Effects of State Electoral Competitiveness and Electoral Proximity on Grant Allocations, 1996-2008



However, these results cannot detail whether this effect is driven by Congress itself or presidents seeking to placate Senate appropriators.

The models presented in Tables 2.5 and 2.6 offer evidence that there exists a presidential electoral influence in the geographic distribution of federal grants. Swing states receive more grants and grant dollars than do core states and non-swing states. Further, the proximity of a presidential election changes the way in which grants are allocated, increasing both the number of grants and grant dollars allocated to the states.

However, the timing variables as specified in both models only describe the effect of time on allocations to *all* states. While the evidence suggests that federal grant allocations are strategically timed, it does not provide a comprehensive understanding of that strategy. To understand allocation strategy more completely, it is important to examine the intersection of timing and geographic distribution. To do this, I re-estimate the grants and grant dollars models using variables that interact the timing and swing

state variables. Table 2.7 presents the results of the estimation. In all four models, state electoral competitiveness is a dichotomous measure of whether a state is a swing state. The first and third models are specified with variables that interact swing state with first term. The second and fourth models interact swing state with election proximity. These interaction variables provide insight into how timing affects swing and non-swing states differently. Their introduction into the models offers a more nuanced evaluation of strategic timing and geographic allocation.

In these models, the proximity of a presidential election continues to play an important role in the distribution of funds. Although the interaction terms fail to reach statistical significance, the parameter estimates suggest that swing states receive more grants and grant dollars when an election is proximate compared to when it is distant.⁶¹ The results from the interaction of proximity and competitiveness and the implications of the variable for the fit of the model offer additional support for the expectations from Hypothesis 2. They suggest that presidents are strategic with regard both to where and when grants are allocated.

Moreover, the estimates suggest that swing states receive more grants and grant dollars in a president's *second* term compared to the first. Hypothesis three suggests that presidential self-interest should lead to increased grant allocations in the first term. A contrary finding could be attributable to executive branch and presidential learning curves. Because new presidents and appointees rapidly find themselves in new decision making settings for which they were not necessarily prepared, it may take time before they can fully realize and execute a grant allocation strategy. As such, the influence

⁶¹ Further, F tests on the impact of the interaction variables for each model shows that the interaction variables have a significant impact on model fit for both models analyzing grant dollars. For the election proximity interaction, $F = 79.95$, $p < .0001$; for the term interaction, $F = 54.99$, $p < .0001$.

Table 2.7. Models of Federal Discretionary Grants including Timing Variables

	Number of Grants		Grant Dollars	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>State Competitiveness</i>				
Swing State (0,1)	0.083*	0.062*	0.067	0.040
	(0.035)	(0.031)	(0.041)	(0.033)
<i>Timing</i>				
First Term (0,1)	-0.001	-0.009	0.038	0.025
	(0.015)	(0.011)	(0.027)	(0.020)
Election Proximity (0,1)	0.101**	0.090**	0.066**	0.054**
	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.014)	(0.017)
Swing*Term	-0.018	---	-0.030	---
	(0.026)		(0.044)	
Swing*Proximity	---	0.025	---	0.028
		(0.020)		(0.030)
<i>State-Level Congressional Controls</i>				
Senate Appropriations Committee (0,1)	0.046	0.048	0.076	0.077
	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.038)	(0.038)
Appropriations Committee Election Year (0,1)	0.006	0.006	0.018	0.019
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Incumbent Senator Election Year (0,1)	-0.006	-0.006	-0.043*	-0.043*
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.019)	(0.019)
Competitive Senate Election (0,1)	-0.011	-0.011	0.013	0.013
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.025)	(0.025)
Senate Leadership (0,1)	-0.045	-0.044	0.045	0.046
	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.055)	(0.056)
Majority Party Membership (0,1)	-0.003	-0.003	0.002	0.001
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.017)	(0.017)
House Delegation with President (0,1)	-0.005	-0.005	0.027	0.026
	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.026)	(0.025)
Cardinals (0,1)	0.003	0.005	-0.010	-0.008
	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.033)	(0.034)
<i>Intergovernmental Controls</i>				
Governor's Election Year (0,1)	0.006	0.007	0.046*	0.047*
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.021)	(0.021)
Governor-President Party Align (0,1)	0.0004	0.001	-0.031	-0.031
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.026)	(0.026)
Gov. Election Yr. X Alignment (0,1)	-0.044*	-0.045*	0.008	0.007
	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.031)	(0.030)
<i>Controls and Constant</i>				
Real Gross State Product	-0.951**	-0.948**	-0.112	-0.108
	(0.114)	(0.114)	(0.127)	(0.127)
Roads (miles)	-0.080	-0.076	-0.175	-0.179
	(0.225)	(0.225)	(0.176)	(0.179)
Research Institutions	-0.002	-0.002	-0.001	-0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Percent Elderly	-0.125**	-0.126**	-0.093*	-0.094*
	(0.038)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.040)
Disaster	0.017	0.018	0.963**	0.964**
	(0.038)	(0.036)	(0.283)	(0.281)
Constant	6.981*	6.924*	17.656**	17.602**
	(3.049)	(3.054)	(2.637)	(2.706)
R ²	0.44	0.44	0.10	0.10
Obs.	650	650	650	650

Note: The dependent variable in models 1 and 2 is the logged number of grants per 100,000 people per state year. The dependent variable in models 3 and 4 is the logged real grant dollars per 100,000 people per state year. **p<.01 (one-tailed test) *p<.05 (one-tailed test). All models are estimated using ordinary least squares with fixed effects for state and year. Robust standard errors are reported. In all models, the reference case for state competitiveness is Non-Swing State.

during the first term may be artificially low as new members of the executive branch face a type of on-the-job training.⁶²

As an additional test of Hypotheses 2 and 3, I divide the data according to state competitiveness and reestimate them.⁶³ The results of this analysis reported in Table 2.8 add context to the interactions reported in Table 2.7. The failure of the interaction of competitiveness and election proximity is driven by the robustness of the election proximity effect. More clearly, when an election is proximate, presidents generally allocate more grants and grant dollars than when an election is distant. This finding likely occurs because presidents play a strategic role in the legislative process. As mentioned in Chapter 1, presidents are able to extract greater discretionary authority from Congress as a condition for supporting legislation. The results reported here suggest that the presidential pursuit of discretionary authority increases in advance of presidential elections. Although there is suggestive evidence that presidents allocate more funds to swing states when an election is proximate, the general flood of money to the states in advance of presidential elections influences the statistical significance of this distinction. Table 2.8 offers support for the robust electoral effects in the distribution of funds, both with regard to targeting allocations to key states and enhancing discretionary authority during key times.

Table 2.8 also reports mixed results for presidential term effects. Hypothesis 3 predicts that while presidential electoral preferences should be salient across one's tenure,

⁶² The ideal test of this proposition would require a modern three term presidency, in which the first term there exists acclimation effects, the second term provides the president with electoral self-interest, and a president is term limited after his third term. However, the requirements of the 22nd Amendment to the US Constitution bar this test.

⁶³ Additionally, in Appendix 2.A2, I divide the data by election proximity and reestimate.

the personal nature of the electoral interest in the first term should increase that salience.

Table 2.8. Models of Federal Discretionary Grants Isolated for Competitiveness

	Number of Grants		Grant Dollars	
	Swing	Non-Swing	Swing	Non-Swing
<i>Timing</i>				
First Term (0,1)	0.029*	0.017	0.047	0.050*
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.032)	(0.029)
Election Proximity (0,1)	0.101**	0.078**	0.080**	0.056**
	(0.019)	(0.012)	(0.030)	(0.022)
<i>State-Level Congressional Controls</i>				
Senate Appropriations Committee (0,1)	0.028	0.058	0.034	0.178**
	(0.044)	(0.039)	(0.047)	(0.061)
Appropriations Committee Election Year (0,1)	-0.029	0.023	0.020	0.025
	(0.028)	(0.026)	(0.043)	(0.042)
Incumbent Senator Election Year (0,1)	-0.002	0.011	-0.033	-0.043
	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.031)	(0.032)
Competitive Senate Election (0,1)	-0.031	-0.032	0.025	-0.009
	(0.023)	(0.030)	(0.029)	(0.034)
Senate Leadership (0,1)	-0.044	-0.015	0.084*	0.063
	(0.050)	(0.039)	(0.049)	(0.064)
Majority Party Membership (0,1)	-0.004	0.001	0.001	0.027
	(0.013)	(0.009)	(0.029)	(0.022)
House Delegation with President (0,1)	0.003	0.020	-0.023	0.039
	(0.022)	(0.029)	(0.051)	(0.034)
Cardinals (0,1)	-0.016	0.030	-0.033	0.015
	(0.045)	(0.050)	(0.058)	0.049
<i>Intergovernmental Controls</i>				
Governor's Election Year (0,1)	0.004	0.012	0.042	0.050
	(0.029)	(0.024)	(0.038)	(0.031)
Governor-President Party Align (0,1)	-0.046*	-0.014	-0.040	0.021
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.045)	(0.026)
Gov. Election Yr. X Alignment (0,1)	-0.035	-0.073*	0.031	-0.009
	(0.036)	(0.028)	(0.046)	(0.045)
<i>Controls and Constant</i>				
Real Gross State Product	-0.653**	-0.831**	0.207	-0.256
	(0.158)	(0.126)	(0.190)	(0.169)
Roads (miles)	0.765*	-0.037	0.845*	0.383*
	(0.324)	0.169	(0.388)	(0.200)
Research Institutions	-0.003	-0.002	-0.003	-0.001
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)
Percent Elderly	-0.111	-0.116**	-0.203**	-0.036
	0.064	(0.043)	(0.071)	(0.040)
Disaster	---	-0.018	---	0.795**
		(0.030)		(0.239)
Constant	-5.770	4.973*	8.086	16.434**
	(3.830)	(2.852)	(5.880)	(3.510)
R ²	0.50	0.42	0.004	0.02
Obs.	278	372	278	372

Note: The dependent variable in models 1 and 2 is the logged number of grants per 100,000 people per state year. The dependent variable in models 3 and 4 is the logged real grant dollars per 100,000 people per state year. **p<.01 (one-tailed test) *p<.05 (one-tailed test). All models are estimated using ordinary least squares with fixed effects for state and year. Robust standard errors are reported. In all models, the reference case for state competitiveness is Non-Swing State.

This analysis challenges this claim, showing little empirical ability to tease out robust term effects, particularly with regard to state electoral competitiveness. The estimates reported in the preceding tables offer evidence of a more continuous electoral interest—one unaffected by the institutional and electoral implications of the 22nd Amendment.

These findings demonstrate that the proximity of a presidential election motivates a change in executive branch allocations of federal grants. During the two years prior to a presidential election, the executive branch allocates a significantly higher percentage of grants and grant dollars are concentrated in swing states. The evidence indicates not only that presidents think about states in terms of electoral competitiveness, but that the urgency of electoral demands motivates increasingly strategic grant allocations.⁶⁴

Analyzing Influence

Research into executive branch politics has sought to understand how the presidency has changed over time. Among these changes, researchers consider how the president has become more responsive to political or electoral considerations. The dawning of the politicization (or perhaps hyper-politicization) of the American presidency has been pegged at numerous points in time. They include Nixon's second term, the fallout of Carter-era bureaucratic reforms, the Reagan presidency, and the

⁶⁴ As a final test on the robustness of the findings regarding the interaction terms, Appendix 2.A6 and 2.A7 report the results of re-estimation of the data by splitting the sample, according to the elements of the interactions. Appendix 2.A6 separately examines Swing and Non-Swing state data, testing the effect of timing variables on both dependent variables. Similarly, Appendix 2.A7 separately examines proximate and distant elections data, testing the effect of the swing state variable on both dependent variables. These analyses offer additional support for the theoretical claims in the central analysis in this project.

Clinton years. What is clear is that the office of president is now a more politically- and electorally-motivated than in previous periods.

Because of this institutional transformation, the findings presented here may not extend to earlier eras of the presidency, and it is unclear from previous research what would be an acceptable historical starting point. However, it is quite likely that the findings of this project will inform our understanding of the presidency into the future. Politicization of the presidency and the strategic use of appointees that was observable in the Reagan era and that accelerated during the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations will, at the very least, ensure the presidency remains a highly political institution. Accepting the institutionalization of political and electoral concerns, it is important to evaluate how politics influences presidential behavior. This chapter has taken such a consideration of an evolving presidency and tested its effects on distributive policy.

Several implications emerge from the results of this study. In a very straightforward way, presidents care about their own electoral interests and use their influence over the federal largesse to further these goals. These findings add to a growing voice in the literature that argues that presidents, like members of Congress, are motivated by elections and behave in a manner that reflects electoral concerns (Shaw 2006; Shaw and Roberts 2000; Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004). Specifically, presidents engage in a targeted and electorally-strategic allocation of government funds to crucial constituencies (states). This finding echoes recent work that suggests electoral considerations motivate and inform presidential influence over the distribution of funds (Berry, Burden and Howell 2010; Berry and Gersen 2010). However, rather than showing

that presidents use funds to aid copartisans in reelection, this chapter shows that concerns over presidential elections drive influence.

In short, this research demonstrates that presidents' electoral motives influence the distribution of federal funds. The literature in this area often (and accurately) argues that Congress plays an important role in distributive politics, and this chapter offers support for this claim, as well. However, the findings presented here effectively demonstrate that presidents also wield substantial influence. Rather than a system of fund distribution that a single branch of government dominates, the allocation of federal dollars is a shared power in which the oft-overlooked executive branch plays an important and influential role.

In evaluating presidential power, an important distinction in this research emerges from the type of spending being analyzed. The project uses federal discretionary grants for an important reason; the executive branch has authority over the distribution of those funds. Unlike some other types of funds (or federal outlays generally), these federal grants offer presidents a clear path to participate in porkbarrel politics. In any study of the strategic distribution of government funds by elites, it is important to consider both the motive and opportunity to influence allocations. Discretionary authority offers presidents the opportunity to influence the process, and as a result, the findings presented here have broader implications. In addition to federal grants, the executive branch maintains authority over the allocation of spending in other areas such as contracts and procurement. Thus, this research question can be extended into any of the areas of spending in which presidents and the executive branch have the opportunity to influence outcomes directly.

This chapter details the manner in which presidential electoral concerns, presidential power and the characteristics of presidential elections inform federal fund distribution. Given the institutional design of the Electoral College and the nature of competition in presidential elections, swing states serve as the key constituencies in the race for the White House. Presidents use their discretionary control over huge sums of federal grant dollars to target funds to swing states. By delivering funds to these states, presidents seek to perform a basic and strategic task in distributive politics to target constituencies with a “relatively high willingness to abandon their ideological preferences in exchange for particularistic benefits” (Dixit and Londregan 1996, 1133). In this way, federal grants function as an incumbent-controlled pool of campaign funds that presidents are able to allocate strategically.

This research also engages the distributive politics literature that focuses on the recipient constituency. Scholars debate whether core constituencies (e.g., Levitt and Snyder 1995) or swing constituencies (e.g., Dixit and Londregan 1996) benefit most in the allocation of funds. The core hypothesis is often posed in the context of legislative elections and reflects a strategy that is particularly effective in popular elections. This chapter lends support to the theory that swing constituencies receive a positive bias in the presidentially-influenced allocation of federal government funds.

However, I also suggest that presidents may make more nuanced calculations regarding the distribution of grants within states. While this research suggests an interstate swing state bias in distribution, it does not preclude a differently-motivated distribution bias at the intra-state level. For example, Chen (2009) argues that within the swing state of Florida, FEMA grants are delivered to core constituencies in the state’s

Eastern counties. Such a finding can be entirely consistent with the results of this chapter. This research simply suggests which states will receive more grants. Research that examines intrastate grant funding may well find that presidents target core constituencies within swing states in an attempt to enhance their electoral prospects. Conversely, research may demonstrate that the swing state bias is true at both the inter- and intrastate levels. This chapter cannot comment on the latter. Instead, the research presented in this chapter offers support for the swing hypothesis in presidential elections specifically at the interstate level, as is consistent with the institutional design of the Electoral College.

Finally, this chapter speaks strictly to presidential influence and behavior, and offers evidence that the distribution of federal grants reflects a strategy consistent with presidential electoral preferences. This chapter does not necessarily speak to the effectiveness of this strategy on voting behavior. Instead, I argue that a presidential administration has an annual duty to distribute federal grants. The executive branch's allocation of grants is relatively low cost, as the bureaucracy is charged by Congress to perform the action with distributive discretion. Because grants offer a yearly porkbarrel opportunity for presidents, serve as an opportunity for media advertising and can be targeted in strategic ways, grants will be allocated to states that are electorally important to a president. Presidential elections can be decided by a few hundred popular votes in a single state or set of states. As such, the allocation of grants is a nearly costless action that may have the ultimate payoff.

Conclusion

The National Park Service (NPS) administers hundreds of nationally protected areas. Chief among these areas, of course, are America's national parks. Eight of the nation's 58 national parks are found in the most populous state California—a protected area roughly the size of Massachusetts. In fact 30 sites protected by NPS can be found in California. By comparison, Pennsylvania is the home to no national parks and only 18 federally protected areas. Between 1996 and 2008, NPS allocated more than 200% more grants to Pennsylvania than to California. Despite California's population advantage (300%), geographic size advantage (400%), and advantage in the number of areas protected by NPS (67%), Pennsylvania, one of the most politically important states in presidential elections, saw dramatically more federal funds.

Like Members of Congress who indulge in the attachment of earmarks and fiddle with funding formulas, presidents use executive branch discretion over federal grants to advance their own electoral interests. Federal grants provide presidents credit claiming opportunities in key constituencies. This chapter demonstrates that presidents are concerned with their own electoral interests and direct federal grants to swing states, particularly in advance of a presidential election. The findings suggest a commitment to presidential credit claiming in the arena of distributive politics. It appears that all else equal, applying for a grant from a swing states, rather than a non-swing state may be a more fruitful endeavor. Moreover, the bureaucracy's generosity is greatest in advance of a presidential election.

This research also engages a debate in distributive politics about the beneficiaries of government funds. While this chapter offers support for the research that posits that swing constituencies receive more government funds, it offers a more nuanced understanding of this research. First, it is crucial to understand and consider the institutional structure of elections when evaluating the beneficiaries of government fund distribution. Such consideration can produce unique and dynamic theories of fund distribution. For example, this study suggests that interstate fund distribution is consistent with the swing hypothesis, but intrastate distribution may not be. The institutional structure of the Electoral College can allow (and may encourage) different distribution strategies at inter- and intrastate levels.

Moreover, this study suggests the importance of incorporating presidential power and executive branch influence into studies of distributive politics. As a major player in all stages of the public policy process, the president must be incorporated into studies of distributive politics. However, what this chapter suggests is that the extent of presidential influence in the realm of federal spending depends in large part on the type of spending. As the literature on delegation suggests, presidential power is most effective in areas with the greatest executive discretion. However, several distributive politics studies fail to consider the role of discretion in federal spending allocations. Future research must shift away from an examination of aggregate federal outlays and focus more clearly on the independent effects associated with specific types of spending.

Finally, this research calls for students of the American presidency to consider that executive behavior may be less unique than is often argued in the literature. Although presidential powers and duties are certainly distinct in the American system,

presidential behavior is likely driven by the same basic forces that motivate Members of Congress and other elected officials. In a fundamental way, presidents are election-minded individuals who depend on electoral success to influence outcomes, accomplish secondary goals, and advance their political agenda.

CHAPTER III

AIDING AND ABETTING THE PRESIDENT: AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO PRESIDENTIAL ELECTORAL INTERESTS

Article I Section 9 says, clearly, we are the ones who are supposed to make these spending determinations in Congress. Now there are a lot of spending determinations that are made that I bitterly oppose. But if you say that you end all—they call them ‘earmarks’...then that means all that is going to be done by Barack Obama in the White House. It will go to the Executive.

Senator James Inhofe (R-OK), March 14, 2010⁶⁵

In this statement, Senator Inhofe explicitly discusses a battle constantly waged between the branches of government regarding who controls public policy. Inhofe defends the power of Congress to direct federal agencies in the allocation of funds. Failure to provide this direction amounts to what Indiana Senator Richard Lugar calls a, “surrendering of Constitutional authority to Washington bureaucrats and the Obama Administration” (Lugar 2010). Two issues drive this debate and underlie the Senators’ concerns. To whom are agencies responsive? And what preferences do agency outcomes reflect?

Agency responsiveness to political elites has long been a topic of interest to scholars. Research usually characterizes agency responsiveness as a uniform relationship between the bureaucracy and particular political actors. However, not all agencies function in a way such that Congress (or the President or the agencies themselves) is singularly empowered to affect all policy outputs. Instead, the system of separated powers drives compromises regarding the creation, reauthorization, and existence of

⁶⁵ Jeffrey, Terence P. “Leading Conservative Senator: Congress has a Right, and Duty, to Earmark.” CNSnews.com. 14 March 2010. <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/62746>

agencies, such that a diversity of interests influences policymaking. The responsiveness of agencies to these interests is a function of interbranch relations and agency design, which itself is a product of interbranch relations.

This chapter considers how agency responsiveness to presidential electoral preferences varies across agencies. I systematically analyze how key agency characteristics affect the way federal grants are allocated in the context of presidential electoral goals, while accounting for the effects of Congress, state copartisanship, and state need. The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I review the literature outlining the presidential electoral motive and how it influences the distribution of federal funds. Second, I describe the theoretical and empirical weaknesses facing work in this area. Third, I explain why agencies should be more or less responsive to presidential electoral preferences. Next, I employ data on all agency-level federal discretionary grant allocations from 1996-2008 to estimate the conditional relationship between agency attributes and responsiveness to presidential preferences.

I find that presidents are motivated by their own electoral preferences and seek policy outcomes that enhance those preferences. At the same time, I show how insulation and politicization condition agency responsiveness. I conclude that presidential influence over policymaking extends to most areas of the bureaucracy, but that specific institutional designs can limit or enhance this influence. Additionally, research into the administrative presidency must consider electoral interests as a forceful motivation in understanding presidential behavior and policy influence.

The Election Driven President

The president is typically viewed as a major player in universalistic public policy ventures involving issues such as security, foreign policy, and the macroeconomy (Alesina and Rosenthal 1989; Neustadt 1960; Tufte 1980). Much of the work in this area argues that partisan or ideological preferences drive these broad policy pursuits. Presidents signal their preferences in these policy areas through public support for legislative proposals (Canes-Wrone 2001; Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004; Cohen 1997; Kernell 1993), budgeting and funding priorities (Bertelli and Grose 2009; Krause 1996), and guidance in administrative rulemaking (Cooper and West 1988; Wiseman 2009).

While traditional work on presidential motivation centers on partisanship, ideology, and legacy, (Moe and Howell 1999; Neustadt 1960) the electoral motivation is often ignored. While existing research essentially regards as a truism that Members of Congress are election-driven actors who seek to provide particularized benefits to their constituencies, presidents are often seen as part of a different and unique category of elected officials (See Mayhew 1974, Lowi 1969, and their progeny). This research considers the president to be driven solely by national-level issues and “think in grander terms...about social problems and the public interest” (Lewis and Moe 2012, 371). To that end, the “national” president is not motivated by the provision of particularistic policy outcomes in the same way legislators are. However, I argue in this dissertation that in order to achieve any goal, presidents require electoral success in order to maintain influence and achieve preferred outcomes. In this way, the electoral motive is not only primary, but a necessary condition for the realization of other goals.

The electoral motivation manifests in a variety of ways. For example, presidents modify behavior in response to the political and electoral environment and their own popularity (Canes-Wrone 2006; Canes-Wrone, Herron and Shotts 2001; Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004). Such behavioral changes can have real effects on policy outcomes, including distributive policy. Indeed, recent work and the previous chapters argue that the electoral competitiveness of states in presidential elections, the proximity of those elections, and constituency partisanship influence where the administration directs federal funds (Chen 2009; Mebane and Wawro 2002; Shor 2006). Others argue that co-partisan electoral considerations drive presidents to allocate federal funds to congressional districts or to states with governors of the same party (Berry, Burden and Howell 2010; Berry and Gersen 2010; Larcinese, Rizzo, and Testa 2006). What these studies suggest is that presidents are not only driven by electoral interests, but that presidents harness their policy making power and translate it into a tool to aid in their electoral success.⁶⁶

This work also brings to light an oft-overlooked aspect of executive branch behavior: the presidential porkbarrel. Of course, the literature on legislative elections is saturated with studies that demonstrate that Members of Congress seek to funnel federal money to their constituencies. However, because of the size of the national constituency and the wide ranging responsibilities facing presidents, they are often assumed to be immune from such basic political behaviors, “prefer(ring) public policy ventures of more diffuse impact” (Mayhew 1974, 128). However, this dissertation relies on both the presidential electoral motive and executive branch discretionary authority over the

⁶⁶ The literature on political business cycles provides a look at one means by which political elites manipulate policy for electoral advantage. Here, government actors affect fiscal policy such that positive economic conditions coincide with elections. In the context of presidential elections, see Tuftes (1978) and Erikson (1989) among others. For a comprehensive review of the literature on political business cycles, see Krause (2005).

allocation of certain federal funds to show that presidents behave in much the same way as members of Congress. In the context of presidential elections, research theoretically and empirically demonstrates that presidents are predominantly concerned with their appeal in swing states (constituencies) and that advertising dollars, campaign visits and parts of the federal largesse are directed to these states (Dixit and Londregan 1996; Lindbeck and Weibull 1987; Shaw 2006; Shor 2006). Thus, in the context of porkbarrel politics, the election driven president wants federal agencies to direct funds to swing states.

The Myth of Agency Homogeneity

The executive branch is a large, diverse, and unique macro institution with component parts that operate in dramatically different ways. Bureaucratic institutions are often not the product of efficient design, but of political compromise and their structural features have important implications for their function. In fact, agencies are often designed for the express purpose of facilitating or hindering political and policy influence from specific elected officials.

As a result of the varied nature of bureaucratic organization, any theory of presidential policy making must incorporate the effect of institutional context on political influence and policy outcomes. However, work on distributive policy influence assumes homogeneous responsiveness across agencies. In this literature, one approach examines federal spending at the aggregate level. Often annual fund allocations to states or congressional districts serves as the unit of analysis (Berry Burden and Howell 2011;

Hoover and Pecorino 2005; Larcinese, Rizzo, and Testa 2005; Shor 2006). Another approach offers a detailed examination of the allocation processes of one or a few federal agencies and draws conclusions about broad government outlays accordingly (Bertelli and Grose 2009; Chen 2009; Gasper and Reeves 2011). What unites these works is a theoretical assumption that distributive federal agencies operate similarly. As research in this area advances, a natural next step that has received less attention (but see Berry and Gersen [2010]) will be a focus on how institutional differences influence agency operation and responsiveness to political principals.⁶⁷ Because specific agency characteristics are intended to affect political control over policy, an analysis that focuses on agency-level variation is critical to a comprehensive understanding of presidential control.

As such, research into the presidential porkbarrel must acknowledge as Moe notes that, “structural choices have important consequences for the content and direction of policy” (1989, 268). In other areas of policy research, scholars have discussed myriad agency structures and characteristics that condition agency responsiveness and outcomes. Generally, these characteristics fall into two categories: external design traits and internal behavior traits (which of course can emerge as a product of agency design). External traits are numerous and include politicization, centralization, insulation and independence, and discretion, among others. Internal behavioral traits can include agency ideology, professionalization and expertise, and the personality of bureaucrats.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Of course, such an oversight of the importance of agency structure can occur for many reasons, including the availability of data. I do not suggest such approaches to research occur because a lack of thoughtful research design, but rather because the presidential porkbarrel is an emerging literature and some of the previous work has built the foundation for such an analysis.

⁶⁸ Among external traits, see Clayton 1992, Lewis 2008, Moe 1982, Nathan 1986, Randall 1989, Stewart and Cromartie 1982, Wood 1990; Hammond 1986, Moe 1985; Krause 1999, Lewis 2003, Moe and Wilson 1994, Seidman 1998, Seidman and Gilmour 1986, Wood and Waterman 1994. Among internal traits, see

From a theoretical perspective, agency characteristics are critical to evaluating the presidential porkbarrel. Distributive decision making occurs within some agency (sub-presidential) hierarchy. Because of this process, any theory of presidential intervention in policy making must consider both presidential preferences over outcomes and the structural features of agencies that may condition responsiveness to those preferences.

Agency Responsiveness to Presidential Preferences over Pork

Which agency characteristics influence bureaucratic responsiveness to presidential electoral preferences? In order to address this question, it is important to consider the means, mechanisms, and tools presidents use to motivate agencies to be responsive. In this section, I argue that four specific institutional features condition agency responsiveness to presidential electoral interests. Discretion, agency insulation, the saturation of political appointees, and agency ideology all affect the personnel and processes within agencies as well as agency outcomes. These features are thought to have substantial effects on policy and political control, and I provide a theoretical foundation for evaluating their effect on the president's ability to engage in porkbarrel politics.

Moe and Wilson (1994) explains that four attributes of agencies condition the elected branches' power over the bureaucracy. "The design, location, staffing, and empowerment of administrative agencies," all influence the ability to control the institutions of the executive branch (Moe and Wilson 1994, 4). Such structures serve as

Altfield and Miller 1984; Bertelli and Grose 2009; Bendor, Taylor and van Gaalen 1985; Carpenter 2001; Clinton and Lewis 2008; Gailmard and Patty 2007; Heclo 1977; Huber and McCarty 2004; Rourke 1984; Wilson 1989; and Wood and Waterman 2004.

key components to agency operations and can dictate not just the level of political control, but which branch will exercise such control.

Presidents rely on institutional mechanisms to control bureaucratic institutions. The first means by which presidents garner greater responsiveness is delegated power from Congress. Discretion is the lifeblood of executive power and offers presidents the primary opportunity to affect policy making. Specific statutes allow Congress to outline meticulously not only the processes of public policy but also the expected outcomes. On the other hand, when the locus of decision making rests in the executive branch, presidential influence is its greatest. Such influence can occur when Congress directly relies on agencies to make policy decisions, through Congressional inaction that allows executive interpretation of vague statutes, or from unilateral action (Epstein and O'Halloran 1999; Huber and Shipan 2002; Moe 1999; Cooper 2002; Howell 2003; Lewis 2003).⁶⁹ Congress delegates to presidents discretionary spending authority over tens of billions of government dollars annually. It is this authority that serves as the foundation for the presidential porkbarrel.⁷⁰

In addition to discretion, the internal structures and location of agencies can influence responsiveness. The intersection of structure and location can lead to *insulated independence*. Insulated independence occurs when an agency is designed in such a way that presidential control over the institution is dramatically limited. The definition of

⁶⁹ If discretion empowers a president, even motivating him to enhance his electoral prospects, one must ask why would Congress delegate? Eisner argues that in a basic way, “delegation is the child of necessity” (1991, 6), as time and information asymmetries serve as key Congressional resource constraints (Epstein 1997; Epstein and O'Halloran 1999; Gilligan and Krehbiel 1987; Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991; Ripley and Franklin 1984). Additionally, some describe delegation as a means of directing blame (Fiorina 1977) or as a necessary part of coalition building in the legislative process (Arnold 1990; Epstein and O'Halloran 1999; McCubbins 1985).

⁷⁰ In the context of this project, I naturally control for discretion by examining federal discretionary grants. The analysis in this chapter focuses more closely on variation in the other institutional features described below.

independence ranges from being located outside of a cabinet department (Seidman and Gilmour 1986) to an agency that has “no layers of bureaucratic organization above it” (Lewis 2003, 46). However, according to these definitions both the Executive Office of the President and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission are independent. Yet, presidential control is quite different in each. Thus, while institutional independence vis-à-vis location is important, it alone does not explain political control.

Instead, it is important to understand both independence and insulation. In this way, internal structures of agencies can insulate them from direct presidential control and thus allow them to be less responsive to presidential preferences. Here, certain agency rules and obligations can serve as a buffer to political control. Lewis (2003) explains that if an agency is governed by a commission structure, it tends to be insulated, “from presidential control by increasing the number of actors who must be influenced to change the direction of an agency” (46). What are called “specific qualifications for administrators” (Lewis 2003, 27) such as fixed or staggered terms and parity limit not only presidential influence, but the effectiveness of appointees as presidential agents. In this way, insulated independence closely reflects what George Krause calls, “the institutional proximity of bureaucratic and political institutions” (1999, 37). The location of an agency and the president’s access to the policy making mechanisms within that agency condition the effectiveness of presidential control and the president’s ability to extract policy benefits for political or electoral gain (Seidman and Gilmour 1986; Seidman 1998; Wood and Waterman 1994).

When institutional dynamics such as insulated independence limit presidential influence, chiefs executive can rely on other institutional processes for effect. For

example, the leadership of individual agencies can have an important impact on responsiveness. The number of appointees within bureaucratic institutions varies dramatically across agencies. The saturation of political appointees within an agency (politicization) affects responsiveness, as well (Clayton 1992; Lewis 2008; Moe 1982; Randall 1989; Stewart and Cromartie 1982; Wood 1990).⁷¹ Presidents staff the upper echelons of federal agencies individuals who are sympathetic to their interests (including electoral interests), serve in key leadership and decision making posts, and have a dramatic effect on policy outcomes (Lewis 2008; Moe 1982, 1985; Nathan 1986; Snyder and Weingast 2000; Stewart and Cromartie 1982; Wood and Waterman 1991, 1994).

The appointment power can have profound effects on how closely policy outcomes mirror presidential preferences. Agencies that are organized with few if any presidential appointees will likely be more responsive to other forces (Congress or their own agency preferences). However, more politicized agencies will likely respond to presidential will, as appointees often share presidential preferences or are subject to his influence directly. Nathan (1986) explains that presidents use signals to convey their (un)happiness and if signals are, “used skillfully...can reinforce the idea that presidential appointees should pursue presidential purposes and should devote time and attention to administrative process” (91).

Appointees generally affect policy in two distinct ways. They serve as core decision makers or gatekeepers of outcomes, adjusting policy recommendations from

⁷¹ To be clear, politicization is not entirely separable from insulated independence, but each concept describes unique aspects of administrative process and affects responsiveness differently. Politicization focuses on the saturation of appointees within an administrative agency. Although insulated independence incorporates aspects of the appointment power (particularly limitations), it also involves the location of the agency vis-à-vis White House staff, budgetary proposal power, regulatory requirements, and the rules governing the presidential appointment power.

career staff (essentially an *ex post* appointee effect). Appointees also convey to careerists information about leadership and presidential preferences and make clear their expectations about policy outcomes (an *ex ante* appointee effect).⁷² In the context of the presidential porkbarrel, appointees can directly control the targeting of funds or create an environment that induces similar responsiveness among bureaucratic actors.

Finally, ideological congruence between an agency and the president (a symptom of staffing and design considerations) serves as another important condition for bureaucratic responsiveness. This congruence—motivated by shared preferences and overlapping interests—will facilitate the production of policy consistent with presidential goals. The ideology of bureaucrats and appointees has been shown to influence the types of policy that is produced (Clinton and Lewis 2008) as well as the responsiveness to presidential preferences (Bertelli and Grose 2009). With a set of shared goals and preferences, ideologically proximate agencies will be more likely to produce outcomes consistent with presidential interests. Beyond a shared interest over policy, proximate agencies also see external benefits to an ideologically congruent president (or successor) being (re)elected. Thus, agencies with ideologies more proximate to the president will be more responsive to presidential (electoral) goals, facilitating his ability to extract preferred policy outcomes.

The ideology of a bureaucratic institution can emerge for three key reasons. First, the mission and policy demands of an agency (such as the liberal nature of low income housing programs in the Department of Housing and Urban Development) naturally lend themselves to a specific range of outcomes. In addition to this mission-based ideology,

⁷² Information can be conveyed in a multitude of ways including through staff meetings, memoranda, mission statements, or administrative directives the goals of the agency leadership.

individuals may self-select into agencies that carry out friendly policy goals, leading to staff-level homogeneity within an institution. Finally, burrowing—a concept by which appointees take career positions in agencies with which they align ideologically—can entrench agency ideology.

Thus, agency responsiveness depends on the unique relationship between agencies and presidential preferences and powers. By design, certain agencies are likely to be more responsive to presidential (electoral and policy) preferences because of their institutional proximity to the White House. However, in situations where agencies are more insulated (or an agency is subject to drift), specific dynamics such as politicization and ideological congruence condition presidential power and affect responsiveness.

From this theoretical discussion, I proceed with a few basic hypotheses to test agency responsiveness to presidential electoral interests. These hypotheses predict the manner in which agency structures affect presidential influence over bureaucratic institutions and ultimately how responsive those agencies are to presidential electoral preferences.

H1: Insulated Independence Hypotheses. Insulated agencies will be less responsive to presidents' electoral interests.

H2: Politicization Hypothesis. More politicized agencies will be more responsive to presidential electoral interests.

H3: Ideological Congruence Hypothesis. Liberal agencies will be more responsive to a Democratic president's electoral interests.

Data

To address this research question, I examine agency-level discretionary grant allocations from 1996-2008. The grants data for this chapter are drawn from the Federal Assistance Award Data System maintained by the US Census Bureau. The data have been organized, such that the unit of analysis is the agency-state-year. The result is a database of 59,650 agency-state-year allocations.⁷³ Table 3.1a offers an overview of the average annual allocations by agencies in each cabinet department and independent institution. The Table shows that while some departments typically distribute large sums of money, grant making exists across the bureaucracy.

Table 3.1a Average State-Year Grant Allocation by Source, 1996-2008

Institution	Average Allocation (Millions \$)	Institution	Average Allocation (Millions \$)
<i>Cabinet Departments</i>		<i>Independent Agencies</i>	
Defense	3.5	Agency for Int'l Development	2.1
Agriculture	2.0	NASA	9.1
Commerce	2.3	Independent Commissions	
Justice	45.2	Appalachian Regional Comm.	1.1
Labor	0.4	Nat'l End. for the Humanities	1.7
Energy	14.3		
Education	15.1		
HHS	59.0		
Homeland Sec	99.6		
HUD	14.4		
Interior	1.3		
State	0.2		
Transportation	33.1		
Treasury	0.1		
VA	0.002		

Note: Allocations are the mean state-year allocations in millions of real dollars. For both Independent Agencies and Commissions, two examples of each type are provided. Data are drawn from the Federal Assistance Award Data System

⁷³ Between 1996 and 2008, 152 agencies allocated grants to the states. However, not every agency allocated funds in every year. In this case, agencies that failed to allocate any funds in a given year do not appear in the dataset for that year. Also excluded were a set of data that were allocated not under an agency heading, but under a departmental heading. For example, the allocation label “Department of Agriculture” was too broad to be considered as consistent with other agency-specific data and were thus excluded.

Table 3.1b Example of Agencies and Levels of Politicization

Agency (Department)	Politicization Ratio
Centers for Disease Control (HHS)	0.1
US Fish and Wildlife Service (Interior)	0.1
Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA)	0.1
Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Labor)	0.5
Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs (ED)	0.5
National Historical Publications and Records Commission (IND)	0.5
Office of Community Planning and Development (HUD)	1.0
Office of Justice Programs (Justice)	1.0
Federal Aviation Administration (Transportation)	1.0
Office of the Secretary (HUD)	5.0
Minority Business Development Agency (Commerce)	5.0
Rural Business-Cooperative Service (USDA)	5.0

Note: Politicization Ratio is appointees to career SES managers (Lewis 2008). IND indicates an agency is independent.

I employ two related dependent variables that measure grant distribution.⁷⁴ First, I examine the logged number of grants allocated by an agency per state-year.⁷⁵ Second, I measure real grant dollars per 100,000 people as a dependent variable. This dependent variable naturally controls for the effects of population differences among states and inflation over time.

Independent Variables of Interest

The core concept in this analysis of federal fund distribution is agency responsiveness to presidential electoral interests. Because an attention to and a focus on swing states drive presidential electoral behavior, I rely on a common measure of state electoral competitiveness to denote states as “swing” (see Abramowitz, et al 2006; Ansolabehere, et al 1992). By using the incumbent party share of the two party

⁷⁴ All models will be separately estimated for each dependent variable. This approach will offer key insight into allocations at the agency level and serve as a robustness check on the general findings.

⁷⁵ I include a control variable measuring state population in millions in all models with this dependent variable.

presidential vote from the previous election, a state is labeled swing if it was decided by 10% or less.⁷⁶

I use a four part measure to capture an agency's insulated independence. This measure accounts for both the location and structure of agencies that may insulate them from (or wed them to) political control. Dummy variables denote a bureaucratic institution as being a cabinet secretary's office, a cabinet bureau,⁷⁷ an independent agency, or an independent commission.⁷⁸

Next, I include a measure of agency politicization, using the standard measure from Lewis (2008). Specifically, politicization is the ratio between presidential appointees and career-level SES managers within an agency.⁷⁹ This measure notes the saturation of political actors in the decision making structure of agencies, compared to senior civil servants.

To measure agency ideological congruence, I compare agency ideal points (Clinton and Lewis 2008) to the party of the president, creating a dichotomous measure. The measure takes the value of one for a liberal agency under a Democratic president (conservative agency under a Republican).

Controls

Much of the literature on distributive politics focuses on the role of Congress as the chief appropriator. While this chapter examines a type of spending for which Congress has delegated allocation authority, legislative influence still serves as the chief

⁷⁶ For all analyses, the reference case is “non-swing”—a state decided by more than 10%.

⁷⁷ A “cabinet bureau” for the purposes of this chapter refers to any grantmaking cabinet institution that is not a secretary's office.

⁷⁸ Data on agency structure and location are drawn from David Lewis' *Administrative Agency Insulation Data Set*.

⁷⁹ A political appointee is defined as an individual who is Senate confirmed, a schedule C employee, or a non-career member of the Senior Executive Service. A sample of agencies and politicization scores can be found in Table 3.1b.

alternative hypothesis. As such, I rely on a host of Congress controls in order to evaluate this hypothesis.⁸⁰ Specifically, I include standard measures of ideological, electoral, and institutional measures often associated with legislative distributive power. Additionally, because this analysis focuses on the agency level, I include measures of a state's representation on House and Senate Appropriations subcommittees with oversight over given agencies. These measures offer a direct evaluation of Congress' distributive power and the influence of key members.

Other research into the distribution of federal funds (most notably Larcinese, Rizzo, and Testa 2006) suggests presidents seek the distribution of funds to support states with gubernatorial copartisans. To account for such influence, I include measures of partisan alignment between president and governor, gubernatorial election year, and the interaction of the two.

Last, I consider the state need and demand for federal funding as an alternative. Measures of gross state product, miles of roads, and number of universities and hospitals measure the economic and research capacities of states. The inclusion of the percentage of the population that is elderly offers insight into the specific demographic demands facing a state. Finally, a disaster measure controls for the demand for funds in the aftermaths of the 2001 terror attacks in New York and Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana and Mississippi.

⁸⁰ A full listing of all dependent and independent variables and their operationalization can be found in Appendix 1.

Analyzing Agency Responsiveness to Presidential Electoral Interests

For all models and both dependent variables, I first estimate the data using ordinary least squares with fixed effects appropriate for state and year. Second, I estimate the data using Tobit,⁸¹ given the left censoring of data at zero.⁸² The empirical effort will proceed as follows. First, I offer a direct test of hypothesis one, estimating the effect of insulated independence on agency responsiveness. Second, to evaluate clearly the effects of other institutional characteristics at each level of agency insulation, I divide the data by agency type. I next estimate the data that include politicization and ideological congruence for each level of insulation. In each model, I interact the independent variable(s) of interest with the swing state variable to evaluate responsiveness to presidential electoral interests.

Table 3.2 reports the estimates of models that evaluate the effect if insulated independence on responsiveness to presidential electoral interests. This model serves as a direct test of Hypothesis 1, and uses ordinary least squares with fixed effects for state and year to estimate the data. In the first two models, I use a four part measure of insulated independence that divides cabinet institutions into secretary's offices and bureaus and independent institutions into agencies and commissions. In the next two models, all

⁸¹ Ordinary least squares offers insight into this variation in an important, conservative way. However, the abundance of "zero allocations" (left censoring of the data) presents a methodological challenge. In the data as much as 30% of the observations are zero, as many federal grant programs do not allocate universally to all states in all years. Estimating censored data with ordinary least squares can bias estimates downward (Amemiya 1984; Greene 1993; Tobin 1958). Employing Tobit accounts for this character of data. As a result, Tobit serves as an appealing alternative, while further demonstrating that ordinary least squares with fixed effects is a more conservative estimation technique.

⁸² The Appendix provides estimates of all model employing Tobit to estimate the data. Generally, the findings are robust across estimation techniques and, at the very least, the Tobit estimates are imprecise but in the expected direction. For each Table in the "Results" section of this chapter, there is an Appendix with a corresponding number .

cabinet institutions fall under the same heading. Broadly, the results support the idea that insulation conditions agency responsiveness to presidential electoral interests. Cabinet institutions allocate approximately 28% more grants to swing states than non-swing states. This finding translates into a substantial increase in resources for states that are competitive in presidential elections. For a state of average population like Tennessee, the results suggest that if it were a swing state it could expect to see agency-level grant allocations increase by over \$4 million per year. In addition to grant dollars, swing states can expect to receive a 10% increase in the number of grants allocated, as well.

Conversely, yet consistent with the expectations of hypothesis 1, the most insulated type of institution—independent commissions—are less responsive to presidential electoral interests. Because independent commissions is the reference category for insulated independence, the estimate for swing state suggests that in independent commissions swing states receive significantly fewer federal grants than do non-swing states. This finding indicates that independent commissions allocate funds based on considerations other than the president's electoral interests and offers further evidence of the effectiveness of insulation in limiting presidential power.

The estimates for the interaction between independent agency and swing state provide interesting results. Despite an effort to insulate independent agencies from political control with such institutional processes such as budgetary proposal power, limitations on regulatory review, and removal from the apparatus of Cabinet influence, these agencies are responsive to presidential electoral interests. Specifically, independent agencies allocate over 37% more grant dollars and 17% more grants to swing states than

Table 3.2 The Effect of Insulated Independence on Discretionary Grant Allocations, 1996-2008

	Grant Dollars	Number of Grants	Grant Dollars	Number of Grants
<i>State Competitiveness</i>				
Swing	-0.218* (0.121)	-0.080 (0.055)	-0.218* (0.121)	-0.080 (0.055)
<i>Agency Characteristics</i>				
Cabinet Secretary Office	-0.455** (0.132)	-0.609** (0.052)		
Cabinet Secretary * Swing	0.292 (0.199)	0.081 (0.079)		
Cabinet Bureau	-0.137 (0.084)	-0.562** (0.038)		
Bureau * Swing	0.274* (0.123)	0.100* (0.056)		
Cabinet Agency			-0.159* (0.084)	-0.566** (0.038)
Cabinet Agency * Swing			0.275* (0.123)	0.099* (0.055)
Independent Agency	-1.347** (0.124)	-1.025** (0.052)	-1.355** (0.123)	-1.027** (0.052)
Independent Agency * Swing	0.377* (0.181)	0.165* (0.078)	0.377* (0.181)	0.165* (0.078)
Liberal Agency	2.131** (0.042)	1.005** (0.017)	2.129** (0.042)	1.004** (0.017)
Staff (logged)	0.317** (0.010)	0.192** (0.004)	0.319** (0.010)	0.193** (0.004)
<i>Congressional Controls</i>				
Senate Appropriations Committee	0.007 (0.074)	0.030 (0.031)	0.007 (0.074)	0.030 (0.031)
Senate Majority Party	0.010 (0.023)	0.003 (0.009)	0.010 (0.023)	0.003 (0.009)
Incumbent Senator Election Year	-0.006 (0.050)	0.003 (0.020)	-0.006 (0.050)	0.003 (0.020)
Senate Leader	0.021 (0.085)	0.010 (0.037)	0.021 (0.085)	0.010 (0.037)
Senator with Oversight	0.107* (0.049)	-0.028 (0.020)	0.107* (0.049)	-0.028 (0.020)
House Member with Oversight	0.042 (0.039)	-0.023 (0.018)	0.042 (0.039)	-0.023 (0.018)
<i>Intergovernmental Controls</i>				
Governor Election Year	-0.017 (0.066)	-0.003 (0.026)	-0.017 (0.066)	-0.003 (0.026)
Gov. -President Party Align	-0.043 (0.050)	-0.003 (0.020)	-0.043 (0.050)	-0.003 (0.020)
Governor Elect * Align	0.015 (0.087)	0.000 (0.034)	0.015 (0.087)	0.000 (0.034)
<i>Controls and Constant</i>				
Real Gross State Product (logged)	-0.327 (0.465)	-0.185 (0.225)	-0.327 (0.466)	-0.185 (0.225)
Miles of Roads (logged)	-0.341 (0.535)	-0.061 (0.195)	-0.341 (0.536)	-0.061 (0.195)
Research Institutions (logged)	-0.288 (0.514)	-0.122 (0.211)	-0.289 (0.514)	-0.122 (0.211)
Percent Elderly	0.055 (0.072)	-0.019 (0.027)	0.055 (0.072)	-0.019 (0.027)
Disaster	0.243 (0.163)	0.057 (0.074)	0.243 (0.163)	0.057 (0.074)
Population (logged)		0.355 (0.326)		0.355 (0.326)
Intercept	10.409 (9.606)	-1.316 (4.987)	10.404 (9.608)	-1.312 (4.988)
Obs.	2	59050	59050	59050
Adj. R	0.06	0.12	0.06	0.12

Note: All data are estimated using ordinary least squares with fixed effects for state and year. Agency clustered standard errors are reported. In the first two models, the Cabinet-level institutions are divided into secretary's office and bureau. In the second two models, all Cabinet-level institutions are grouped under the same variable "Cabinet Agency." **p<.01 (one-tailed test) *p<.05 (one-tailed test).

non-swing states. The finding suggests that despite efforts to insulate independent agencies, presidential influence still motivates responsiveness to electoral interests.⁸³

In addition to the precise estimates reported here the findings from these models suggest that insulated independence has an important effect on responsiveness to the president. Moreover, and in basic terms, the findings reported here suggest that different types of agencies function in dramatically different ways. Figure 3.1 offers a clear comparison on the findings reported in Table 3.2. The Figure demonstrates the responsiveness of less insulated agencies (those institutionally proximate to the president), while the most insulated commissions resist such influence. Moreover, this Figure offers insight into the substantive impact of agency responsiveness to presidential electoral interests. In agencies where presidents wield greater political control—cabinet institutions and independent agencies—agency-level allocations to swing states are hundreds of thousands of dollars greater than those to non-swing states. The result for states and their citizens is a real impact on daily life that is contingent on the electoral competitiveness of the state.

To evaluate more clearly how differences in insulation across bureaucratic institutions affect responsiveness, I divide the data according to each type of agency. In this way, I am able to control agency insulation and evaluate if other institutional characteristics influence responsiveness in similar ways. In so doing, I reestimate the divided data and include measures of politicization and ideological congruence (as well as the interaction of each with the swing state variable).

⁸³ It should be noted, while the dollar estimates for the interaction independent agency and swing are substantively more significant than the interaction estimates for cabinet and swing, the two are statistically indistinguishable.

Figure 3.1. The Effect of State Electoral Competitiveness on Grant Dollar Allocations by Agency Insulation

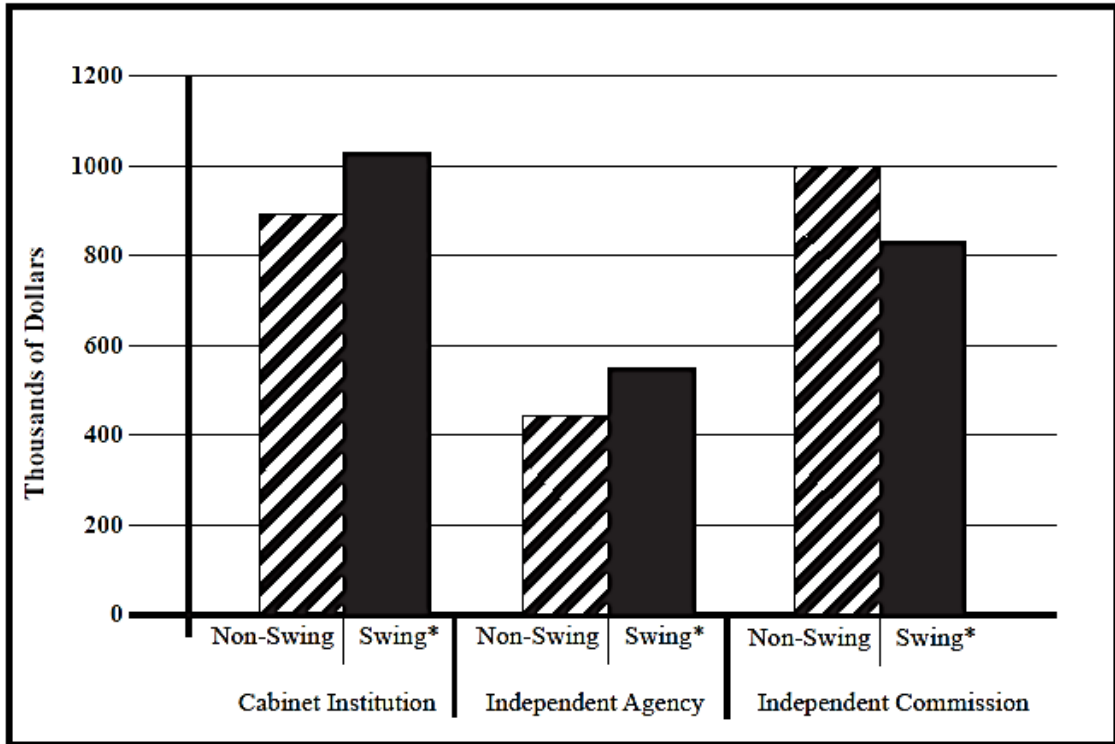


Table 3.3 reports the estimates for Cabinet-level data. Across the models, there is robust support for responsiveness to presidential electoral interests. Cabinet secretary’s offices allocate 46% more grants to swing states than non-swing states. Similarly, Cabinet bureaus benefit swing states by more than 12%. The interaction of ideological congruence and swing state produces null results, however. This finding suggests that Cabinet institutions are responsive to the president regardless of their ideological relationship to him. In this way, Cabinet institutions likely function in one of two ways. These institutions may operate under an expectation of responsiveness, viewing the president as the charge of the executive branch and essentially a bureaucratic CEO whose interests shall be promoted. Alternatively, presidential power is likely its strongest within the Cabinet as the chief executive is able to wield myriad powers without the types of

restrictions that exist in independent institutions. Regardless of the reasoning, presidential power within the cabinet is pervasive and allows presidents to engage effectively in porkbarrel politics.

Interestingly, in Cabinet secretary's offices, the interaction of politicization and swing state produces a significant and negative estimate, suggesting that in more politicized secretaries' offices, swing states receive fewer grant dollars than non-swing states. This finding is contrary to the expectations of hypothesis 2. There may be a few explanations for this outcome. First, politicization is not an entirely exogenous concept. Instead, presidents have the power to manipulate agency politicization by increasing or decreasing the number of appointees in a given institution. While the theoretical expectation was that in agencies with a greater saturation of political appointees, responsiveness would be stronger, politicization may be a more proactive tool in this setting. Presidents may politicize Cabinet secretaries' offices that are less responsive in an effort to recapture control. In the same vein, if a small cadre of political appointees is ensuring responsiveness in another secretary's office, the president may effectively and strategically de-politicize an agency without reducing his influence and the office's responsiveness.

Another explanation for this scenario is that while Cabinet secretaries' offices are likely the least insulated, Bertelli and Grose (2009) tells us that secretaries themselves are politically savvy, self-interested and under certain conditions may ensure that institutions under their purview are less responsive to the president. Finally, a methodological reason may motivate this result. Because of the limited number of Cabinet secretary's offices

Table 3.3 The Effects of Politicization and Ideological Congruence on Discretionary Grant Allocations for Cabinet Secretary Offices and Cabinet Bureaus, 1996-2008

	Cabinet Secretary Office		Cabinet Bureau	
	Grant Dollars	Number of Grants	Grant Dollars	Number of Grants
<i>State Competitiveness</i>				
Swing	0.460* (0.199)	0.124* (0.050)	0.122* (0.063)	0.036 (0.027)
<i>Agency Characteristics</i>				
Ideological Congruence	-0.058 (1.245)	-0.077 (0.382)	-0.355 (0.281)	-0.137 (0.131)
Congruence * Swing	-0.338 (0.250)	-0.101 (0.079)	-0.033 (0.068)	-0.016 (0.024)
Politicization (logged)	-1.109 (1.265)	-1.211* (0.426)	-0.176 (0.667)	0.212 (0.349)
Politicization * Swing	-0.226* (0.080)	-0.065* (0.025)	-0.068 (0.054)	-0.002 (0.029)
Liberal Agency	8.577** (1.313)	3.796** (0.442)	1.624* (0.894)	0.791* (0.403)
Staff (logged)	0.625 (0.666)	-0.024 (0.219)	0.243 (0.212)	0.173* (0.088)
<i>Congressional Controls</i>				
Senate Appropriations Committee	-0.140 (0.165)	-0.018 (0.036)	-0.053 (0.063)	0.005 (0.025)
Senate Majority Party	-0.056 (0.030)	-0.017 (0.009)	0.017 (0.013)	0.004 (0.004)
Incumbent Senator Election Year	-0.117 (0.119)	-0.036 (0.019)	0.005 (0.024)	0.007 (0.006)
Senate Leader	-0.076 (0.259)	0.050 (0.077)	0.014 (0.058)	0.001 (0.017)
Senator with Oversight	0.281 (0.218)	0.055 (0.053)	0.239* (0.102)	0.029 (0.048)
House Member with Oversight	0.357** (0.065)	0.104 (0.069)	0.120* (0.065)	0.016 (0.035)
<i>Intergovernmental Controls</i>				
Governor Election Year	-0.053 (0.107)	-0.009 (0.028)	-0.023 (0.026)	-0.003 (0.008)
Gov. -President Party Align	0.097 (0.136)	-0.001 (0.031)	-0.058* (0.028)	-0.009 (0.009)
Governor Elect * Align	0.067 (0.122)	0.003 (0.031)	0.013 (0.035)	-0.002 (0.011)
<i>Controls and Constant</i>				
Real Gross State Product (logged)	-3.285 (2.326)	-1.586* (0.622)	-0.098 (0.395)	-0.070 (0.139)
Miles of Roads (logged)	-4.029* (1.781)	-0.129 (0.294)	-0.104 (0.365)	-0.054 (0.113)
Research Institutions (logged)	-4.274 (2.448)	-0.476 (0.565)	-0.107 (0.286)	-0.089 (0.086)
Percent Elderly	-0.062 (0.285)	-0.136 (0.120)	0.069 (0.076)	-0.017 (0.028)
Disaster	0.018 (0.401)	0.002 (0.123)	0.239* (0.117)	0.064* (0.031)
Population (logged)		1.327 (0.801)		0.252 (0.183)
Intercept	103.605* (39.598)	4.909 (15.807)	4.666 (7.622)	-1.762 (3.264)
Obs.	2650	2650	47900	47900
Adj. R ²	0.66	0.78	0.04	0.10

Note: All data are estimated using ordinary least squares with fixed effects for state and year. Agency clustered standard errors are reported. **p<.01 (one-tailed test) *p<.05 (one-tailed test).

generally (N=14 or 15)⁸⁴ and in this dataset specifically (n=7), a small number of offices in highly politicized agencies could drive such results.

The estimates for the relationship between politicization and responsiveness for Cabinet bureaus speak more clearly to this effect. In bureaus, there is no relationship between politicization and responsiveness. This finding once again suggests that presidential influence over the Cabinet writ large is substantial and pervasive and that Cabinet bureaus are broadly responsive to his electoral interests, regardless of ideology or the saturation of appointees. Once again, a null finding for the interaction of swing and politicization is inconsistent with the expectations of hypothesis 2. However, one explanation is that in the bureaus, sub-agencies, and offices captured in the “bureau” variable, grant decision making may not face a complex network of appointees. Instead, a small number of appointees may make such decisions. By having a small score of decision makers, White House influence can be more easily targeted and an agency can be responsive without a profound saturation of appointees. The result is that presidents can extract responsiveness from agencies whether there are several or few appointees in a bureaucratic institution so long as decision making is structured effectively.⁸⁵

Additionally, I estimate the effects of politicization and ideological congruence on responsiveness for independent institutions and report them in Table 3.4. In general terms, it is notable that independent institutions function quite differently than Cabinet institutions. Whereas Cabinet institutions are broadly responsive to presidential electoral

⁸⁴ During the time period analyzed in this project, the Department of Homeland Security was created (2003), such that from 1996-2002, there was a universe of 14 Cabinet secretary’s offices, and from 2003-2008, the universe was 15.

⁸⁵ It should be noted that in cases where few appointees are required to approve grants, the risk of drift increases because the capability for intra-institutional monitoring is reduced. That said, it appears despite such risks (and perhaps because of the ability of presidents to move or remove political appointees), agencies remain broadly responsive to presidential electoral interests.

interests, there is no relationship between state electoral competitiveness and grant allocations. The results show either no relationship or a negative relationship between competitiveness and grant dollars in independent institutions. This finding speaks to the insulated nature of this segment of the bureaucracy and the limitations of presidential power vis-à-vis the Cabinet reflecting the predictions in Hypothesis 1.

However, while showing the limitations of presidential power, the findings also illustrate the reach of presidents to influence policy within independent institutions. The division of data allows for a more nuanced understanding of the function of independent agencies and commissions and helps clarify the findings. For example, while the estimates reported in Table 3.2 show that independent agencies were responsive to presidential electoral interests, the analysis reported in Table 3.4 demonstrates the manner in which responsiveness manifests. The estimate for the interaction between politicization and swing state suggests the importance of political appointees to presidential administration in independent agencies. In more politicized independent agencies, swing states receive over 83% more grant dollars non-swing states.

Political appointees play a unique and important role. With structures such as limits on regulatory review and White House budgetary influence and review, these institutions are designed to be somewhat insulated from presidential control, and political appointees serve as the most critical means for presidents to influence policymaking. The president relies on his handpicked executives to convey his preferences and work to overcome insulating structures and ensure that policy outcomes are consistent with his interests.

Table 3.4 The Effects of Politicization and Ideological Congruence on Discretionary Grant Allocations for Independent Agencies and Commissions, 1996-2008

	Independent Agencies		Independent Commissions	
	Grant Dollars	Number of Grants	Grant Dollars	Number of Grants
<i>State Competitiveness</i>				
Swing	-0.234* (0.126)	-0.067 (0.062)	-0.265 (0.206)	-0.064 (0.088)
<i>Agency Characteristics</i>				
Ideological Congruence	-0.058 (0.423)	-0.082 (0.162)	-0.579 (0.494)	-0.310 (0.255)
Congruence * Swing	-0.046 (0.155)	0.058 (0.045)	0.214 (0.220)	-0.006 (0.089)
Politicization (logged)	-2.321 (4.032)	-1.696 (1.906)	1.183 (0.726)	0.009 (0.396)
Politicization * Swing	0.838** (0.198)	0.129 (0.172)	0.052 (0.080)	0.032 (0.036)
Liberal Agency	-2.614 (3.174)	-1.058 (1.465)	8.922** (2.727)	4.363* (1.516)
Staff (logged)	0.904 (1.041)	0.330 (0.451)	1.384** (0.446)	0.573* (0.228)
<i>Congressional Controls</i>				
Senate Appropriations Committee	0.379* (0.171)	0.148* (0.063)	-0.159 (0.101)	-0.049 (0.032)
Senate Majority Party	-0.005 (0.060)	0.015 (0.015)	-0.019 (0.016)	-0.004 (0.009)
Incumbent Senator Election Year	0.020 (0.043)	0.003 (0.014)	-0.066 (0.060)	-0.012 (0.018)
Senate Leader	0.158 (0.184)	0.089 (0.067)	0.030 (0.084)	0.028 (0.062)
Senator with Oversight	-0.496 (0.375)	-0.258 (0.177)	0.271 (0.169)	0.082 (0.066)
House Member with Oversight	-0.350 (0.269)	-0.317* (0.160)	-0.211 (0.231)	-0.026 (0.102)
<i>Intergovernmental Controls</i>				
Governor Election Year	0.041 (0.090)	0.001 (0.016)	0.032 (0.040)	-0.012 (0.016)
Gov. -President Party Align	-0.087 (0.071)	0.001 (0.027)	0.021 (0.035)	0.026 (0.018)
Governor Elect * Align	0.078 (0.103)	0.032 (0.029)	-0.069 (0.045)	-0.018 (0.017)
<i>Controls and Constant</i>				
Real Gross State Product (logged)	-0.301 (1.337)	-0.001 (0.327)	-1.294** (0.333)	-0.876** (0.215)
Miles of Roads (logged)	-1.912* (0.972)	-0.112 (0.314)	0.793 (1.522)	0.089 (0.444)
Research Institutions (logged)	-0.301 (0.678)	-0.089 (0.197)	0.225 (0.593)	-0.158 (0.194)
Percent Elderly	-0.020 (0.164)	-0.005 (0.047)	0.023 (0.075)	-0.008 (0.062)
Disaster	0.654 (0.501)	0.004 (0.059)	0.011 (0.190)	0.082 (0.101)
Population (logged)		0.574 (0.493)		0.815 (0.514)
Intercept	26.140 (23.278)	-6.871 (12.166)	-5.914 (12.272)	-6.887 (4.906)
Obs.	4350	4350	4150	4150
Adj. R ²	0.19	0.23	0.53	0.53

Note: All data are estimated using ordinary least squares with fixed effects for state and year. Agency clustered standard errors are reported. **p<.01 (one-tailed test) *p<.05 (one-tailed test).

Figure 3.2. The Effect of Politicization, Ideological Congruence, and State Electoral Competitiveness on Grant Dollar Allocations for Independent Agencies

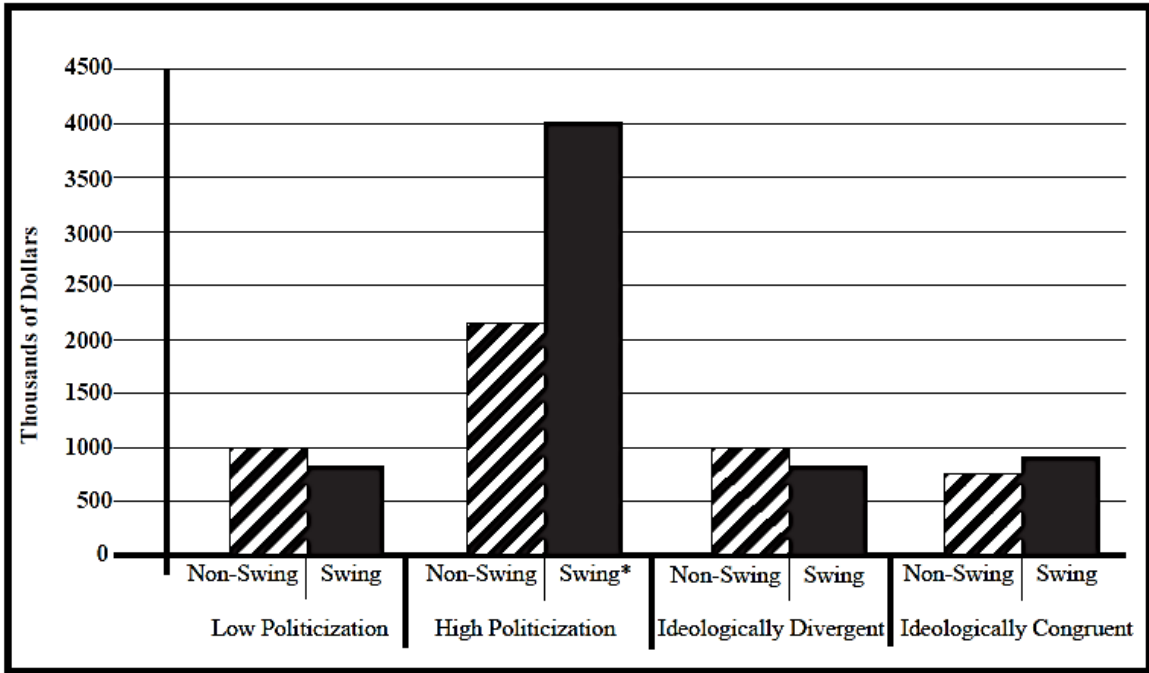


Figure 3.2 offers a visual display of the estimates reported in the first two models of Table 3.4. The effect of an increase in politicization on agency responsiveness to presidential electoral interests is clear. In agencies with low levels of politicization, state electoral competitiveness has no effect on grant allocations. However, in agencies with higher levels of politicization,⁸⁶ swing states benefit substantially in the receipt of grant dollars. This finding illustrates that where presidential surrogates saturate the structure of independent agencies, presidents are able to extract electoral benefits from them.

Figure 3.2 also demonstrates another significant consequence of politicization for federal spending. The Figure shows that average baseline levels of funding in politicized agencies are markedly (and statistically significantly) higher than in less politicized agencies. In agencies with a higher percentage of political appointees, discretionary

⁸⁶ The difference in politicization used in this figure is a one unit change.

spending authority is greater. This arrangement may come as a result of a strategic president negotiating with Congress for greater discretionary authority in agencies in which he has greater political control. Similar to the findings reported in Chapter II, in which presidents bargain for greater discretionary authority when elections are proximate, the effect of politicization suggests that presidents are also strategic regarding where discretion is targeted.

The results reported here demonstrate that politicization facilitates presidential influence and motivates responsiveness. The findings, taken together, speak to the importance of understanding the role of institutional characteristics in limiting or enhancing presidential power. The characteristics that insulate independent agencies are effective in limiting responsiveness. However, despite these efforts, presidents are still able to capitalize on specific tools in order to extract desired policy outcomes from the bureaucracy.

The estimates for independent commissions further emphasize the role of institutional characteristics in affecting responsiveness. The findings generally support the idea that independent commissions are insulated from political control. There is no relationship between state electoral competitiveness and grant allocations. Similarly, the interactions also fail to reach statistical significance. These results show that independent commissions do not allocate grants in a way that benefits swing states at the expense of non-swing states.

Unlike in independent agencies, politicization does not facilitate greater responsiveness. This result reflects the limitations on the president's appointment power in commissions. Because of specific rules governing appointments such as party

balancing and fixed and staggered terms, appointees are not an effective means for presidents to induce preferred outcomes. In the end, commissions are effectively insulated against the presidential desire to extract outcomes consistent with his electoral interests.

In addition to commissions being insulated from presidential control, the estimates demonstrate that commissions are insulated from Congressional control, as well. Each of the estimates for variables measuring political, electoral, and institutional interests for Congress fails to reach statistical significance. The null results for Congressional influence in the independent commission models are even more stark when compared to the Congress effects in other models. For example, in independent agencies, a state with a senators serving on the Appropriations Committee can expect an additional 14.8% grants and 37.8% grant dollars.

Similarly, for the models that estimate responsiveness in Cabinet institutions, Congressional effects are robust. These results suggest that states with House members and Senators on the relevant Appropriations subcommittees with oversight over a given agency will benefit in the receipt of grant dollars. The focus of this chapter on agency-level grant allocations allows a unique and nuanced analysis of the effect of legislative interests. Often, research into distributive politics considers the role of Congressional appropriators in affecting outcomes. However, these measures are often broad or blunt in nature. The allocations analyzed here allow an evaluation of the effect of Appropriations subcommittee overseers who should be the most influential possible benefactors of politically-influenced fund distributions.

It is important to note, however, that it is unclear whether the Congressional benefits come from a direct intervention by Congress or a president placating relevant legislative actors. In fact, in the context of analyzing Appropriations subcommittee membership, it is impossible with these data to disentangle whether presidents and their surrogates simply direct funds to these key legislative constituencies in an effort to maintain their distributive authority. Finally, the estimates for legislative effects in independent commissions offer important results. Like presidents, the legislative effect within commissions is stunted. That Congressional effects influence grant allocations in other institutions more clearly further demonstrates the insulated nature of independent commissions. However, it also offers additional suggestive evidence that “Congressional effects” may actually emerge from the strategic behavior of presidents. The institutional structure of independent commissions limits the president’s ability to extract policy benefits to advance his own interests. Such structures may also limit his ability to satisfy his discretionary appropriators strategically.

Implications for Future Work and Policy Making

This chapter illustrates the conditions under which federal agencies are responsive to the president. Specifically, I consider how the structural features of bureaucratic institutions condition the ability of elites to extract preferred policy outcomes. In so doing, I focus on federal discretionary grants and the president’s ability to influence their distribution. Although this chapter illustrates the manner in which responsiveness manifests in the administration of public policy, it also focuses on a unique approach to

responsiveness to the president. In particular, I examine the way in which agencies produce policy outcomes that are consistent with the president's electoral interests.

This chapter provides additional support for the salience of electoral considerations among presidential incentives. The presidential electoral motivation suggests the need for a specific empirical approach to the study of executive branch politics that incorporates such interests. This research suggests the scope of the office and network of people and powers available to the president may mean that the administrative presidency has a more micro-level focus. Certainly, this research does not support the idea that the president makes a decision on every grant processed in the executive branch. Instead, through a transparent set of electoral preferences, institutional powers, ideological support, and an army of bureaucratic executives, agencies are responsive to the electoral goals of the president. The result is an administrative network that drives micro-level policy outcomes to be consistent with presidential electoral interests. Executive branch actors may be motivated to be responsive to presidential electoral interests for a host of reasons including loyalty, political alignment, or as a reaction to the creation of a highly politicized administrative environment in which such behaviors are expected.

The findings presented here show the importance of understanding the structure of bureaucratic institutions for the study of responsiveness to the president. The insulated independence of an agency that accounts for the proximity of federal agencies to the political power and influence of the White House is a critical first step in evaluating this phenomenon. Cabinet institutions are broadly responsive to the president's electoral interests. However, independent institutions function differently. The mechanisms and

institutional designs that structure independent agencies and commissions limit responsiveness. Rather than rendering a president powerless in all circumstances, agency insulation channels presidential influence into critical avenues by which presidents rely on key institutional powers to extract policy benefits to support his electoral interests. In independent agencies, presidents rely on political appointees to ensure policy outcomes are consistent with his interests.

The importance of politicization as a means of influence and power within independent agencies is critical to understanding bureaucratic function. Even within independent agencies that are designed to resist political influence, presidents are still able to wield power. Political appointees allow presidents to affect policy outcomes even in the face of institutional structures that seek to limit such effects. The finding has substantial implications for the design of federal agencies, particularly at the legislative level. In designing an independent agency as a means of limiting presidential power, Congress should limit substantially the number of political appointees within that institution. Moreover, Congress should resist presidential attempts to increase the saturation of appointees, as they serve as a president's central means of wielding political control and using policy outcomes as campaign tools.

The findings for independent commissions further demonstrate the relationship between institutional design and bureaucratic responsiveness. In independent commissions, unlike in independent agencies, specific rules govern and limit the president's appointment power. Such rules are intended to insulate further independent commissions. The results suggest two important aspects of the effectiveness of such rules. First, institutional traits such as fixed and staggered terms and party balancing

requirements for commissioners do limit the president's ability to garner responsiveness through politicization. Second, these rules effectively insulate independent commissions from responsiveness to presidential electoral interests.

The design of independent commissions has important consequences for presidential control. However, the implications of such design do not offer legislators an effective recommendation for corralling presidential power. While it is true that the commission structure limits presidential power, it also restricts legislative influence, as well. In this way, Congress should resist creating independent commissions because it interrupts their own ability to reap the policy benefits of federal spending.

The results of this chapter illustrate ideal scenarios for political elites who want to use federal agencies for political gain. Presidents should prefer agencies be located in the cabinet because his ability to extract pork from those institutions is quite pervasive and not conditioned by politicization or ideology. Congress, on the other hand, should seek to create independent agencies in order to enjoy policy benefits, but limit the saturation of appointees to limit presidential impact.

Conclusion

Agency responsiveness to democratically elected officials is crucial to understanding how the machine of government functions and what forces generate public policy. Often, bureaucratic responsiveness is conceptualized as policy outcomes that reflect the ideological or partisan interests of political actors. This chapter examines bureaucratic responsiveness to the president's electoral interests. I argue this behavior

most often occurs when a federal agency directs federal funds to key states in presidential elections. The National Park Service is one such agency.

The National Park Service (NPS) administers hundreds of nationally protected areas. Chief among these areas, of course, are America's national parks. Eight of the nation's 58 national parks are found in the most populous state California—a protected area roughly the size of Massachusetts. In fact 30 sites protected by NPS can be found in California. By comparison, Pennsylvania is the home to no national parks and only 18 federally protected areas. Between 1996 and 2008, NPS allocated more than 200% more grants to Pennsylvania than to California. Despite California's population advantage (300%), geographic size advantage (400%), and advantage in the number of areas protected by NPS (67%), Pennsylvania, one of the most politically important states in presidential elections, saw dramatically more federal funds.

This chapter demonstrates that bureaucratic structures and design condition agency responsiveness to presidential electoral interests. In key ways, the level of independence and insulation has a significant effect on presidential control of the bureaucracy. However, this chapter does not argue that insulated independence wholly stifles presidential control and agency responsiveness. Instead, institutional characteristics of bureaucracies intended to limit political (or electoral) influence simply redirect it through different avenues.

The unique behaviors and motivations behind agency responsiveness mark important structural features that lead to variable agency outcomes. The results reinforce the idea that structure matters both for outcomes and the incentives of those individuals operating within an institution. The proximity of institutions to direct political and

administrative control, the presence of appointees and the rules governing their selection all condition power, influence, and ultimately, responsiveness.

Similarly, this chapter shows the political responsiveness of agencies to extend both to presidents and to key Congressional constituencies. Rather than an approach that ignores or commits to the influence of a single branch, this work offer a more integrated view of responsiveness in the context of distributive politics. This chapter rigorously tests and finds robust support for presidential influence in conjunction with that of Congress. I further suggest benefits associated with Congressional constituency may come not from direct legislative intervention, but from a strategic president seeking to maintain discretionary authority.

Thus, future work must evaluate federal fund distribution and agency responsiveness in more nuanced ways. From a broader government perspective, institutional and electoral incentives must be considered for both legislative and executive branch influence. A simple focus on one ignores important variation associated with the other. Within the executive branch, an understanding of institutional differences is central to evaluating the avenues and extent of political control as well as the incentives presidents face. In the same way that political elites' interests and motivations are multi-faceted, so too are the institutional structures in which the component parts of the executive branch operate. These factors call for a more comprehensive and integrated theoretical and methodological approach to these important areas of public policy.

CHAPTER IV

ELECTORAL POLITICS INSIDE FEDERAL AGENCIES: PRESIDENTIAL SPENDING POWER FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FEDERAL EXECUTIVES

Electoral interests drive presidents to manipulate the distribution of federal funds. The previous chapters have demonstrated that presidents target federal funds to swing states and that this electorally strategic behavior enhances in advance of elections. The president's ability to induce agency responsiveness in a manner that reflects his electoral goals is pervasive in cabinet agencies and substantial in independent agencies, yet conditional on the saturation of political appointees. The findings presented in the previous chapters demonstrate that the presidential electoral incentive is a powerful force in policy making and ultimately affects outcomes in ways that benefit presidential interests.

The previous chapters also illustrate that distributors—executive branch personnel with direct spending authority—serve in roles critical to the realization of presidential goals. These individuals hold the key to the president's ability to use the federal largesse as a campaign tool. These players must be responsive to presidential electoral interests in order for this strategy to be effective. This project has shown that with a few specific (and theoretically predictable) exceptions, distributors produce policy outcomes that are consistent with these presidential goals.

It is clear *that* presidents influence federal fund allocations in electorally strategic ways, but it remains to be shown *how* presidents can achieve these outcomes. The

president is a lone individual charged with overseeing a bureaucracy that includes nearly 3 million civilian and 1.5 million military employees. One challenge he faces is inducing responsiveness from this burgeoning branch of government such that it supports his electoral goals. Does the president's immediate staff contact distributive agencies and explicitly inform them of presidential preferences over allocations? Do presidents empower political actors to wield final decision making authority? Or is the process more subtle and varied with presidents relying on layers of contact to diffuse information through the bureaucracy? In evaluating presidential power over policy and the ability to engage in porkbarrel politics, it is vital to understand the mechanisms that facilitate such political (or electoral) control.

Ultimately, this chapter demonstrates that presidents target distributors. Presidents use common administrative strategies, including politicization, reorganization and centralization to position themselves to reap the rewards of electorally responsive federal spending decisions. Presidents make sure that distributive actors reflect the political and professional characteristics that are likely to provide loyalty. Additionally, distributors have a unique experience with and perception of political influence and pressure. Presidents focus particular attention on distributors because of the electoral benefits they can provide. In an effort to induce responsiveness to their preferences, presidents exert substantial power and apply pervasive and targeted pressure toward distributive actors.

I use data from a recent and large survey of federal government executives, the Survey on the Future of Government Service, to look at distributors—federal government executives who deal directly with grant, loans, contracts, licenses, and cooperative agreements. The Survey questions respondents in a host of critical areas including,

background characteristics; work, policy, and political experience; institutional and work environment; and policy influence and political contact. These topics and the individual-level nature of the data allow a precise assessment of how distributors' experience with politics differs dramatically from the experience of federal executives working in other capacities. The data provide key paths to evaluate how presidents expose distributors to the central tools of administrative control: politicization, centralization and reorganization.

This chapter is organized into five sections. First, I review the primary avenues by which presidents influence the bureaucracy: centralization, politicization and reorganization. In so doing, I highlight the gaps in our understanding and detail how a process-oriented approach to bureaucratic analysis can illuminate efforts at presidential control. Second, I detail how presidential incentives will induce him to treat certain institutional actors and agencies differently. Presidential electoral motives drive the White House to focus political control efforts toward agencies that can deliver electoral benefits. Third, I describe how the president will subject distributors to these tools of political control in a systematic way. Because distributors have the opportunity to provide presidents key electoral benefits, presidents work to induce responsiveness among these actors. Fourth, I use the Survey to explore whether distributors are more likely to exhibit traits that are consistent with presidential responsiveness, report greater policy influence from political actors, and are subject to greater political contact and pressure from executive branch actors. Finally, I conclude that presidents capitalize on precise institutional powers to influence public policy outcomes. Specific bureaucratic mechanisms and the political and electoral motivations of presidents not only drive policy

control efforts, but also determine the nature and focus of such influence. This chapter illustrates further that the institutional powers of the presidency allow the White House to influence micro-level policy and advance electoral interests.

Administrative Control and Presidential Power

Presidents have three broad institutional means of influencing the policy process within agencies: politicization, reorganization, and centralization. Politicization is a process by which presidents increase the number or saturation of political appointees within an agency (Lewis 2008). Reorganization occurs when executive branch institutions are moved, merged or divided in ways that can facilitate political control or administrative efficiency (Seidman 1986). Centralization is a process in which agency decision making authority is transferred to executive positions such as agency and department heads or the White House (Rudalevige 2002). Each provides presidents greater opportunity to control outcomes and induce responsiveness.

One key context for institutional analysis in bureaucracy is personnel—career civil servants and appointees. Career-level bureaucrats are important actors in policy making. These individuals number in the millions and make daily decisions that affect policy in myriad ways. Their roles vary from overseeing state offices of federal agencies to serving as program directors to being the faces of customer service at local Social Security Administration offices. To varying degrees, the individuals enjoy civil service protections. Civil servants cannot be transferred, demoted, or fired without cause. Research on civil servants often examines their efforts and ability to develop autonomous

spheres of power within government. Bureaucratic autonomy arises out of a host of scenarios and characteristics including personality and expertise (Rourke 1984; Carpenter 2001; Wood and Waterman 1994), the complexity of tasks (Carpenter 2001), poor monitoring (Miller 1992; Wilson 1989), policy motivated goals (Carpenter 2001; Gailmard and Patty 2007; Wilson 1989), discretion (Huber and Shipan 2002; Ting n.d.) and the design of bureaucratic institutions (Fiorina 1977; Gilmour and Seidman 1986).

Through a set of formal and informal tools, presidents work to ensure that civil servants make decisions consistent with presidential views (Nathan 1986). Politicization serves presidents as a key means of gaining political control. Politicization studies argue that presidents introduce politics into policy making through the use of political appointees (Lewis 2008; Moe 1985; Nathan 1986; Wood and Waterman 1991, 1994). Presidents politicize in multiple ways including increasing the saturation and penetration of appointees within federal agencies and selecting them on the basis of loyalty to the president. Appointees serve in leadership and decision making positions throughout the executive branch and these individuals largely serve at the pleasure of the president.⁸⁷ Presidents use these actors as surrogates of their own interests in an effort to ensure that policy outcomes reflect presidential preferences. Moreover, given the size and diverse nature of the bureaucracy, political appointees help limit the president's organizational challenges, including shirking and drift (Miller 1992).

Sometimes efforts to gain control require larger structural solutions.

Administrative reorganization empowers presidents to design decision making and

⁸⁷ Presidents also manipulate personnel at lower levels in order to maximize their influence. The president's ability to relocate Senior Executive Service personnel can empower presidents to choose which individuals oversee specific operations and decisions (Lewis 2008; Wood and Waterman 1991, 1994). Additionally, a process known as burrowing allows political appointees to take positions in the civil service and shows an additional means by which presidents can influence the selection of career-level bureaucrats.

leadership structures in ways that enhance executive authority, empower appointees, and can be determinative of policy outcomes (Arnold 1998; Lewis 2003; Pfiffner 1996; Seidman 1986). The reorganization of institutions, such as the creation of the Department of Homeland Security in 2003, is often guided legislatively. However, such institutional reformation frequently offers presidents broad administrative discretion to redesign decision making structures, communication environments, policy direction, and personnel structures. For example, when Homeland Security was created, President Bush requested and largely received an increase in the number of political appointees, substantial control over a new and more flexible civil service system, and direct, hierarchical control over 22 previously fragmented agencies.

Reorganization needs not exist on as grand of a scale as Homeland Security entailed. Recently, President Barack Obama, “called on Congress to reinstate Presidential authority to reorganize and consolidate the federal government...”⁸⁸ As part of a broader request for reorganization authority, the President’s first effort would be geared toward creating a new trade and commerce-centered cabinet department that would consolidate the operations of six existing agencies, including more insulated independent agencies and commissions and government corporations. This effort, while framed “to streamline government to make it work better for the American people while eliminating duplication, waste and inefficiencies”⁸⁹ would empower the president to redesign executive branch institutions in ways that can enhance political control. Throughout the 20th century the president, often with Congress’ assistance, augmented presidential staff and organization. This process allowed the president to centralize decision making

⁸⁸ “President Obama Announces proposal to reform, reorganize and consolidate Government,” The White House. Office of the Press Secretary. 13 January 2012.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

in newly established White House institutions. The presidency expanded to include the White House Office, the Office of Management and Budget, and a host of other institutions inside the Executive Office of the President (Ragsdale and Theiss 1991; Wyszomirski 1991). Additionally, the White House developed liaison offices for key groups, institutions and issues to provide greater information sharing and control in those areas (Tenpas 2000). The growth of what scholars refer to as “the institutional presidency” expanded the reach of presidential power, facilitated White House policy coordination and development, and placed greater authority in offices both institutionally and physically proximate to the White House.

Presidents not only augmented the power of the presidency internally, they also strengthened ties between the White House and agencies. Presidents sought to transfer decision making authority toward higher level political appointees (agency heads or cabinet secretaries) or the White House itself. Often rhetorically signaled as an effective means of improving communication and coordination, centralization serves as a way of decreasing shirking and ideological drift and increasing monitoring and presidential control of the bureaucracy (Galvin and Shogun 2004; Moe 1985; Robinson et al 2007; Rudalevige 2002). Centralization is a critical presidential response to a bureaucracy that fails to support presidential interests.

While previous work discovered important presidential strategies regarding political control, more work needs to be done to explain how such tools can be specifically targeted in ways that advance presidential electoral interests. It is to this issue that I now turn.

Incentives for Political Control

Presidents are motivated by electoral interests and desire policy outcomes that reflect those goals. Targeting such efforts at actors with distributive authority allows presidents flexibility to maximize benefits (strategic fund allocations) and minimize costs (policy failure). To evaluate how presidents induce responsiveness among policy making institutions, it is critical to understand how variation in agencies conditions presidential efforts at administrative control.

Presidential preferences over policy outcomes can vary dramatically across agencies because federal agencies administer policy in substantially diverse areas. As a result, it is important to understand presidential goals in context in order to evaluate the manner in which presidents approach political control. For example, the National Nuclear Security Agency (NNSA), a subunit of the Department of Energy, “ensures the nuclear warheads and bombs in the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile are safe, secure, and effective in order to provide the nation with a credible nuclear deterrent.”⁹⁰ The NNSA provides an important service for the security and military power of the United States, and its tasks require a heightened level of expertise. The use of administrative tools of political control in an agency such as this one could not only be disastrous for the president who chose to do so, but would endanger the lives of Americans and others throughout the world. For the NNSA, presidents likely prefer expertise rather than politics to drive outcomes. Even a president seeking to implement political control in executive branch institutions would likely spare NNSA.

⁹⁰ “Managing the Stockpile.” National Nuclear Security Agency.
<http://nnsa.energy.gov/ourmission/managingthestockpile> Online. Accessed: 13 January 2012.

However, the complexity of tasks and expertise required of employees at NNSA does not mean that presidents must forego administrative control broadly. Instead, it suggests that agency operations will condition a president's decision to introduce politics into policymaking agencies. Politicization of personnel and policy at the expense of competence, experience or expertise offers presidents political costs and benefits. Both costs and benefits vary dramatically according to the task of the agency, the policy outcomes an agency generates, and the risks and implications of policy failure.

The stated goal of the Delta Regional Authority is “to enhance economic development and improve the quality of life for the hard-working residents of the Delta Region.”⁹¹ This agency provides such services through the distribution of federal grants. While individuals in the Delta region depend on these funds to pursue greater economic opportunities, politicization of this agency presents costs and benefits that differ dramatically from an institution such as NNSA.

The Delta Regional Authority distributes federal money and provides a context in which the president can engage in politically strategic fund targeting. Policy failures—in this case, imperfect allocations of federal funds—are unlikely to cause a problem of profound proportions. In fact, so long as funds are still distributed to eligible and needy applicants, but are done so in politically- or electorally-sensitive ways, such a policy “failure” may be difficult to identify. Compared to what could result from a policy failure in the NNSA, the Delta Regional Authority presents the president a low cost, high benefit context for politicizing personnel and administrative structures.

⁹¹ “About DRA.” Delta Regional Authority. <http://www.dra.gov/about-us/default.aspx> Online. Accessed: 13 January 2012.

Generally, because political and electoral goals motivate presidents, agencies that provide political and electoral benefits and carry with them low risks and/or low costs of policy failure become appealing centers for political and administrative control.

Presidents will use and manipulate the administrative apparatus of government to reap electoral benefits. In fact, presidents are uniquely positioned to identify, across and within agencies, potential benefits (and costs) and maneuver to maximize net benefits. In considering the risks and rewards of political control (concepts that vary across and even within agencies), presidents administer government based on a strategic political and policy calculus.

By implementing tools of administrative control in distributive agencies, presidents can effectively reap the electoral benefits that such institutions can provide. Treating distributive institutions and actors differently allows a strategic use of politicization, reorganization, and centralization that satisfies the preferences of an election driven president. Such calculated implementation of administrative control that exempts certain agencies also shields presidents from serious policy failures.

Extracting Electoral Benefits through Political Control

Presidents are able to control policy processes and outcomes in spending agencies through a series of clear steps. First, as noted above, the executive branch personnel system is a key source of political control. The president's appointment power allows him to select individuals who will lead agencies and offices and serve in key decision making roles throughout the bureaucracy. Presidents can politicize in multiple ways. First, they

can select appointees based on political, work, and background characteristics that will signal support for presidential interests. Second, presidents can affect the number of appointees in bureaucratic institutions. Third, presidents can give these actors substantial decision making authority and policy influence. The result is a multifaceted effort to create an army of appointees that is loyal, responsive, and politically sensitive.

Beyond the appointment power, the president's ability to affect personnel extends to the civil service. The power over the Senior Executive Service (SES) allows presidents to transfer individuals throughout the SES and reassign responsibilities therein. This empowers presidents to move responsive SES actors into more influential roles, while rendering less responsive actors ineffective. Moreover, executive branch actors can affect hiring decisions even within the civil service. When political appointees or White House institutions have influence or authority over agency-level hiring decisions, administrations can work to ensure that new hires reflect presidential interests. This power is critical, as well. Because civil servants can play key roles in the context of federal spending, any power that political actors retain over staffing these positions facilitates the drive for greater electoral responsiveness. In the end, presidents and their surrogates wield broad powers to influence the character of the executive branch workforce through personnel politicization.

Presidents will identify bureaucratic actors with spending authority and work to ensure that these personnel have characteristics such as political experience, ideological alignment, or support for the White House. These traits will improve the likelihood that actors will advance presidential causes. Because key personal and professional characteristics can signal greater responsiveness, presidents will focus specific attention

on matching such characteristics with positions that offer greater electoral benefit. In so doing, he ensures that people administering distributive policy look fundamentally different than other policy makers and better reflect presidential interests. Politicizing distributors allows presidents greater opportunity to extract electoral benefits from policy.

H1: Personnel Hypothesis: Presidents will choose more responsive personnel to administer distributive policy than non-distributive policy.

In addition to politicization, presidents can influence structures within federal agencies to ensure that politically responsive actors hold critical decision making roles. In this sense, presidents can centralize power to loyal agency staff.⁹² In some cases, politically appointed and other leadership positions are already assigned broad decision making authority *ex officio*. In other cases, non-appointed officials lead agencies and offices and serve as key decision makers. For example, the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) operates state offices throughout the country. Although these offices are charged to make critical decisions affecting their local jurisdiction, career-level federal executives run each. When agency decision making rests in the hands of individuals likely to be less responsive to the president, institutional structures can be redesigned to empower those who are more supportive of presidential interests. Presidents should focus exceptional attention to redesigning decision making structures for distributive agencies and actors.

⁹² An argument can be made that such a strategic behavior or tool of administrative control is truly an effort at intra-agency reorganization; however, presidents rely on political actors: appointees, White House personnel, officials at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and OMB's liaison offices within departments and agencies to carry out presidential preferences. While these appointees are not the only executive branch actors who are responsive to presidential (electoral) preferences, they are, as a group, far more reliable than civil servants to advance the president's goals. In this way, a reorganization or reapplication of decision making geared toward loyalists—appointed or otherwise—may be a tool presidents employ. However, centralizing power in the hands of political officials serves presidents more effectively and is more systematically observable as a result.

Moreover, these efforts—unlike broader reorganization or centralization—can often occur unilaterally. Simply assigning different decision making roles to different actors *within* federal agencies often rests within the administrative authority of the White House or bureaucratic leadership. These efforts can help secure greater responsiveness at low cost. For an agency like the NRCS, one means of enhancing political responsiveness is close monitoring of agency decisions or ensuring that all final decisions pass through political appointees in the national office. Short of transferring powers directly to the White House or moving policy jurisdictions to different agencies, presidents can encourage greater appointee intervention at the intra-institutional level as a means of exacting greater political control over policy. The presidential focus on distributive actors will make certain that they have a different experience with political actors' oversight, intervention, and scope of policy influence. Presidents and their surrogates will manipulate the bureaucratic decision making apparatus around distributors in order to control spending outcomes more effectively.

H2: Empowerment Hypothesis: Political officials will have more decision making authority and policy influence over distributive policy than other policy areas.

Despite efforts to empower political actors and responsive individuals, the sheer size and responsibility of the federal government limits the ability of key personnel to make all policy decisions. Presidents must rely on career-level civil servants to make decisions. Because of the technocratic and professional nature and tenure protections of such positions, civil servants may have very different policy goals than presidents. As a result, presidents must take additional steps in an effort to control policy outcomes. They can use political appointees and White House institutions to foster an administrative

environment within agencies that is politicized and generates responsiveness. Presidents can essentially generate *environmental politicization* by maintaining an atmosphere in which political pressure and contact are pervasive and careerists are constantly reminded of presidential or administration preferences and expectations regarding policy making. Similar to personnel politicization, environmental politicization allows senior, loyal and responsive personnel to use a strategic informational setting to apply political pressure where responsiveness is lacking.

Once again returning to the NRCS, if political appointees struggle to find the time necessary to monitor all decision making by career-level state executives, they may seek indirect means of influence. Rather than playing an active and direct role in the daily affairs of state offices, central agency appointees may use frequent contact to discuss with career executives the preferences of the administration and the most efficient means of achieving those outcomes. By relaying constant information on administration priorities, appointees can convey behavioral and policy expectations that career executives should meet. Like in any organization, leadership can convey to staff their preferences and in an indirect way drive those individuals to reflect leadership goals. In a federal agency, staff are reminded of who they serve every time they walk into their office, as pictures of the president and department head are usually prominently displayed.

Fostering environmental politicization can be a highly effective means of communicating information about the preferences of political principals (presidents and their appointees) in a way that can induce responsiveness. Given the important benefits federal spending provides, distributors' experience with political pressure should be unique. For example, White House staff or OMB may contact distributive actors to

remind them of critical projects being considered in key geographic locations (swing states). This effort involves a subtle signal to distributors of presidential preferences of fund allocations. Presidential preferences over the distribution of funds are thus easily conveyed to career members of the bureaucracy through frequent contact and a clear statement of behavioral expectations. Moreover, because so many funding decisions are made each day, this area of administration quickly becomes too unwieldy to control directly.⁹³ Environmental politicization, laden with contact regarding the administration's political and electoral goals, can allow this extensive area of policy outcomes to incorporate and reflect presidential goals.

Environmental politicization through the application of political pressure provides presidents a flexible tool with more precision than other efforts. Personnel politicization can affect dynamics within entire cabinet departments or federal agencies. Restructuring decision making authority can be geared toward distributors in an effort to induce electoral responsiveness in federal spending. However, centralization can have negative externalities by affecting decision making in other areas—an effect that is resource inefficient and can increase the risk of other unintended policy failures. The application of political pressure can be effectively applied to specific individuals, groups of individuals or entire agencies, depending on presidential need and intent. Distributors' experience with and perception of the politicized environment should be distinct given the salient political and electoral benefits they can provide. What results are scenarios in which distributors face intense political pressure while their colleagues working in positions that cannot provide electoral benefits experience none of it.

⁹³ For example, between 1996 and 2008 almost 300,000 federal discretionary grants were allocated annually—approximately 6000 decisions every week.

H3: Influence Hypothesis: Federal executives administering distributive policy will be subject to greater political pressure than other federal executives.

Presidents, thus, rely on a set of administrative tools to induce policy responsiveness and can target these tools to distributors. Presidents both politicize personnel in strategic ways and give those actors decision making authority as a means of enhancing policy responsiveness. By ensuring that the right individuals staff the bureaucracy and that they are empowered with decision making authority over policy, presidents are able to generate direct policy responsiveness. However, the effects of politicized staffing and the strategic assignment of decision making authority have other benefits for a president seeking responsiveness. These agency leaders and the structure of decision making can foster a politicized environment within federal agencies through political influence and the application of political pressure. These efforts, born from initially manipulating personnel and process, contribute an additional means of garnering policy responsiveness throughout the bureaucracy. These tools can be targeted in ways that allow presidents to extract benefits from policy. In the context of presidential electoral goals—a driving force and critical incentive in presidential behavior—distributors are particularly subject to these tools of control. By focusing administrative attention on actors with spending authority, presidents can induce electoral responsiveness and participate effectively in porkbarrel politics.

Data Analysis and a Closer Look at Distributors

To evaluate differences in background and experience between distributors and non-distributors, I rely on the Survey on the Future of Government Service. The Survey was conducted from 2007-8 and asks a series of questions of federal executives across government.⁹⁴ The focus on federal executives ensures that all respondents play critical roles in the executive branch and the administration of policy therein. These individuals serve in leadership roles and are often intimately involved in decision making at the highest levels of bureaucratic institutions. The survey questions touch on a host of topics including respondents' background, position, and qualifications. It also includes questions about myriad topics such as political pressure and the political and administrative environment inside bureaucratic institutions. This body of data allows for the assessment of important questions including expertise, political affiliation and loyalty, readiness to perform, and the saturation of political pressure in policy making. The Survey is an exceptional data source for testing important questions regarding federal personnel and the role of politics in administrative process.

The Survey also allows another distinction in the data that is critical to evaluating the above hypotheses. It gives leverage on which federal executives hold positions that involve federal fund distribution. One segment of the survey asks,

Does your job deal directly with decisions about:

Procurement of the content of contracts with private firms? (Y/N)

⁹⁴ Details regarding the precise methodology used in this survey can be found in Clinton, et al (2012). The survey sampled 7,448 federal executives with 2,398 responding. Respondents included political appointees (259) and career-level federal executives (2,021).

Licenses of loans granted to private firms or citizens? (Y/N)

Grants to states and local governments, other organizations, or individuals? (Y/N)

This question allows me to distinguish effectively those who I label “distributors” and those who work in other capacities.⁹⁵

This question probes a fairly complete definition of distributional politics. However, it offers additional methodological appeal for assessing presidential power over the administration of government and the formation of public policy. Because of the comprehensive nature of this prompt and the structure of federal spending authority, this question offers a conservative assessment of the presidential role. Although the executive branch wields discretionary authority over large portions of federal spending, Congressional influence manifests through earmarks; block, formula, and categorical grants; guidelines about contract, license, or cooperative agreement eligibility; and in a host of other formal and informal ways. Unlike previous chapters that capitalized exclusively on discretionary spending authority, the Survey does not allow as clean of a distinction and thus risks underestimating the presidential effect.

The data used in this chapter include responses from 1,678 federal executives from across the government. Among these respondents, 11.1% or 187 are political appointees, defined as individuals who are Senate-confirmed, Schedule C or Non-career Senior Executive Service. Additionally, the data include 1,031 respondents who note that they are distributors, accounting for 63.8% of all respondents. The empirical effort seeks to test the hypotheses by asking a few straightforward questions. First, do distributors look different than non-distributors? Are distributors more likely to have characteristics

⁹⁵ I label a respondent a “distributor” if they answer “Yes” to one or more parts of this question.

associated with responsiveness? Second, do distributors experience greater levels of political control and policy influence from political actors? Finally, do distributors face a significantly different, more politicized agency environment in which political actors serve as the source of such administrative politicization? In the process, this effort offers a comprehensive and detailed look at how presidents affect both personnel and process to achieve political control and extract electoral benefits from public policy.

Assessing the Personnel Hypothesis

Presidents can begin to seize control of the policy apparatus of government through strategic staffing. By carefully selecting political appointees and influencing the process to fill mid-level vacancies, presidents try to staff the bureaucracy with friendly faces—those sympathetic to their interests. Strategic staffing is a basic story of politicization, and the data drawn from the Survey support the notion that presidents engage in this behavior. However, the Survey also offers insight into politicization, as conditional on prospective political benefits.

Political appointees were asked to discuss their prior political experience in elected branches of government, service to a political party campaign or interest group, or affiliation with a partisan think tank. Of course, political appointees are often chosen because of their experience in politics, loyalty to the president or party in power, and connections to the establishment. The data effectively show this political experience among the appointed corps. For example, among appointed respondents in the survey, over 56% had prior political experience. In fact, 20% of appointees reported prior White House experience, suggesting the importance of political knowledge to the president in selecting surrogates. Beyond political experience, ideological alignment with the

president is also a critical consideration in selecting appointees. For self-reported ideology,⁹⁶ 58% of appointees reported being “somewhat conservative,” “conservative,” or “very conservative,” while 32% of respondents reported being “moderate.” That appointees are more politically experienced and ideologically aligned with the White House suggests presidents particularly value of loyalty and responsiveness in choosing individuals to lead bureaucratic institutions.

I also divide appointees into those who control federal spending (distributors) and those who do not (non-distributors) in order to evaluate presidential considerations of loyalty for electorally strategic positions. Consistent with the expectations in Hypothesis 1, appointed distributors are also slightly more conservative than appointed non-distributors, although the results are statistically indistinguishable. Similarly, I examine the percentage of politically appointed respondents who report having a role in distributive policy (n=107) and their ideology. I find that conservative political appointees are more likely to have a distributive role than less conservative political appointees, as well. These findings suggest that in an area of policy that can provide presidents political and electoral rewards, presidents make certain that key actors are loyal, responsive, and politically knowledgeable.

The Survey allows a greater look into the motivations driving career personnel, as well. While presidents wield less formal power over the selection of career-level staff, politics can certainly enter the civil service system. Appointees have formal and informal roles in the hiring of federal employees and job postings can critically target specific individuals within and without the civil service. To this end, it is important to examine

⁹⁶ For the purpose of this survey, ideological alignment with the White House is reflected in respondents with more conservative ideology. The Survey was conducted in 2007-8 during the administration of Republican President George W. Bush.

whether politics can affect the recruitment or hiring of career-level personnel. The Survey illustrates that there is little ideological alignment between career federal executives and the president. However, what is more important is careerists' propensity to be responsive to political direction. I am able to examine this propensity by examining why federal executives chose to enter public service and analyzing their work environment.

The Survey examines respondents' motivations for entering government services and this question allows insight into the political motives involved in that decision. The question asks

Now thinking about your original decision to enter government service, how important were each to the following in your decision?

Enthusiasm for the party/person in power in the White House.

Personal request by higher agency official.

Respondents' choices included a 5-point scale: "very important," "important," "moderately important," "not too important," and "not at all important." In this context, lower values signify greater importance (1= very important; 5 = not important at all). The results reported in Table 4.1 offers suggestive evidence that distributors were more likely to enter government service because of enthusiasm for the White House or because of a personal connection to someone selected by the White House. Because presidents seek to generate responsiveness particularly from individuals who serve in roles that can provide political and electoral benefits, they will try to assign supporters to distributive roles. Although not statistically distinguishable, point estimates indicate that those who enter government service because of support for the White House are more likely to be assigned distributive authority. It is often easy to deduce who in an applicant pool is enthusiastic for the president or the party in the White House. A candidate can easily

convey such support through a résumé or interview by including volunteer work for political campaigns or affiliation with specific organizations that denote political alignment with the White House.

Table 4.1 Motivations for Government Service

<i>Decision to Work in Government (1-5; 1= stronger support)</i>	<i>Distributors</i>	<i>Non-Distributors</i>
Enthusiasm for the party/person in the White House	4.55	4.64
Personal request by a higher level agency official	3.94*	4.26*

Note: The values represent the mean response to the question "Now thinking about your original decision to enter government service, how important were each of the following in your decision?" "Grants" signifies a respondent who deals directly with federal grant allocations. Responses ranged from 1=Very Important to 5=Not important at all. * $p < .05$ (one-tailed test), signifying a difference between distributors and non-distributors. N(distributors) = 849. N(non-distributors) = 493.

Interestingly, distributors are significantly more likely to have entered government service because of a personal request from an agency leader (“higher official”) than non-distributors. Rather than an indirect effort at identifying possibly responsive individuals in a broad applicant pool, agency officials can use their own networking and familiarity with responsive individuals to target and recruit federal personnel. This effort is not only more active, but would likely be far more effective at achieving responsiveness, as familiarity with an individual reduces the risk of a hiring error.

Taken together, the results from Table 4.1 illustrate that politics affects executive branch personnel in two key ways. First, political motivations can affect one’s decision to enter government service initially. Individuals understand that the bureaucracy is an institution that is political in nature and one’s support for the president may make a job in his administration more appealing. Second, the personnel system in the executive branch is politically strategic in identifying and recruiting individuals who are likely to be responsive to the president and other executive branch principals. Although presidents want the entire bureaucracy to be responsive and thus have characteristics that foster

greater alignment with presidential goals, the results show that particular attention is paid to staffing strategically positions that can provide electoral benefits. Targeting the “right kind” of personnel allows presidents and their surrogates greater control over policy making. These results also show that this strategic allocation of personnel, particularly in the context of positions with spending power includes appointees but also extends to the civil service.

Who is Influencing Distributive Decisions?

Not only are personnel selected in strategic ways, but decision making and power structures within the bureaucracy are designed to enhance the influence of key actors and generate policy responsiveness. Once politically responsive individuals are recruited to serve in the executive branch of government, it is critical to ensure these individuals serve in influential roles. Generally, respondents to this survey will play key decision making roles within the executive branch, as they are all federal executives. However, policy influence is not necessarily equal in type or amount across all respondents, and variation will certainly exist with regard to the level and scope of authority. This variation is true across the bureaucracy where different individuals and institutions are powerful or weak depending on the structure and context of an agency.

One benefit of the Survey in evaluating policy influence is that it asks federal executives directly about processes and behaviors within their institution. These data allow a first-hand look into the avenues of influence and loci of policy making power within the bureaucracy. One question asks

In general, how much influence do the following groups have over policy decisions in your agency?

White House

*Office of Management and Budget
 Political Appointees
 Senior Civil Servants
 Congressional Committees
 Republicans in Congress
 Democrats in Congress*

The responses are on a 5-point scale: “a great deal,” “a good bit,” “some,” “little,” or “none.” Lower values indicate greater influence (1= a great deal; 5 = none). This question allows insight into how key actors in the executive and legislative branches affect “policy decisions” in particular. The appeal of this question is that it is targeted to *policy* influence, rather than a diffuse measure of “influence” that allows dramatic variation in respondent interpretation. Moreover, the broad base of groups that are referenced in the question allows an examination of non-elected officials’ influence (Senior Civil Servants) as well as the influence of political actors in both branches of government. This question allows effective comparisons of policy influence in multiple ways include inter-branch effects, intra-branch differences, as well as the relative impact of political and non-political forces in the policy process.

Table 4.2 Policy Influence of Institutional Actors

<i>Institution (1=maximum influence)</i>	<i>Distributors</i>	<i>Non-Distributors</i>
White House	2.13*	2.27*
Office of Management and Budget	1.85*	2.06*
Political Appointees	1.70*	1.80*
Senior Civil Servants	2.16	2.23
Congressional Committees	2.23*	2.48*
Republicans in Congress	2.52*	2.76*
Democrats in Congress	2.79*	3.01*

Note: The values represent the mean response from career-level federal executives to the question "In general, how much influence do the following groups have over policy decisions in your agency?" Responses ranged from 1 = a great deal to 5 = none. *p<.05 (one-tailed test), signifying a difference between distributors and non-distributors. N(distributors) = 947. N(non-distributors) = 493.

Policy influence rests at the core of understanding how decision making structures within agencies are designed and how that design empowers or hinders political forces in

the manipulation of outcomes. Further, it allows a direct test of Hypothesis 2 by exploring how these political forces differently affect various policy areas. The results presented in Table 4.2 are consistent with Hypothesis 2. Distributors report more political influence across the board and the most influence from executive branch actors. Specifically, from the perspective of those administering federal spending, policy influence is more pronounced for the White House, OMB, and political appointees.

The only group for which there is no statistical difference in influence between distributors and non-distributors is senior civil servants. This distinction for senior civil servants informs much about the relationship of politics and policy. If there existed a characteristic, unique to distributive policy, for which greater senior level influence was necessary for the standard administration of that policy, it should affect the data uniformly. That is, senior civil servants should be more influential and involved in distributive policy than other areas. Instead, the influence increase for distributive policy is only true for political actors, illustrating that this policy area is fundamentally political and uniquely important to politically-oriented actors.

Given that political actors across the two branches try to reap political benefits from federal spending policy, it is also important to understand relative political influence from the elected branches. That political actors in the executive branch influence distributive policy more than other policy areas provides support for Hypothesis 2. Decision making structures within policy areas with distributive authority empower political actors to influence outcomes. Table 4.2 illustrates effectively that distributors report greater policy influence from political actors than do non-distributors. However, these results do not explain the relative influence of political institutions in policy

making. Table 4.2 also shows the significant influence of executive branch actors vis-à-vis legislative actors.⁹⁷ Executive branch actors are powerful forces in the administration of policy—even in the context of micro-level decision making. For example, distributive respondents reported, on average, that executive branch actors had “a good bit” or more policy influence. In fact this average reported influence was greater than that of Congressional actors. Table 4.2 challenges previous work that suggests the executive branch role in the distribution of federal funds is limited and subordinate to the legislative role. This analysis shows that both executive and legislative influence is critical, but that executive branch actors assert a strong role in the policy process.

The results of Table 4.2 confirm that Congress has greater influence over distributive policy than they do in other areas of policy. As the appropriator and overseer of federal spending, Congressional committees and legislators can have profound influence on distributive policy. In addition, because legislators insert earmarks into bills and committee reports and craft formula and block grants with the intention of targeting key constituencies, the Congressional impact cannot be ignored. However, what these results show is that unlike traditional work that speaks to the dominant Congressional role in federal spending policy, the executive branch is also quite powerful.

As mentioned above, certain institutional structures within the executive branch can limit the effect of political actors in extracting policy benefits. A central means of insulating bureaucracy from political control is the creation of independent institutions: agencies and commissions. Chapter III demonstrates that under certain circumstances, institutions can be insulated; however, presidents still maintain some avenues of power.

⁹⁷ Appendix 4.A1 includes a table of pair-wise difference of means tests of key political actors’ reported policy influence. This appendix allows the comparison of interbranch levels of influence in a way that Table 4.2 suggests.

The questions in this survey that probe the policy influence of political actors allow an evaluation of common theories of political insulation. The Survey also asks respondents to identify the agency in which they work. These data provide for isolation of responses by agency type to evaluate political power within such agencies and commissions. Analyzing the impact of independent institutions allows a more rigorous test of theories of presidential policy power and administrative control.

Table 4.3 Independent Institution-Employed Career-Level Federal Executives' Perceptions of Political Influence

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Independent Agency</i>		<i>Independent Commission</i>	
	<i>Distributors</i>	<i>Non-Distributors</i>	<i>Distributors</i>	<i>Non-Distributors</i>
Congressional Democrats	2.88*	3.10*	2.89*	3.48*
Congressional Republicans	2.65*	2.86*	2.80*	3.26*
Congressional Committees	2.37*	2.60*	2.33*	2.97*
White House	2.20	2.17	2.85*	3.48*
OMB	1.79	1.87	2.37*	3.08*
Political Appointees	1.76	1.83	1.41	1.48

Note: The values represent the mean response among career-level independent institution respondents to the question, "In general, how much influence do the following groups have over policy decisions in your agency?" Responses ranged from 1= A great deal to 5 = None. * $p < .05$ (one-tailed test), signifying a difference between distributors and non-distributors. N(distributors|Independent Agency) = 183. N(non-distributors|Independent Agency) = 94. N(distributors|Independent Commission) = 71. N(non-distributors|Independent Commission) = 70.

Table 4.3 reports the influence of political actors for both distributive and non-distributive policy areas in independent institutions. The results are generally mixed. Broadly, political actors in the executive branch have more policy influence than Congress.⁹⁸ This finding suggests that institutional structure does condition the policy influence of political actors in independent institutions. Of particular note in the more insulated independent commissions, respondents report far less overall policy influence from Congress and executive branch political actors than they do in other institutions, consistent with conventional views about the political insulation of these commissions

⁹⁸ Although differences between executive branch and legislative institutions are not tested, the differences are clearly observable and are found to be statistically significant than in separate tests.

(see Lewis 2003). The difference in means between distributors and non-distributors shows that distributors report greater influence from political actors even in institutions where the policy influence of political actors is limited.⁹⁹ These findings further demonstrate the importance presidents place on the role of politically responsive in the arena of federal spending, even when institutions are designed to limit political control and influence.

An Econometric Assessment of the Empowerment Hypothesis

Although the assessment of Hypothesis 2 thus far has produced convincing results regarding the ability of presidents to structure decision making processes to empower political and politically-responsive actors, more can be done empirically to investigate these claims. So far, the analysis has relied on difference of means to tests to tease out variation in the decision making power of political officials among distributors and non-distributors and among various institutional actors. Yet, this variation could be caused by omitted factors such as institutional characteristics of agencies and other individual level attributes that predict both political influence and federal spending power. As such, I estimate models with appropriate agency- and respondent-level controls. Specifically, I control for whether a respondent is a political appointee, whether she works in a regional office, her position in the administrative hierarchy, and experience in her current

⁹⁹ The difference in means between distributors' and non-distributors' responses regarding executive branch political actors' policy influence is significant for independent commissions and approaches significance for independent agencies. The difference in means for independent agencies' responses regarding the influence of OMB and political appointees is in the expected direction (favoring greater influence among distributors). One reason for the lack of precision for some of these findings involves a character of the data. The data reported in Table 4.3 are divided repeatedly, such that some cells contain fewer than 10 observations and increase the size of standard deviations. Additionally, the consequences of dividing data in this way can introduce concerns over robustness. However, because the findings support theoretical expectation both within this chapter and dissertation and in the literature more generally and are well complemented by other similar findings, it offers additional confidence that the findings do not reflect a faulty rejection of the null hypothesis.

position.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, I control for whether the respondent's agency is cabinet-level, independent, or an independent commission as well as logged agency employment.

Because the dependent variable is ordered and categorical, I estimate a series of ordered logit models. Table 4.4 reports the model estimates where higher values indicate higher levels of political influence.

Most importantly, even when controlling for all of these factors, distributors report significantly greater policy influence from political actors. The estimate reaches or approaches statistical significance across all four models and is robust in terms of being positive, in concert with expectations in Hypothesis 2. The administration places key political actors in influential distributive positions more than in other policy areas.

Respondents directly involved in federal spending report greater policy power from executive branch political actors including the White House, OMB, and political appointees. Distributive respondents are 3.8% more likely than non-distributors to report the White House having "a great deal" of influence and 7.6% more likely to report the same influence from appointees. These effects demonstrate the scope of political power in the executive branch over federal spending. In fact, while Congress is traditionally considered the source of power in the distribution of funds, the estimated effects of these models show the powerful influence of executive branch actors compared to Congress.

For example, distributors report OMB having "a great deal" of influence with a probability of 39.2%. However, the same respondents are only 18.3 percent likely to

¹⁰⁰ Political Appointee is an indicator variable with a mode of zero, indicating the abundance of career-level respondents. Regional Office is an indicator variable with a mode of zero, indicating that most respondents serve in central offices of agencies. The Hierarchy variable is 4-category variable indicating whether a respondent is an Senate-confirmed appointee, a different appoint, a career member of the SES, or a different careerist. Hierarchy has a mean of 1.86 with higher values indicating a higher position in the hierarchy (4=Senate-confirmed appointee). The Current Position variable is measured in years with a mean of 6.6.

Table 4.4 Predicting Institutional Influence in the Bureaucracy

	<i>White House</i>	<i>OMB</i>	<i>Appointees</i>	<i>Committees</i>
<i>Federal Spending Authority</i>				
Distributors (0,1)	0.182 [^] (0.135)	0.334** (0.111)	0.184 [^] (0.121)	0.384** (0.094)
<i>Individual Work Characteristics</i>				
Political Appointee (0,1)	-0.726** (0.251)	-0.500* (0.282)	-1.098** (0.242)	-0.373 [^] (0.262)
Regional Office (0,1)	-0.028 (0.157)	-0.002 (0.138)	-0.204 [^] (0.128)	-0.211 [^] (0.139)
Seniority (1-4)	0.337** (0.118)	0.228* (0.136)	0.359** (0.134)	0.114 (0.113)
Current Position (years)	-0.004 (0.009)	-0.001 (0.009)	-0.008 (0.008)	-0.009 (0.009)
<i>Institutional Characteristics</i>				
Cabinet (0,1)	1.783** (0.298)	1.652** (0.363)	-0.654** (0.214)	0.530* (0.297)
Independent Agency (0,1)	1.560** (0.321)	1.901** (0.398)	-0.718** (0.227)	0.109 (0.337)
Agency Employment (logged)	0.003 (0.045)	-0.020 (0.057)	-0.011 (0.037)	0.076* (0.035)
<i>Personal Characteristics</i>				
Ideology (1-7)	-0.005 (0.041)	-0.071* (0.043)	-0.021 (0.042)	0.063* (0.035)
Male	0.180 [^] (0.122)	0.449** (0.125)	0.041 (0.101)	0.246* (0.118)
Education Level (1-5)	0.085 [^] (0.063)	0.023 (0.062)	0.151** (0.063)	0.023 (0.066)
Observations	1607	1607	1607	1607
Log Likelihood	-2200.12	-1968.44	-1829.15	-2152.67
Pseudo-R2	0.02	0.04	0.02	0.02

Note: For each model the dependent variable is the reported level of influence over a policy, in which the relevant institution is noted atop each column. **p<.01 (one-tailed test) *p<.05 (one-tailed test) [^]p<.10 (one-tailed test). Agency clustered standard errors are reported.

report the same level of influence from Congressional committees. These findings and effects are critical to understanding both the importance of distributive policy for the president and how presidents can structure executive branch decision making to advance their goals and satisfy their preferences.

Further, one's position within the executive branch conditions his view of policy influence from political actors. The Political Appointee indicator variable denotes a careerist as the reference case. Career-level federal executives are more likely to report policy influence. The estimates for this variable are robust across the three models measuring influence from executive branch political actors. This estimate shows that the impact of political actors within the administration is felt throughout the civil service. For example, distributive careerists are 23.5% more likely to report that appointees have "a great deal" of influence than are appointees themselves. Similarly, distributive careerists are 13.1% more likely to report the White House having the same level of influence over policy. That appointees report less influence from political actors may reflect the politically guarded responses of appointees, particularly with regard to their own impact on the process.

After controlling for political appointees, one's position in the bureaucratic hierarchy also substantially affects reported policy influence. More senior individuals note that political actors in the executive branch have more of an effect on policy outcomes. Conversely, one's position in the hierarchy has no effect on the reported influence of Congress. This estimate likely reflects the information environment within federal agencies and the top-down decision making structure of the federal government. It is likely that lower level federal executives observe less policy influence from political actors because they have less interaction with those individuals and institutions. Instead, as decisions over policy trickle down through the bureaucracy, the source of such decision making or the influences acting on it become less clear. Senior executives, dealing directly with political actors, understand more thoroughly and observe first-hand

the amount of policy influence that the White House, OMB, and political appointees have. More precisely, a one unit change in the four-point scale¹⁰¹ of executive branch hierarchy (from “2” to “3”) translates into a 7.7% greater likelihood of a distributor reporting “a great deal” of White House influence, a 5.6% greater likelihood of reporting the same level of OMB influence, and an 8.9% greater likelihood of reporting the same level of appointee influence.

Finally, the results reported in Table 4.4 offer additional insight into the impact of executive branch structures on the policy influence of political actors. As the difference of means tests showed above, independent institutions appear to function differently than cabinet-level institutions. The estimates from the models presented here support this argument and add nuance to the conclusion. Individuals in cabinet institutions and independent agencies are more likely to report increased policy influence from the White House, OMB and Congress compared to independent commissions. Distributors from Cabinet agencies are 23.9% more likely than independent commission distributors to report “a great deal” of White House influence. Similarly, cabinet distributors are 28.2% more likely to report “a great deal” of OMB influence compared to commission distributors. This finding shows that presidential policy influence is pervasive across the vast majority of bureaucratic institutions. This means that presidential preferences are likely to affect dramatically the way a majority of policy affects citizens and other institutions. Moreover, these findings continue to highlight an empirical regularity in this dissertation: the effective insulation of independent commissions. Independent

¹⁰¹ The Hierarchy variable ranges in value from 1-4 with higher values indicating a higher position in the hierarchy. 1= Non-Senior Executive Service career-level bureaucrats. 2= Career members of the Senior Executive Service. 3= Schedule C or Non-Career Senior Executive Service political appointees. 4 = Senate-confirmed appointees.

commission respondents report significantly less policy influence from the political institutions most proximate to the president. This finding echoes the idea that the unique design features of independent commissions, including fixed and staggered terms and party balancing rules for appointed commissioners, do well to limit presidential influence over policy making.

However, the findings reported in Table 4.4 with regard to independent commissions do not suggest political forces have *no* effect in commissions. Commission respondents are likely to report *more* influence from political appointees than do respondents in other bureaucratic institutions. This estimate suggests that the institutional structure of independent commissions appears not to buffer them from political officials' policy control entirely. Instead, appointees within those institutions—sometimes presidents' only avenues into commissions—provide substantial policy influence. It shows that in an institutional context in which White House (and possibly Congressional) influence is lacking, the leadership of commissions is able to exercise substantial and *independent* policy influence. This finding also reflects the results presented in Chapter III that suggest the policy making power of political actors in independent commissions is severely restricted.

Despite the limitations in the data for independent institutions, the analysis of policy influence highlights another means by which presidents control policy making. They ensure that key individuals have decision making authority and policy influence broadly, but also greater influence in areas of policy that can provide presidents political and electoral benefits. Scholars frequently argue that by placing political actors in key decision making roles within the bureaucracy, presidents are empowered. The above

analysis suggests that this process is pervasive throughout the bureaucracy and its effects are particularly salient in the area of distributive public policy, where presidents are able to engage in porkbarrel politics.

Fostering a Political Environment: Testing the Influence Hypothesis

In many situations, presidents and their surrogates can have influence over policy decisions in agencies. The previous section illustrated that such influence can be pervasive. However, this influence over decision making is not absolute. While politicizing personnel and assigning duties to key actors can help ensure that policy outcomes reflect presidential preferences, agency drift can still occur for reasons such as unresponsive careerists or rogue appointees. However, presidents have another tool to induce policy responsiveness and reduce shirking: political pressure.

Typically, measuring political pressure can be difficult. However, one means of insight into this concept is through contact. If political actors seek to influence policy makers' behaviors, they should contact them with some regularity. Although contact does not occur exclusively to convey political interests, it is difficult to express such information without contact. The Survey asks respondents about contact with a wide variety of individuals and institutions. This question reads:

How often do you have contact with:

White House
Members of staff of congressional committees
Republicans in Congress or their staff
Democrats in Congress or their staff
Political appointees in your department or agency

Respondents' choices included a 5-point scale: "daily," "weekly," "monthly," "rarely," and "never." Lower values signify more frequent contact (1= daily; 5 = never). The

precision of this question helps evaluate how often career executives deal directly with the system's political forces.

Table 4.5 Career-Level Federal Executives' Contact with Political Institutions

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Distributors</i>	<i>Non-Distributors</i>
White House	4.33	4.26
Congressional Committees	3.61*	3.78*
Congressional Republicans	3.73*	3.91*
Congressional Democrats	3.72*	3.89*
Political Appointees	2.18*	2.35*

Note: The values represent the mean response among career bureaucrats to the question, "How often do you have contact with (Institution)?" Responses ranged from 1= Daily to 5 = Never. *p<.05 (one-tailed test), signifying a difference between distributors and non-distributors. N(distributors) = 853. N(non-distributors) = 498.

Table 4.5 compares the reported contact career-level federal executives have with political actors and institutions. The data are divided according to whether respondents deal with distributive policy in order to evaluate Hypothesis 3. The results suggest that with the exception of the White House, distributors report greater contact with political actors than do non-distributors. This increased contact with distributors is true for both legislative actors¹⁰² and political appointees. This finding comports with the idea that distributors provide elected officials opportunities to participate in porkbarrel politics, and pols will contact those bureaucratic actors more frequently.

These results not only demonstrate that distributors report more contact with political appointees than do non-distributors but also shed light on the extent of appointee influence. It is apparent from the results in Table 4.5 (and confirmed in separate tests) that career-level federal executives have significantly more contact with political

¹⁰² As mentioned previously, because the data include individuals who deal with more Congressionally-dominated types of spending, the contact with Congress is sensible. Respondents likely deal with distributive decisions over earmarking, formula and block grants. Additionally, because Congress requires reporting as part of the oversight process and often those dealing with budgetary matters have additional demands for such reports, legislative institutions (committees and members' offices) would be expected to contact distributors more often.

appointees than with Congress or the White House.¹⁰³ In fact, the values of average responses in Table 4.5 add substance to this claim. On average, respondents report that contact with appointees occurs about “weekly.” Contact with Congress occurs almost “rarely.”¹⁰⁴ These results suggest that information and contact comes from one’s more immediate supervisors rather than from the highest levels of the executive branch. As further evidence of the structure of the communication environment, White House contact with federal executives is not only indistinguishable between distributors and non-distributors, but is also muted in absolute terms. On average, career-level respondents note White House contact occurring slightly less than “rarely.” This suggests that the president does not reach out to careerists to convey information. Instead, career-level executives rely on contact from political appointees.

These differences and ubiquitous appointee contact emerges from a president relying on a complex, hierarchical network of surrogates to foster a politically-charged information environment in which pressure is used to induce responsiveness. Presidents face constraints because of the size of the executive branch and the number of policy decisions he would like to influence. As a result, presidents rely on political appointees to influence the distribution of funds rather than through direct White House intervention. In addition to being a resource-saving option, relying on appointees is appealing because they often have a more personal relationship with distributors. Because of this

¹⁰³ It would be difficult to rule out the role of Congressional intervention filtering through executive branch institutions, except that Congressional contact with the executive branch is muted. Under an alternative scenario, the executive branch actors contacting federal executives are simply responding to efforts of Congress to politicize policy outcomes (and distributive decisions). However, this scenario is difficult to support when Congress’ contact with the executive branch is limited.

¹⁰⁴ The response value for “weekly” is 2, and the average response for distributors regarding contact with political appointees was 2.18 (2.35 for non-distributors). The response value for “rarely” is 4, and the average response for distributors regarding contact with legislative institutions ranges from 3.61 to 3.73 (3.78 to 3.91 for non-distributors).

relationship, communication may be more fluid in conveying presidential needs. To this end, presidents inform political appointees of their preferences. Political appointees subsequently inform other appointees and career-level personnel of these preferences with expectations of responsiveness permeating the communication environment.

The flow of contact from appointees to career-level federal executives shows this communication environment in part. However, to understand fully the structure and nature of executive branch contact, it is also necessary to evaluate communication to political appointees. Essentially, in order to assess whether this hierarchy exists, it is critical to examine both the top and bottom of the structure. In separate analysis, I find that appointees report higher levels of contact with the White House than do careerists (see Appendix 4.A2). The results also offer suggestive evidence that the White House contacts distributive appointees more often than non-distributive appointees.¹⁰⁵ The results show a White House that is cognizant of the constraints on direct communication capabilities, given the size of the executive branch. Rather than direct contact with career-level policy makers, the White House relies on contact with appointees who in turn communicate frequently with other appointees and career-level executives.

Moreover, while contact, in itself, does not provide conclusive evidence of political pressure, differences across distributors and non-distributors do. Given the senior-level nature of federal executives, contact with administration leadership is an expected part of an organizational environment. However, that such communication with political actors increases exclusively in the context of federal spending suggests that politics is at the root of much of this contact.

¹⁰⁵ Additionally, appointed respondents report higher levels of contact with political appointees—approximately monthly).

The results in Table 4.5 offer preliminary support for Hypothesis 3. They suggest that political actors in both the executive branch and Congress—and particularly political appointees—have contact with career-level federal executives and that this contact increases for distributors. Political elites recognize the benefits that federal spending can provide, and they contact bureaucratic actors charged with exercising such authority with greater frequency. Although these findings reflect theoretical expectations, a more rigorous test of Hypothesis 3 can offer more convincing evidence of the relationship. To this end, I estimate models of political contact with the appropriate controls for individual and institutional characteristics used in the models reported in Table 4.4. Once again, because of the format of the survey question used for the dependent variables, I employ ordered logit to estimate separate models of political contact by institution. I report the estimates from these models in Table 4.6 with higher values indicating greater levels of political contact.

Overall, the results provide fairly strong support for the claim that individuals with distributive policy authority will receive more contact from political actors. The estimates for the Distributor indicator variable are positive and significant for contact with political appointees and Congress. Distributors are 2% more likely to report “daily” contact with political appointees than are non-distributors.¹⁰⁶ This result offers additional support for Hypothesis 3’s predictions, but also sheds light on the political nature of such contact. Because federal executives typically have decision making authority *ex officio*, contact with political appointees—agency leaders—would make sense as a reflection of the organizational structure of any federal agency. Such contact should occur regardless

¹⁰⁶ This substantive effect appears small, but the probability of reporting “daily” contact with political appointees is quite high across the board. Non-distributors are 93% likely to report that level of contact, while distributors are slightly more than 95% likely.

Table 4.6 Predicting Political Contact in the Bureaucracy

	<i>White House</i>	<i>Appointees</i>	<i>Committees</i>
<i>Federal Spending Authority</i>			
Distributive Role (0,1)	-0.046 (0.203)	0.326* (0.179)	0.492** (0.132)
<i>Individual Work Characteristics</i>			
Political Appointee (0,1)	0.690* (0.373)	-0.421 (0.358)	-0.378 (0.277)
Regional Office (0,1)	-1.238** (0.186)	-1.520** (0.274)	-0.950** (0.143)
Seniority (1-4)	0.596** (0.139)	1.134** (0.208)	0.698** (0.134)
Current Position (years)	-0.013 (0.011)	-0.008 (0.009)	-0.002 (0.009)
<i>Institutional Characteristics</i>			
Cabinet (0,1)	1.047** (0.346)	0.196 (0.431)	0.581* (0.282)
Independent Agency (0,1)	1.254** (0.284)	0.175 (0.450)	0.406^ (0.297)
Agency Employment (logged)	-0.066^ (0.047)	-0.068 (0.055)	0.045 (0.043)
<i>Personal Characteristics</i>			
Ideology (1-7)	0.032 (0.044)	-0.049 (0.046)	0.045 (0.048)
Male	-0.084 (0.116)	0.030 (0.101)	0.181^ (0.113)
Education Level (1-5)	0.296** (0.078)	0.0003 (0.102)	0.131* (0.071)
Observations	1607	1607	1607
Log Likelihood	-1767.00	-1967.84	-1894.27
Pseudo-R2	0.09	0.10	0.07

Note: For each model the dependent variable is the reported level of political contact, in which the relevant institution is noted atop each column. **p<.01 (one-tailed test) *p<.05 (one-tailed test) ^p<.10(one-tailed test). Agency clustered standard errors are reported.

of a respondent's specific role and be due to the senior-level nature of a federal executive's post. However, the results in Table 4.6 challenge this idea and show that contact increases for those charged with the specific tasks that can provide the president key electoral benefits: federal spending power. The estimates for distributors' contact

with political appointees suggest the politically motivated and strategic basis for this contact.

The Hierarchy variable offers additional evidence of the top-down nature of communication within the executive branch.¹⁰⁷ The estimate for this variable illustrates that more senior federal executives receive more contact from political institutions. A one unit change in the Hierarchy variable (a change from being career SES to being a Schedule C or non-career SES appointee) makes a respondent 3.0% more likely to report “daily” contact with Congressional Committees and 6.3% more likely to report the same level of contact with the White House. These results illustrate that political officials’ contact is intended to affect outcomes in meaningful ways. Contact from political institutions is targeted to more senior federal executives who either have a greater direct effect on outcomes or are well-positioned to induce behaviors among bureaucratic actors working beneath them. This finding also reflects the idea that contact begins from higher level decision makers (in the White House and Congress) and trickles down through the bureaucracy. While lower-level agency actors do not deal directly with political affairs, they may subsequently feel their effects. Moreover, this finding is robust even while including the Political Appointee indicator variable as a control, suggesting that even at the career-level, more senior executives are subject to greater direct political pressure than are junior executives. This provides further evidence that political pressure in the executive branch is not simply targeted to key actors (distributors, political appointees, etc.), but also manifests in a complex hierarchical system of communication and politicization.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid at 9.

The estimates reported in Table 4.6 for Distributors echo the findings from the difference of means tests for White House contact. The difference in White House contact between distributors and non-distributors is statistically indistinguishable. However, this result does not mean that the White House avoids the application of political pressure, but rather that it focuses it differently and perhaps indirectly targets pressure on distributors. The estimate for the Political Appointee variable in the White House contact model shows that the White House communicates with appointees substantially more than it does career-level federal executives. In fact, appointed distributors are 7.6% more likely than distributive career executives to report “daily” contact with the White House. This demonstrates that presidents target their contact directly to their appointed surrogates rather than the broader army of career-level federal executives. However, this result also indicates an indirect White House effect on distributors. Taken together, the findings paint the picture of a coordinated hierarchical effort to apply political pressure to individuals who are best positioned to deliver benefits. The White House directs greater contact toward political appointees. Political appointees then, in turn, contact distributors more frequently than non-distributors. This information environment and system of communication means that White House-directed political pressure can be targeted toward federal executives with spending authority.

In the analysis of political contact, I also control for agency insulation in order to examine whether institutional structure conditions the president’s ability to apply and target political pressure. This aspect of institutional design sets up interesting and competing notions of policy politicization. Presidents will want to foster a politicized environment in agencies that are less responsive; however, some agencies are constructed

for the express purpose of being insulated from political control. How such clashing concepts play out is critical to understanding presidential power over public policy and administrative process. I ask whether presidents seek to apply greater political pressure in more insulated agencies as a means of generating greater responsiveness or if agency design features intended to insulate bureaucratic institutions are effective at warding off political pressure.

To examine this question, I include two indicator variables each denoting a Cabinet Agency or Independent Agency with Independent Commission serving as the reference case. The estimates reported in Table 4.6 generally support the idea that insulated agencies can resist political pressure. Independent commission respondents, the reference case for institution structure, report less frequent contact from Congress and the White House than do independent agency or cabinet agency respondents. Cabinet distributors are 5.8% more likely to report “daily” contact with the White House than are distributors from independent commissions and cabinet distributors are 2.2% more likely than independent commission distributors to report the same level of contact with Congress. Political appointees, on the other hand, contact federal executives at similar rates across the three institutional types.¹⁰⁸ Although presidents may be motivated to apply greater political pressure in independent commissions, they may be restricted for a few reasons. Because independent commissions are institutionally designed to be resistant to political pressure, they may generate a culture in which political pressure is seen as inconsistent with the intent of the commissions’ authorization legislation and overall institutional design. For instance, it is seen as improper for the president to call

¹⁰⁸ This result is found in the estimates for Cabinet Agency and Independent Agency being statistically indistinguishable from the effect of the reference case. The estimates for Cabinet Agency and Independent Agency are also statistically indistinguishable from each other.

the Chairman of the Federal Reserve to tell him what interest rate policy should be. Additionally, because the structure of commissions means that several commissioners are appointed by other presidents, the White House may realize that politically-motivated contact—particularly toward commissioners of the opposite party—would be futile. Thus, while presidents desire fostering a politically charged commission environment, they may be institutionally restricted from doing so. Political contact will be less effective and as a result underutilized. Instead, political actors will target political pressure to less responsive institutions with less insulated design features. The results of this analysis show that even when controlling for differences across agencies and respondents' position in the hierarchy, distributors still face significantly greater political contact than respondents serving in other capacities.

Once again, the analysis of contact with political actors provides strongly suggestive evidence that the basis of such communication is to apply political pressure. However, other data from the Survey help illuminate pressure from political actors. As mentioned above, political appointees are often chosen because of their likelihood of generating policy responsiveness. As a result, another way in which presidents can foster a more political environment is through increasing the number of political appointees in an agency. When asked about whether the number of political appointees has increased in their agency, distributive respondents reported (3.16) statistically significantly larger increases than non-distributive respondents (3.01).¹⁰⁹ This difference shows that distributors are more likely to report an increase in appointees than non-distributors and that the mean response is to report some level of increase. This result shows the effort of

¹⁰⁹ Respondents were asked “Since you have been in your current position, has the number of political appointees or noncareer executives in your department or agency:?” Responses ranged from 1(Decreased Significantly) to 5(Increased Significantly).

presidents to foster an environment that is more political in nature in policy areas for which they are most interested. More clearly, in agencies that are involved in distributing federal funds, President Bush sought to increase the number of political appointees compared to agencies that operated in other capacities.

Political pressure can also make careerists unhappy in their jobs and may motivate them to leave government service. The Survey asks respondents about their likelihood of leaving their job for a host of reasons and many of these reasons reflect political pressure or influence. Specifically, the question asks

How important are each of these factors for your decision to stay or leave?

Problems with political appointees
Problems with White House
Policy Disagreement with current administration
Problems with Congress

Respondents' choices included a 5-point scale: "very important," "important," "moderately important," "not too important," and "not important at all." Lower values signify greater importance (1= very important; 5 = not important at all).

Table 4.7 reports the results of the analysis. The findings offer additional support for Hypothesis 3. They demonstrate that distributors are more likely to leave their jobs because of problems with political actors and institutions. The results suggest that the environment in distributive institutions—or at least around distributive personnel—is more political in nature. Across the board, distributors report that they are more likely than non-distributors to exit government service because of conflict with political actors. Respondents also noted the biggest political factor affecting their employment decision

was an issue involving executive branch political actors: appointees.¹¹⁰ In this way, political pressure that is applied to career-level federal executives can have serious implications. These individuals identify such processes as a “problem” or a “disagreement.” Most striking is that there exist universal differences in reported issues for those with federal spending authority. This result shows that distributors face greater challenges in dealing with political actors and suggests that politics affects them in more substantial ways than it does others. The threat or possibility of exit means that such issues are a serious problem for respondents and that they are more intense in distributive policy areas.

Table 4.7 Career-Level Federal Executives' Workplace Challenges and Political Environment

<i>Importance of a factor for leaving job (1= very important)</i>	<i>Distributors</i>	<i>Non-Distributors</i>
Problems with political appointees	3.55*	3.71*
Problems with the White House	4.04*	4.19*
Policy Disagreement with Administration	4.00*	4.10*
Problems with Congress	3.93*	4.18*

Note: The values represent the mean response among career-level federal executives to the question "How important are each of these factors for your decision to stay or leave?" Responses ranged from 1=Very Important to 5=Not important at all. *p<.05 (one-tailed test), signifying a difference between distributors and non-distributors. N(distributors) = 848. N(non-distributors) = 492.

The fostering of this politicized environment in which individuals with spending authority are more likely to exit government service has additional implications. Federal executives' decisions to exit the government workforce allow presidential surrogates to fill those critical decision making positions as they see fit. Such a scenario can allow presidents to enhance the political environment by selecting more responsive individuals for those positions. In fact, these results combined with those reported in Table 4.1 suggest that a complex strategy could involve political actors driving individuals from

¹¹⁰ In separate analysis, the mean distributors' responses to “Problems with political appointees” was the most extreme and statistically different from all other mean responses.

distributive positions and then recruiting more responsive replacements. Such a system of personnel replacement would enhance the president's control over policy and increase his ability to extract electoral benefits from the system.

In sum, federal executives who oversee distributive policy are more likely to experience pressure from political actors in the executive and legislative branches. These actors apply pressure in an effort to induce policy responsiveness, particularly in politically salient policy areas. Because of the importance of federal spending for presidential electoral interests, presidents are driven to intervene, directly or through surrogates, in a way that ensures actors throughout the executive branch are continually aware of the preferences and expectations of the leadership. Increased contact with career-level federal executives and increasing displeasure with political actors within the bureaucracy can be so significant that distributive respondents note a greater likelihood of exiting government service as a result. Such informal efforts at motivating responsiveness—beyond politicization and the structuring of policy influence and decision making authority—can have real effects on both the civil service and the outcomes it produces.

Conclusion

In the pursuit of policy responsiveness, presidents have many options. In broad terms, presidents can affect personnel and process to help ensure that policy outcomes reflect their political and electoral preferences. To do this, presidents politicize the personnel and processes surrounding federal spending. Specifically, presidents work to

ensure that both appointed and career staff in federal agencies reflect characteristics that generate responsiveness—political experience, ideological alignment, etc. Additionally, presidents position responsive and/or political actors in decision making roles so that they can exact maximum policy influence in concert with presidential (electoral) preferences. Finally, through a complex, hierarchical network of communication, presidents and their surrogates can foster a politicized administrative environment that makes bureaucratic actors aware of presidential goals and preferences. These efforts can be targeted across the executive branch, but presidents target them significantly toward distributors and agencies that handle the distribution of federal funds.

Mechanisms of political control exist below the macro-level. Unlike broad approaches to concepts such as politicization, reorganization and centralization, this chapter examines new and related ways that presidents can induce a large bureaucracy to support his interests. The mechanisms described here are unilateral and more importantly, flexible for presidential use. As a result, structuring internal decision making to empower political actors and applying of political pressure can work in conjunction with broader, comprehensive efforts (i.e., bureaucratic reorganization) or in place of such techniques. The appeal of the mechanisms and methods described in this chapter is that they often do not require legislative authorization, can be done quickly and efficiently, and often exist behind the scenes, outside of the eye of the public or Congress.

The more private, internal nature of the president's ability to affect personnel and administrative process in these ways provides additional insight. Often media, the public and Congress discuss policy politicization in the context of embarrassing, yet infrequent policy failures. This chapter helps explain why visibility of such behaviors is so rare. The

processes of administering policy and structuring the executive branch are opaque and difficult to observe even among those working within those institutions. Efforts such as the application of political pressure are done subtly. Often, direct political pressure flows down a chain of command, first through political actors and eventually to careerists. In this process, the source of policy direction is not abundantly clear because of the complexity of the communication environment. The opaque and intricate processes that seek to induce policy responsiveness may lead observers to miss or underestimate the true effects of politics and presidential control on public policy.

In the end, the administration of government is a complex and highly political process. The president and his surrogates manipulate personnel and policy processes to affect outcomes in ways that are consistent with his preferences. The effects of this political control are enhanced for distributors, allowing presidents to extract electoral benefits from policy. This chapter takes a step toward a more micro-level analysis by relying on survey responses from federal executives. It essentially seeks to open the black box wrapped in red tape: political influence in the American bureaucracy. The next chapter seeks to continue this process and examine institutional and administrative efforts at political control and offer a textured view of presidential influence over policy. By using elite interviews with individuals intimately involved in the federal grants process, I gain offer an individual-level understanding of the precise mechanisms of political influence over federal spending. I examine how institutional forces such as White House contact and OMB oversight as well as program-level influences such as criteria design and allocation decision making empower presidential forces to affect outcomes in ways

that are consistent with their electoral interests and reflect the politicization described in this chapter.

CHAPTER V

EVALUATING THE ELECTION DRIVEN PRESIDENT THROUGH ORIGINAL ELITE INTERVIEWS

In 1981, Congress opened an investigation into the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund cleanup program. The Energy and Commerce Committee alleged that EPA strategically delivered (or withheld) funds from states and localities because of electoral politics. In an effort to uncover internal EPA processes, Chairman John Dingell (D-MI) subpoenaed agency documents. The EPA administrator refused to turn over these documents that were thought to detail administrative process. In the end, the EPA Administrator, Anne Burford, resigned; the Assistant Administrator, Rita Lavelle was fired and imprisoned for perjury; and President Reagan refused to turn over the documents, citing executive privilege. Ultimately, the documents were transmitted to Congress, but not before the EPA Administrator was held in contempt of Congress and the Department of Justice sued the House of Representatives.¹¹¹

In the regular administration of policy, bureaucratic process is difficult to understand and navigate. When politics enters policy making, that process becomes even more veiled and opaque. As the above example illustrates, political officials are interested in keeping the details of influence and manipulation away from public eye for personal, reputational, and often legal reasons. In this case, the EPA administrator resigned her office rather than release documents or testify about the appropriation of discretionary

¹¹¹ See Stack, Kevin. 2008. "The Story of *Morrison v. Olson*: The Independent Counsel and Independent Agencies in Watergate's Wake." In *Presidential Power Stories*, eds. Schroeder, Christopher H. and Curtis A. Bradley. Foundation: Eagen, MN.

dollars within her agency. This additional layer of complexity makes an already intricate process even harder to comprehend and evaluate.

Often, bureaucratic outcomes are readily observable, as government reporting—particularly in the context of federal spending policy—is pervasive and public. However, the internal machinations that produce such outcomes are often far less visible. Research into public policy and administration often makes inferences based on the observation of policy results and draw on theory to explain outcomes. The previous chapters of this dissertation take this approach. They illustrate that electoral interests motivate presidents (as well as Congress) to influence policy. Each successive analysis works to analyze internal agency processes and assess the mechanisms by which presidents affect policy. However, it remains difficult to identify precisely how influence occurs.

There exist multiple explanations for how presidents control bureaucratic process and incorporate their own preferences into policy. One explanation is direct intervention by presidents and their surrogates. Presidents direct bureaucrats and appointees to make policy decisions that are consistent with their interests. For example, the Secretary of the Interior may call a policy administrator in the Bureau of Indian Affairs and explain their expectations about the design of a specific housing program. Another explanation is that bureaucrats may be strategic, understanding presidential preferences and realizing that there can be consequences leveraged at rogue bureaucrats and agencies. In this case, presidents need not intervene, as their preferences are met through a type of administrative autopilot. In this case an administrator in the Bureau of Indian Affairs is well aware of the preferences of the Interior Secretary and designs a policy that reflects those interests, knowing it will pass any hierarchical approval processes.

In both cases, as is a standard view in bureaucratic studies, presidential preferences are simply substituted for other policy considerations so that outcomes reflect what presidents want. This process is fairly linear in nature. Preferences exist, and some institutional actor (or actors) intervenes in the process to implement those preferences. However, the precise procedures that facilitate or hinder presidential influence are often overlooked in research. This limitation frequently occurs because of the increasing use of systematic data in bureaucracy and presidency scholarship. Such analysis often cannot illuminate such nuance and mechanistic process. Yet, it is vital to capture fully the public policy processes of American government in order to understand how elected officials affect the delivery of public goods.

This chapter adds texture and detail to the analysis of politics in distributive policy. Through the use of elite interviews, I examine precisely how presidents influence public policy, how electoral politics affects outcomes, and how administrative procedures can be designed to serve presidents effectively. To accomplish these goals, this chapter is organized in five parts. First, to provide context, I briefly sketch the federal grants process in general terms. Although federal grant programs operate according to a varied set of institutional processes, several similarities and trends are observable and are incorporated into this section. In describing this policy area, I illustrate competing explanations regarding who influences federal spending decisions and precisely the mechanisms by which influence manifests.

Second, I discuss the use of elite interviews in this project. I describe the benefits of elite interviewing to the study of executive branch politics and note some of the methodological and empirical challenges commonly facing its use. I detail how I

overcome these challenges through the use of across-group sample diversification, explaining specifically the design of elite interviews used in this project.

Third, I detail the results of the elite interviews and shed light on precisely how presidential power over executive branch processes translates into electorally-preferred policy. This section demonstrates the substantial impact of executive branch political actors in the administration of federal spending policy. More clearly, the results of the elite interviews demonstrate not only the mechanisms and processes political actors use to affect outcomes, but explain the impact of presidential electoral interests on the distribution of federal funds. In so doing, the results of the elite interviews provide a clear picture of presidential power over micro-level policy and add context to the systematic results reported in previous chapters. Finally, I discuss the implications of these findings and conclude.

The Federal Grants Process: An Overview

Federal spending is a diverse tool of public policy born from formal and informal administrative procedures often developed and implemented in the federal bureaucracy. A lack of uniformity limits the effort to design a single visual representation of the process or detail the manner in which grant programs are administered; however, this section will provide a general outline of this process with a specific focus on federal discretionary grants. This overview serves two purposes. It is intended to provide a broad framework within which unique processes and procedures operate. The discussion of the

process also sheds light on the competing explanations of how political elites, including Congress and the president, influence micro-level policy formation and administration.

Generally, federal grant programs operate along a four part process. First, programs face a design and conception stage. Second, grant programs are made public and invite applicants to seek funds. Third, applications go through a consideration and evaluation stage. Finally, grant programs allocate funds. I will describe each in turn.

The design and conception of federal grant programs can involve the input of several actors and institutions. Because Congress appropriates and authorizes money, it can play a role in the design of grant programs. Even though the focus of this section (and the dissertation broadly) is federal discretionary grants, legislative influence can exist, particularly at the design stage. Some legislative language provides the executive branch broad discretion over the distribution of grant money. For example, in the *Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009* (P.L. 111-8) Congress authorizes to the Department of Justice

\$178,000,000 for discretionary grants to improve the functioning of the criminal justice system, to prevent or combat juvenile delinquency, and to assist victims of crime (p. 580).

This authority provides great leeway for the Justice Department to design a program as it sees fit. Often, Congress authorizes distributive programs in this way, delegating substantial authority to the bureaucracy. However, Congress can also insert specifics into discretionary funding authorization and appropriations legislation that bounds discretion.

In the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2010* (P.L. 111-117), Congress appropriates \$600,000,000 to the Department of Transportation and notes

That the Secretary of Transportation shall distribute funds provided under this heading as discretionary grants to be awarded to a State, local government, transit agency, or a collaboration among such entities on a

competitive basis for projects that will have a significant impact on the Nation, a metropolitan area, or a region: Provided further, That projects eligible for funding provided under this heading shall include, but not be limited to, highway or bridge projects eligible under title 23, United States Code; public transportation projects eligible under chapter 53 of title 49, United States Code; passenger and freight rail transportation projects; and port infrastructure investments: Provided further, That in distributing funds provided under this heading, the Secretary shall take such measures so as to ensure an equitable geographic distribution of funds, an appropriate balance in addressing the needs of urban and rural areas, and the investment in a variety of transportation modes: Provided further, That a grant funded under this heading shall be not less than \$10,000,000 and not greater than \$200,000,000: Provided further, That not more than 25 percent of the funds made available under this heading may be awarded to projects in a single State: Provided further, That the Federal share of the costs for which an expenditure is made under this heading shall be, at the option of the recipient, up to 80 percent: Provided further, That the Secretary shall give priority to projects that require a contribution of Federal funds in order to complete an overall financing package: Provided further, That not less than \$140,000,000 of the funds provided under this heading shall be for projects located in rural areas: Provided further, That for projects located in rural areas, the minimum grant size shall be \$1,000,000 and the Secretary may increase the Federal share of costs above 80 percent: Provided further, That of the amount made available under this heading, the Secretary may use an amount not to exceed \$150,000,000 for the purpose of paying the subsidy and administrative costs of projects eligible for federal credit assistance under chapter 6 of title 23, United States Code, if the Secretary finds that such use of the funds would advance the purposes of this paragraph: Provided further, That of the amount made available under this heading, the Secretary may use an amount not to exceed \$35,000,000 for the planning, preparation or design of projects eligible for funding under this heading: Provided further, That projects conducted using funds provided under this heading must comply with the requirements of subchapter IV of chapter 31 of title 40, United States Code (p. 3036-7).

In this case, Congress exerts much greater influence in the design of this grant program, although ultimately, the bureaucracy has substantial allocation authority within these bounds. In fact, it is clear that Congress seeks to place restrictions on the president's ability to target funds to states.

Within the bounds of discretionary authority, several executive branch actors influence the structure and nature of grant programs. Political appointees in many cases have formal and final decision making roles over their design or effectively convey preferences to those who do. Presidential and other White House policy initiatives can motivate grant programs to reflect specific goals and charge agencies to focus on specific priorities. Career-level civil servants with substantial and long term policy and program experience can also weigh in on program design offering suggestions about effectiveness and administration. Depending on the program, issue area, agency, and governing administration, different combinations of elite actors' inputs affect the manner in which requests for proposals are crafted, criteria are developed, eligibility is determined, and programs are structured and managed. These actors include political appointees, White House officials and the Office of Management and Budget and their liaison offices within federal agencies.

After grant programs are designed, agencies publicize funding availability. In all cases, grant programs' announcements are printed in the federal register and published on the US government's grants clearinghouse website.¹¹² Additionally, federal agencies use other informal means of publicizing funding opportunities. State, local, and regional offices are often charged with developing and implementing information campaigns. These campaigns include standard advertising, but also communication with state and local officials and participation in town hall meetings in an effort to notify citizens of such funding opportunities and possible eligibility. Additionally, agencies often work closely with interest groups and other issue-based stakeholders to communicate these opportunities and identify key groups that may benefit by such funding. Because unused

¹¹² <http://www.grants.gov/>

appropriations are often returned to the Treasury, it is in the interest of agencies to increase knowledge and ensure that they are able to allocate their full grant program appropriations.

During this time, prospective applicants begin preparing materials in the pursuit of federal funds. The application process can be time consuming and complicated, though resources often exist to assist the effort. The federal grants website provides program specific and general guidelines and tips on application preparation, but other institutions help as well. Federal agencies themselves, particularly those with regional, state, and local offices, frequently have staff liaisons who specialize in assistance or conduct workshops that aid applicants. Additionally, interest groups often specialize in grant preparation and work on applicants' behalf or work closely to answer questions and provide guidance in the application process. These efforts intend to make applicants more competitive and ensure that federal funds are allocated.

Once applications are received a more complex, varied, and often opaque process begins: evaluation. Federal agencies evaluate the quality of grants in determining eligibility and ultimately to make decisions regarding which applicants receive funding. This process entails myriad different parts that work together to determine outcomes. It is important to understand how grants are judged. Grants are typically evaluated according to the criteria listed in grant announcements and the ability of an applicant to meet those guidelines. However, there often exist informal or discretionary criteria beyond those listed in funding publications that offer greater leeway in the decision making process. In this case, the published criteria serve as a minimum for consideration and additional factors may affect the evaluation of applications. Often, applications are scored using a

numeric rubric which assigns point values to certain criteria and judges portions of the application accordingly. However, this scoring rubric can include other discretionary point values as well,¹¹³ and such values are often difficult to access or understand. This sometimes informal process allows factors of influence to affect consideration and empowers decision makers to manipulate outcomes.

Although a scoring system serves as the standard method in evaluating grants, it is important, too, to know who participates in such scoring. Internal and/or external participants take part in grant evaluations. Internal to federal agencies, an administrative review process often involves a combination of career program staff and political appointees play roles in evaluating grant applications. These individuals may serve in central agency offices in Washington, DC, or in regional, state, and local offices throughout the country. Frequently, political appointees have formal approval authority over grant determinations from careerists' recommendations. Additionally, the Office of Management and Budget or its liaison offices within agencies and departments play a role not only in checking funding decisions, but even in the development of criteria and program details in order to ensure that the ultimate evaluation processes reflect both budgetary and administration priorities.

Internal evaluation of grants is one means administering this policy area. Another way involves the inclusion of external actors—often policy experts and stakeholders—for peer review. Agencies and programs request the services of these individuals to provide expertise in the evaluation of applications. This procedure is used particularly in the context of large grant programs and ones that require specific

¹¹³ Discretionary point values can be used for a multitude of reasons including veterans preference, applicant reputation, urgency of need or for other less transparent and more political reasons.

expertise. For example, university faculty are often familiar with the evaluation processes at the National Science Foundation and National Institutes for Health. In these cases, because grant proposals include scientific specificity, the agencies rely on outside experts to provide insight into the quality of applications, likelihood of success, and reflection of agency aims through research. Experts rate proposals and often make recommendations to career or appointed agency leaders who can set thresholds, determine final funding levels and make allocation decisions.

The grant consideration process also varies in terms of the timing of evaluations and such timing can have serious implications for applicants. Essentially, grants are evaluated on either a rolling basis or *en masse*. When applications are evaluated on a rolling basis, funds are often distributed according to a first-come, first-served approach. This process means that those applying later can have a reduced chance of being funded, regardless of application quality. When materials are evaluated at once, distributors are able to see funding decisions from a broader perspective, and get a better grasp on who is benefiting from funding nationally.

The final stage in the federal grants process involves allocation. After agencies make funding determinations and OMB and other budget offices approve funding decisions, applicants receive their money, often with very specific guidelines and restrictions for their use. Typically, the design of programs and specific commitments in the details of grant applications determine the nature of such restrictions. To ensure that funds are being used in the ways the agency intended, grant recipients must comport with (sometimes extensive) federal reporting requirements. Politics can even influence federal reporting, depending on the type of information an administration considers politically

relevant or salient. For example during the Obama administration, reporting requirements emphasized job creation and the manner in which such numbers were calculated, an obvious reflect of the political implications of economic policy at the time.

What results is a complex system through which federal spending policy is administered. Through this intricate bureaucratic process emerge several competing hypotheses regarding who influences policy making and how that influence manifests. First, the appropriation and authorization of legislation offers Congress the opportunity to play a critical role in distributive policy. The literature is flush with research illustrating legislative impact in the distribution of federal funds. However, the federal grants process also demonstrates a set of opportunities for executive branch actors to affect policy. In fact, the process suggests that these actors can range from the President, himself, and White House/OMB staff to political appointees within agencies to career level civil servants making daily distributive decisions. Beyond several competing ideas regarding *who* influences policy making, there exist a host of rival explanations with respect to *how* influence occurs. This overview illustrates clearly that influence can occur during the broad design of programs and the creation and authorization of program criteria. Additionally, influence may manifest while grant applications are being evaluated, as a host of actors can and do participate in the scoring and rating of applicant materials. Finally, because allocations decisions are not automatic upon evaluation, the final distributive decision making offers another opportunity for actors to affect outcomes.

Although the federal grants process offers presidents myriad opportunities to influence the allocation of federal grants, it may be surprising that little public attention is paid to such behaviors. This lack of attention emerges generally from limited awareness.

While several stages of the grants process allow political influence, strategic actors are incentivized (politically and in many cases legally) to be less than transparent when capitalizing on such opportunities. As a result, subtle or private efforts create institutional processes in which politics has quietly and preemptively entered. Moreover, behaviors that affect outcomes in the final stages of the process may only be observable by a few select decision makers, such that even some involved in the process are unaware of the role of politics.

What is clear from this overview is that influence can occur in a multitude of ways. However, what have been unclear from prior research and the previous chapters in this dissertation are the precise mechanisms of this influence. It is critical to assess which of these actors affect the process and understand how and when such impact occurs. The previous three chapters have demonstrated clearly *that* influence occurs, and this chapter seeks to demonstrate *how* it occurs. Because systematic analysis struggles to identify mechanisms and causal effects with such precisions, alternative means are necessary to complete the understanding of this phenomenon. One method scholars use to illustrate such a causal relationship and explore micro-level political processes is elite interviewing. This chapter relies on this technique to accomplish the same.

Employing Elite Interviewing

The Benefits of Elite Interviewing

Across the social sciences, elite interviewing serves as a key tool to provide researchers greater detail about institutional behaviors and processes. Elite interviews

also provide access and support for causal explanations of phenomena, often where systematic data is unavailable or unable to provide such traction. Research on executive branch politics and public policy employ this useful research tool frequently because it offers both methodological and empirical benefits. Methodologically, elite interviews are resource efficient in their ability to target empirical topics and access critical information in a short period of time. Additionally, and unlike large data sets, interviews allow clarification and greater empirical exploration when necessary. In this section, I will discuss each of these benefits and explain how they enable executive branch researchers to understand comprehensively micro-level processes within this branch of government.

Elite interviews allow access to information from respondents who have expertise, knowledge or experience with the phenomena under investigation. For the purpose of this project, I focus on respondents who participate directly in the federal grants process. In elite interviewing, respondents are targeted because they hold a wealth of information. Interviews allow “a useful way to get large amounts of information quickly” (Marshall and Rossman 1999, 108). While the researcher must approach interviews with specific details related to the topic of interest, interviews allow the respondent to motivate the exploration of new information. Thus, interviews are commonly open-ended and conversational in style, such that “the investigator is willing, and often eager to let the interviewee teach him what the problem, the question is—to the limits, of course of the interviewer’s ability to perceive relationships” (Dexter 1970, 5-6).

Elite interviewers balance focusing the interview on topics relevant to the research and allowing the discussion to be organic in nature. The conversational format typically encourages openness and increases access to key data. Moreover, the perceived

level of autonomy the elite enjoys by moving forward the conversation works in tandem to enhance respondent confidence and motivate their continued participation (information sharing).¹¹⁴

Another benefit of interviewing that also signals to the respondent her value and level of expertise is that “immediate follow-up and clarification are possible,” (Marshall and Rossman 1999, 110). This benefit is fundamental to the method. Such detail and clarification often cannot be gleaned from an antiseptic, systematic, multivariate dataset; it may only be inferred from a set of parameter estimates. However, the interview allows texture to be added to data in an immediate and efficient way, while signaling to the respondent the interest in and attention to her information. Because the interview serves as an interactive data gathering operation, the researcher can simply request more information when necessary.

In many ways, elite interviews allow access to data that rest beyond the reach of systematic analysis. While not systematic, first-hand insight into individual-level processes, accessed through interviews, can confirm or disconfirm findings or conclusions from quantitative analysis, build or refine hypotheses, and/or aid in making causal arguments.

Given the complex and often seemingly impervious nature of executive branch policy and political processes, elite interviews are common in this area of research. Previous work in executive branch politics either employs elite interviews as the central research method or, as is the design of this dissertation, uses this technique in concert

¹¹⁴ However, this means of interviewing also empowers the researcher, as well. “The open-ended, quasi-conversational technique maximizes the interviewer’s ability to clarify, illuminate, or probe more deeply into the responses of the subject” (Aberbach, Chesney, and Rockman 1975, 3).

with systematic analysis. In so doing, this technique provides a wealth of knowledge regarding policy processes and formation.

Typically, in order to gain insight into micro-level processes in the executive branch, scholars identify key personnel who have broad perspective and participate in bureaucratic decision making. However, the approach to identifying key personnel varies dramatically. Many scholars interview political appointees, as they are bureaucratic power players. Chosen by the president, these agency executives administer subunits of the government (large and small) while serving as *all the presidents (wo)men*.

Pfiffner (1996) targets these appointees for elite interviews in an investigation into the administrative state. Because appointees are meant to carry out the president's wishes (preferences) through the innumerable decisions that must be made across the executive branch daily, they serve as key institutional actors. Pfiffner (1996) diversifies his sample by selecting appointees across agencies and issue areas. Such variation is important as agencies can function quite differently and may lead to different behaviors and outcomes. For example, generalizing about administrative process through interviews with the Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation Commission would be a mistake. Diversification aids Pfiffner in drawing conclusions by allowing awareness of extreme cases and finding relationships across different individuals. Pfiffner provides a broad understanding of the strategy involved in selecting presidential personnel. Through reliance on interviews with senior-level White House staff and other political appointees, he accesses not simply an observation of presidential strategy but the motivations behind it. The interviews demonstrate clearly that presidents actively organize the president's staff in way expands power and influence over policy making in Washington.

Other work notes that the bureaucracy is larger than the appointees who lead agencies. In a modern day classic, Heclo (1977) conducts interviews with both appointees and senior-level bureaucratic careerists. This approach offers a more varied view of administration. Because career civil servants tend to serve in the bureaucracy for extended periods and serve in positions that differ from political appointees, they offer unique perspectives on public policy. Like Heclo before him, Maranto (1993) uses a combination of permanent and political personnel to gain greater insight into empirical questions of interest. This more diverse sample of respondents seeks a unique set of perspectives on policy processes. In any organization, the leadership may have a different view than staff, yet both groups can offer important data. Moreover, such different, yet related perspectives offer an effort “to counterbalance self-serving statements” (Heclo 1977, xii).

Both Heclo and Maranto document how respective interests differently motivate career and political administrators. Rather than the bureaucracy working as a machine in unison, there exist profound sticking points that lead to disagreement and conflict and can have serious implications for the formation of policy. Through the use of various elite interviews among both groups, these scholars identify not only the sources of problems, but the conditions under which such issues are amplified. In the end, the employment of elite interviews offers invaluable insight into the inner workings of bureaucratic institutions—a contribution beyond the reach of the observation of policy outcomes.

Of course, because policy making extends across the branches of government, some empirical questions drive scholars to design elite interviews accordingly. Whereas Heclo and Maranto interviewed bureaucrats and appointees to evaluate their interaction

and conflict, others use interviews to investigate legislative and executive branch interactions. Because one's perspective can largely be shaped by the institution within they work, a diversified sample can address questions involving inter-branch dealings. Krause (1999), in considering simultaneous inter-branch impact on public policy, interviews staff and officials in the legislative and executive branches. He finds how internal constituency and policy motivations motivate different actors and ensures that legislative and administrative processes are more collaborative and coordinated, rather than isolated and sequential. Krause capitalizes on different respondents' abilities to discuss their own experience as well as their interaction with actors in the other branch to illustrate how discrete influences affect policy production and execution.

The executive branch of the American government is often described as a black box in which inputs (legislation) and outputs (policy) are readily observable, but the process in between is unobservable or indecipherable. This perspective contributes to the view of a complex or burdensome bureaucracy. Even for researchers who rely on large, systematic data sets to analyze public policy, bureaucratic process is an elusive concept, often assumed away or modeled in a stylized way. Elite interviewing empowers the researcher to understand, assess and evaluate bureaucratic process in order to gain leverage on its connection to and role within a given empirical question. The authors discussed above perform this empirical task in high-quality ways. Their use of elite interviews illustrates how the interaction among specific actors and institutional constructs leads to policy outcomes. By detailing how motivated behaviors work within and change the shape of institutions, elite interviews allow the curtain to be pulled back,

the red tape to be cut, and a picture of policy making in the United States to be clear and observable.

Problems with Elite Interviewing

Despite the benefits that elite interviewing brings to the social sciences, this technique faces a series of methodological challenges that if not addressed can lead to empirical limitations. Generally, similar types of concerns or challenges facing the collection and analysis of quantitative data also face interview data. These concerns include selection effects, the tradeoff between depth (concept validity) and breadth (generalizability), and response validity. This section will describe each limitation and note standard solutions to such problems.

Elite interviews typically use a small sample from a specified, limited population. As such, issues can exist over selection effects. Will the respondents offer a uniform, non-diverse view of a concept or process, not because of the uniformity of the concept but due to the similarities among interviewees? Concerns over a non-random sample can carry great weight and give pause to the acceptability of the conclusions. However, randomization can actually detract from the level of textured data sought through elite interviews (see Aberbach 1990, Appendix A). Non-randomization should be not considered *non-scientific*, but rather serves as a benefit in the use of elite interviewing. In fact, Hugh Heclo, in discussing his interview methodology bluntly and honestly explains, “I do not claim to have constructed a random statistical sample” (1977, ix). Because elite interviews seek to provide deeper detail on specific processes and phenomena, a non-random sample becomes necessary to access such information.

It must be noted that the technique's benefits of non-random sampling do not insulate it from selection concerns. Instead, the interviewer must carefully craft interviews in an effort to overcome this limitation. The aim of a project will affect both the size and structure of the sample. In designing interviews, the researcher must account both for the specific empirical question and the institutional context of the phenomena being investigated.

Another concern facing the use of elite interviews is a tradeoff between depth and breadth. All scholars across methodological approaches face this tradeoff. When interviews provide great depth into a single process or phenomenon, the analysis is able to offer a thorough understanding with strong conceptual validity. At its extreme, this technique is a case study. With it, the effort has specific benefits including the concept-, theory-, and hypothesis building, but also faces empirical challenges (see George and Bennett 2005; Gerring 2004; and Mahoney 2007 for key discussions of the topic). Namely, the opportunity cost of stronger conceptual validity is conceptual travel. Case studies can limit theoretical development and confound concepts because of homogeneity in the information source.

The limitation on conceptual travel in addition to being a challenge to empirical rigor leads to a concern over generalizability. By focusing an interview to one respondent or set of closely related respondents, the researcher surrenders an assessment of relevant phenomena that is applicable and relatable to similarly situated scenarios. The use of a diverse set of respondents with unique perspectives provides a greater breadth of understanding and enhances the reach of ideas and conclusions. However, such benefits

are not implicit in the use of elite interviews; instead, it requires a careful design that seeks to maximize such benefits while minimizing costs.

For example, in the study of the American bureaucracy, one can sample across issue areas, agencies, employment levels, etc., in order to offer a comprehensive and generalizable understanding of public policy. Essentially, the researcher observes commonalities across differences, while remaining sensitive to and aware of unique characteristics and phenomena.

The third concern facing researchers who employ elite interviews involves response validity. Concerns over response validity emerge from two sources: respondent knowledge and distortion. Both present obstacles in collecting usable and insightful data from an elite interview.

Limits of respondent knowledge or “demands on competence,” pose problems, particularly when interviewees fail to admit that questions probe beyond their area of expertise (Marshall and Rossman 1999, 114). What results is the dissemination of data that do not accurately explain phenomena being analyzed. Because a respondent may be unaware or unwilling to admit that his answers may be incorrect or speculative, the burden rests with the researcher to evaluate such responses. Dexter explains that it is difficult to weigh the validity of data or have “knowledge of an informant’s mental set” (1970, 127) if the researcher’s knowledge on the topic or subject is limited (1970, 14-15).

Key to the successful employment of elite interviewing in research is the respondent’s ability to recognize patterns, trends, or systematic phenomena in the process or institution under inquiry.¹¹⁵ However, it is possible that respondents’ limits of knowledge constrain them from recognizing such patterns or even being aware of certain

¹¹⁵ Though less important for the immediate point, it is also critical for respondents to recognize anomalies.

phenomena. When this occurs it limits the interviewer's ability to gather useful data even with a well-designed instrument. For example, in the context of EPA rulemaking, a researcher may interview environmental policy officials in state government about the effects of a given rule. An official may be aware that a rule weakens carbon emission standards. However, he may be unaware that members of the EPA previously held meetings with General Motors, Chrysler, and Ford. In this case, the respondent is aware of the effect of an administrative rule but is unaware of the interest group influence that led to such an outcome.

Although this example may exaggerate the naiveté of state political elites, it illustrates a weakness a respondent may carry. Respondents may observe a symptom of a larger concept without observing (or being aware of) that concept. The difficulty for the interviewer centers on distinguishing between what a respondent knows and what he does not know (but still discusses).

Distortion also offers a related, but difficult challenge to response validity. With limits to knowledge, valid data are not collected because they are outside the respondent's information set. However, with distortion, data are within the respondent's information set, but cannot be properly accessed because the respondent has modified them, unintentionally or purposely. Dexter writes that when assessing respondent honesty, the researcher must ask, "what factors can we expect to influence this informant's reporting" (1970, 122)?¹¹⁶ Overcoming distortion is critical to the collection of valid and usable data in interviewing. There exist many ways in which distortion may influence interviewees' answers. Some are casual, unintentional effects of memory, while

¹¹⁶ To be clear, Dexter (1970) includes limits to knowledge and dishonesty under the macro-heading "distortion" (see Chapter V). He explains, "the (four) major sources of distortion in first-hand reports..." include a failure of a respondent to observe details (1970, 126).

others are purposive efforts to misinform. Dexter once again clarifies most eloquently that distortion manifests through *selective perception*, *unconscious modification*, or *conscious modification* (Dexter 1970, 126).¹¹⁷ Thus, distortion occurs either through a failure or adjustment of memory or as a means of revision.

While Dexter notes failures in memory as a source of distortion, a lack of truthfulness may emerge from a more active and purposive respondent behavior including self-promotion and self-protection. Self-promotion stems from an effort by some respondents capitalizing on perceived (or real) information asymmetry to present themselves in a more important and influential way than reality dictates. I was once told by a senior Congressional aide, “if you have talked to one person in a (federal) agency, you’ve talked to the most important person in Washington.” Of course, this tongue-in-cheek comment highlights that some individuals have a vested, personal interest in overestimating their own importance. As a result, the freshman Congressman is a power-player; the mid-level manager is a baron of business; and the high school educator is the ideas person for the school district.

Similarly, self-protection may occur when the interview probes difficult, nuanced, and private information. In this situation, the respondent may omit data or fail to be forthcoming. Such omission may occur because of financial, personal, professional, legal, political, or reputational reasons. For example, the technology firm’s lead engineer may avoid discussing new research and development projects and the incumbent mayor may

¹¹⁷ A few notes are needed to give proper credit to the work cited here. Each italicized phrase in this section is borrowed from Dexter (1970), but adjusted to fit the syntax of the writing. For example, *unconscious modification* comes from “unconsciously modifies.” I believe the use of italics and this footnote offers the clearest presentation of this information, while including a sound attribution to the work being cited.

fail to reveal controversial campaign tactics. In either case, researchers receive information at odds with empirical realities.

All interviewees are prone to memory limitations and failures as a human condition. However, elite interviewees are particularly subject to self-promotion and self-protection, as they are typically being questioned with regard to their professional position and qualifications. Often, researchers interview related respondents to collect data about similar topics from diverse sources. What this tool of interview design allows is “to counterbalance self-serving statements with responses from other participants whose views could be self-serving in a contrary direction” (Hecl 1977, xii). More formally and generally, a key to revealing, accounting for, and minimizing distortion in elite interviews is “some quasi-independent or independent test...in order to believe what (interviewees) say” (Dexter 1970, 7). Thus, scholars use various sample diversification techniques to overcome distortion and enhance response validity.

Overcoming Challenges to Elite Interviewing

As mentioned in the previous section, a common way of overcoming many of the methodological challenges associated with elite interviewing involves sample modification and expansion. For the purpose of this project, I employ a similar technique—across-group sample diversification—in a unique way to improve the methodological strength of this research device. In this section, I briefly describe across-group sample diversification. Next, I discuss three key benefits that this technique offers the study of executive politics. Additionally, I illustrate how this sampling approach is

incorporated into this project. Finally, I note how this specific design improves the empirical effort.

Sample expansion is common in the use of elite interviews, but the manner in which this technique is used is critical. Some work seeks to expand samples *within* groups. In this case, researchers simply speak to many similarly-suited respondents in the pursuit of data. For example, an interviewer may speak to all of the appointees at EPA. However, this technique introduces limitations in terms of the diversity and validity of data collected.

An alternative technique is to diversify the sample across groups. With this method, the interviewer identifies several diverse groups of respondents who are involved in or connected to a process or phenomenon of interest and conducts interviews within each group. By relying on various groups, the researcher deals with respondents who have different motives, perspectives, and priorities. In this way, across-group sample diversification targets a specific context and extracts data from heterogeneous but related sources. This construct allows the interviewer to limit the impact of distortion, overcome selection effects, and have greater agency in balancing concept validity and generalizability.

The across-group diversification approach to sample design in elite interviewing carries three broad methodological and empirical benefits to the study of executive politics and political institutions. First, it offers a diversity of views that enlighten a complex, multi-faceted public policy process.¹¹⁸ The actions of myriad individuals inside and outside institutions can affect outcomes and provide unique perspective. Given this

¹¹⁸ Throughout this section, I will refer to a focus on federal bureaucrats and the weaknesses that ensue. However, the federal bureaucrat serves more as an archetype of an institutional actor, rather than an exclusive example that illustrates this point.

intricacy, sampling respondents across multiple types or categories offers greater detail and facilitates a more nuanced understanding of such institutional processes and can help enhance conceptual validity.

While certain respondents or even respondent types may face knowledge limitations, a diversified sample can dramatically increase the likelihood that interviewees can identify patterns and trends in a thorough and complete way. In so doing, the researcher decreases the likelihood he will make inferences or draw conclusions from data that lack validity. Thus, given the complexity of bureaucratic processes and the risk of response error, across-group diversification in sample design improves the methodological foundation of elite interviewing.

By combining broadened intra- and inter-institutional observations (within- and across-group sample expansion and diversification), researchers gather a more generalizable evaluation of policymaking, as well. A heterogeneous set of respondents and respondent types, sometimes work with multiple issues, can identify trends common in large portions of or throughout the bureaucracy. In this way, the multitude of viewpoints enhances the ability of the researcher to provide greater generalizability and theoretical understanding.

The second benefit of across-group sample diversification is that it allows for a clearer evaluation of the decision making structures in the policy process. In understanding the politics and behaviors that drive institutional and bureaucratic process, it is vital to know who the power players are and where influence originates. Specifically, by conducting interviews across a broad range of institutions all intimately connected with and involved in the grants process, the researcher can improve concept and response

validity. It is crucial to sample individuals who are institutionally incentivized to have a thorough knowledge of the areas of inquiry. In the public policy arena groups inside and outside of government are more successful when they know who makes decisions and which actors have an impact on outcomes. In the context of this project, the structure of the grants process drives key respondents to have the knowledge necessary to assist in this empirical endeavor.

In addition to increasing concept validity in evaluating decision making and influence, this sampling technique also aids in enhancing response validity. Whenever interviews probe power and influence dynamics among a group of individuals, especially in federal government service, the researcher risks respondent distortion. Respondents may overemphasize their own power and influence. Additionally, executive branch actors may underestimate the influence of internal political or external group forces on policy. As a result of these concerns, the sample should rely on respondent types who serve as a “quasi-independent or independent test...in order to believe what the other” respondents discuss (Dexter 1970, 7). Across-group sample diversification serves as the central technique in achieving this goal. In this way, each respondent type allows the researcher to assess the others’ response validity.

Third, when conducted and designed properly, elite interviews can offer the additional benefit of a longitudinal evaluation of political phenomena. Where quantitative analyses can often include time varying data, qualitative data can be used in a similar manner. In order to gain a longitudinal understanding of a political concept or process with qualitative measures, the researcher must seek out individuals who have the experience in and exposure to the phenomenon for multiple time periods. Across-group

sample diversification can substantially assist this effort. In fact, in some contexts, this technique may be the lone means of accessing longitudinal data. For example, if a string of recent retirements leaves a given policy program under the purview of relatively new bureaucrats, a sample that selects only agency staff means that access to a longitudinal analysis is quite difficult. However, by extending the sample to include other types of respondents who are intimately involved in the process and have been for an extended period of time, the researcher can access usable data for that policy area.

Thus, across-group diversification in the design of the sample of respondents for elite interviews is an important piece of qualitative methodology. In a broad sense, the use of sample diversification offers much to political science and for the study of political institutions. It enhances the researcher's ability to explore key empirical subjects including decision making and influence structures, internal processes, and long-term trends. Further, this technique improves the research methodologically. Across-group sample diversification enhances generalizability and the validity of both the responses and concepts being investigated. To this end, across-group sample diversification is crucial to conducting rich and informative research.

i. Across-Group Sample Diversification in Studying the Presidential Porkbarrel

It is important for the specific research question to drive sampling choices when conducting elite interviews. The most efficient means of performing this crucial task in sample design is to pinpoint the relevant institutions and actors responsible (or believed to be responsible) for the phenomenon under investigation. In an article that investigates inter-branch relations and oversight, Bert Rockman explicitly describes this requirement

by noting that one must identify key players in the area of inquiry before “we can focus on what we know of each” (1984, 395). In short, the identification of these actors and institutions serves as a necessary condition for a properly designed interview sample.

In any study of bureaucratic process including federal spending policy, scholars must focus on the agencies of the executive branch. These institutions serve central roles in public administration and provide a wealth of knowledge and insight on the topic. As mentioned previously, previous research samples within the bureaucracy in various ways. For the purpose of this project, I design a sample that includes individuals working in federal grant programs across a series of issue areas and agencies. In addition, I diversify federal agency respondents through the inclusion of both careerists and appointees.

However, bureaucratic institutions are not the only actors in this area of policy. Interest groups often play consistent roles in the context of federal spending policy. These organizations seek to advance their interests through lobbying, media efforts, and information sharing and exchange. This relationship is true within Congressionally-dominated spending programs, including formula and block grants and executive-controlled spending, such as discretionary grants and procurement, as well (Freeman 1965; Gais, Peterson, and Walker 1982; Hecl 1977; Lowi 1969; Polsby 1978; Schattschneider 1960). These groups offer broad, local or both views of policy efforts, effects, implications, and the impact on constituents and other constituent groups. This information is often difficult or cost prohibitive for the government to ascertain on its own (see McCubbins and Schwartz 1984 for an example), and interest groups make it their business to gather such information and make available this commodity to interested parties, including the legislative and executive branches.

In the policy making process, interest groups are not only information providers. They play a more dynamic, self-interested role. Beyond their assistance in conveying to agencies the impact and performance of grant programs and their role as the suppliers of broad-based monitoring, interest groups also function as policy demanders. These groups seek to advance their interests, further their agenda, and when relevant, support their members' access to policy benefits. In the realm of federal grants, interest groups serve all three of these critical roles. Many interest groups have a national network that includes regional, state, and/or local offices and serve a body of dues-paying members. These groups often communicate which areas need policy attention (or here, federal funding) and actively use the resources of the network to help their issue-based constituency reap benefits.

This discussion of the dynamic role of interest groups demonstrates the importance of examining both policy *suppliers* as well as policy *demanders* when conducting elite interviews in the area of executive politics. In addition to interest groups, grant applicants serve as the core group of policy demanders for this project. While grant applicants come in many forms, a recurring type is the state government agency. Each year, state agencies seek funding through discretionary grant programs.¹¹⁹ In fact, several federal grant programs *require* that funding requests originate with state government agencies.

State agencies are appealing data sources for three reasons. First, states have institutionally shared experiences in the federal policy process. In this sense, different states face similar institutional rules when applying for grants. While resource differences

¹¹⁹ For some programs, state agencies serve as direct demanders of federal funds. In others, they serve as intermediary institutions through which private or municipal applicants apply for these monies.

exist across states in terms of the ability to direct time and effort toward the pursuit of funds, such variation is relatively muted when compared to variation among other policy demanders.¹²⁰

Second, state agencies are consistent demanders of federal grants. Often, states seek the same federal funding opportunities on an annual basis. Given the consistency and dynamic needs at the state level, they are a more appealing demander than local governments, private citizens or other entities that may not seek grants as frequently. The regularity in the states' pursuit of federal grants allows the researcher better access to longitudinal comparisons, as well.

Third, and related to the consistency of state applicants, is that state agencies develop and maintain accumulated experience and knowledge about the grants process. Often, state agency employees serve long careers in the same issue area and many tend to work in the same position with similar responsibilities for a number of years. The result is a more knowledgeable, better functioning, experienced bureaucracy. Such accumulated knowledge allows state bureaucrats to build a comprehensive, clear, and long term understanding of the policy process. These individuals can thus identify loci of power, explain how the process has changed, and assess which influences have a real impact on policy outcomes.

In sum, I propose (for this project) an across-group diversified sample design that relies on data from three diverse respondent types who play the most critical and consistent roles in the policy process. Each respondent type offers a perspective that complements or supplements the others. Specifically, the sample is composed of

¹²⁰ For example, county and municipal governments face a much broader variability in terms of staff and revenue than do state governments. Even broader variation exists among private citizens seeking funds, in terms of time, experience, monetary resources, and access to institutional support.

respondents from federal agencies that supply grants, state agencies that demand them, and interest groups that play intermediary or joint roles. While each individual offers unique insight into the process, all respondents are part of a common grants process. This diversified design helps overcome some of the challenges discussed in previous sections by targeting data that have greater concept and response validity and are more generalizable across policy contexts. Overall, this sample design ensures the elite interviews will provide rich data that address the broader research question of this project.

Observing Political Influence in the Federal Grants Process

The interviews described above will allow a clear assessment of the key research questions in this chapter: *Do presidents influence policy outcomes (grant allocations) to support their electoral interests? And if they do, what administrative mechanisms and processes do they use to extract these benefits and control micro-level outcomes?* To provide a more detailed and nuanced answer to these questions, I employ broad-based elite interviewing with individuals who play critical and diverse roles in the federal grants process. Through these interviews, I examine political and electoral influence over federal grants. Specifically, I consider the extent to which elected officials influence administrative outcomes, and what mechanisms, structures, and processes facilitate such behavior. The key to this effort is the analysis of the internal design and workings of bureaucratic institutions in the context of the strategic allocation of federal funds. Reliance on interviews with federal and state agency employees and interest group

lobbyists allows a thorough assessment of trends and regularities across distributive programs.

To do this, I conducted 27 elite interviews with career and appointed staff at federal grant making agencies, interest group lobbyists who deal with federal grants, and bureaucrats from swing and non-swing states who actively apply for federal discretionary grants. Respondents worked in a diversity of programs and issue areas; however, in several instances, issue consistency existed across respondent types. In this way, some of the individuals interviewed in multiple respondent groups were directly or indirectly linked by the same grant programs. Interviews were generally open ended and explored consistent aspects of the grants process. Interviews lasted between 35 minutes and two hours, and with the exception of one interview, they were conducted in person.¹²¹ A more comprehensive appendix outlining the precise interview methodology follows this chapter.

The interviews explored a host of topics with each respondent type. Broadly, the interviews explored political influence from elected officials in the grants process. Specifically, these questions probed direct and indirect ways that the White House, political appointees, OMB, and Congress seek to and ultimately are able to advance political and electoral interests. I asked respondents to describe how the federal grants process works and to detail their role within it. Additionally, I explored which actors have decision making authority, influence within the process, and influence over outcomes. Other questions involved how changes in agency and department leadership, presidential

¹²¹ For reasons of anonymity required by the Vanderbilt University Institutional Review Board, I am unable to identify the individuals interviewed or the agencies, organizations or states from which they hail. Instead, I simply will note whether each is a federal bureaucrat, federal careerist, state bureaucrat, or interest group lobbyists. In some instances, I interview individuals who work for a federal agency, but at a subnational office, and those respondents are identified as such.

administrations, party control of Congress and legislative leadership affect bureaucratic process and influence outcomes.

The elite interviews conducted as part of this research demonstrate the myriad ways in which presidential interests are not only conveyed throughout the policy process but are implemented. Ultimately, respondents noted that political influence—and particularly presidential influence—over the grants process is substantial and manifests in many ways. Presidents and their surrogates can affect outcomes in direct ways through decision making authority and through indirect ways such as program and criteria design, OMB oversight, and strategic communication environments. In so doing, I illustrate that common views of how presidents and Congress influence distributive policy are misguided and elementary. In reality, political influence is a complex, multi-part process that acts on administrative decision making in unique and pervasive ways.

I focus on respondent views relating to five key issues that reflect the president's ability to manipulate personnel and process for political or electoral gain. I examine the power of political appointees in federal grants policy and how decision making structures in the process facilitate presidential influence. Second, I detail how control over the development of formal, informal, and discretionary grant criteria serves as a critical tool in influencing federal grant outcomes and how political actors are charged with these actions. Third, I explain how the Office of Management and Budget and its satellite offices within agencies and cabinet departments effectively work to influence outcomes so that they are consistent with administration preferences and priorities. Fourth, I discuss the limited role that Congress plays in the distribution of funds, providing insight into Congress' restricted path to influence. Finally, before concluding, I discuss the apolitical

nature of the federal grants process, offering a different perspective to the substantial evidence of political influence. In this section, I explain that while politics affects the grants process in a systematic way, many individuals seek to produce outcomes that reflect need and public policy success.

The Power of the Appointee in the Grants Process

Political appointees serve as critical players in bureaucratic decision making and public policy formation and affect the federal grants process in a multitude of ways. They are often positioned to influence outcomes in both direct and indirect ways and serve as effective surrogates in propagating presidential preferences throughout a vast bureaucracy. This section uses data from the elite interviews to describe the precise mechanisms political appointees use to influence the federal grants process and its outcomes. I first focus on indirect means that appointees use to affect outcomes, drawing particular attention to the way appointees foster a communication environment and policy context. Often, political scientists conceptualize presidential control and appointee influence as a linear process by which elites substitute political and administration preferences in place of technocratic policy proposals. This section challenges this common view and argues that the president and his surrogates also maintain indirect and less publicly transparent ways of affecting outcomes. Next, I engage the more common view of influence and explain how political appointees can intervene directly in grant policy decision making, but political appointees also serve as an effective means of conveying and implementing presidential preferences over policy.

i. The Indirect Impact of Political Appointees

Political appointees can have an indirect influence on outcomes. They can foster a communication and administrative environment that breeds responsiveness to presidential preferences and priorities and makes clear to careerists what expectations are regarding their policy behavior. Participation in the grants policy and observation of changes between administrations and agency leadership illustrates the effect of this environment.

Consistent among almost all respondents was a reaction that political appointees and even the president himself set clear public policy priorities and objectives that they hoped policy outcomes would accomplish. At the presidential level, policy priorities are painted with broad brush strokes. However, the army of political appointees, serving at the pleasure of the president, conveys more clearly administration objectives at the micro-level. An appointee heading a subnational office of a federal agency explained that “the president and the (cabinet) secretary set clear priorities that are easy to follow.” In fact, a senior careerist in a federal agency who deals predominantly in the distribution of federal funds explained that it was quite clear that the tone for policy making was set in the White House, but that cabinet secretaries could make small adjustments. Both respondents noted that these priorities from on high are considered controlling and while the lower-level and subnational appointees have some discretion, the information environment in both the agency and the department writ large is hierarchical and top-down in nature.

The communication of administration objectives through appointees is pervasive and observable among most players in the federal grants process. One federal careerist described a process his agency employs for each discretionary funding program. Often,

Congress offers the agency broad discretion over the objectives and goals of a program or for the development and design of the program itself. In developing the procedures for each project, careerists, who deal with different aspects of the program, meet as a group with a political appointee. The appointee makes clear administration objectives and preferences, either in advance of or during the meeting, and the career-level administrators are then charged to operate within that framework. In fact, another career-level staffer in a different agency explained that because administration preferences are so important, longer serving appointees facilitate the process. As careerists build better and longer-lasting relationships with appointees, the careerist understands clearly the information being conveyed and the precise preferences they seek to advance.

One subnational federal agency appointee detailed precisely the information dynamics of influence. He noted that contact between central agency appointees (and their immediate staff) and subnational appointees occurred at least daily, through phone, email, or fax. Essentially his office received a flow of briefings from the White House, the leadership of the department, and even the department's White House liaison regarding the administration priorities. Additionally, agency and departmental appointees travel frequently to observe the administration of policy within subnational units. In-person visits become critical events for the subnational appointee and his staff to convey administration preferences, monitor how funding programs are being administered and visit sites that are effectively utilizing such funding.

Respondents inside and outside the bureaucracy reported an information environment in which presidential and administration preferences are conveyed to key actors in the process. One interest group official dealing mainly in federal grant policy

noted that while career-level bureaucrats or lower-level appointees were contacting the interest group seeking potential applicants for funds from targeted areas, the source of such efforts clearly came from higher up the chain of command. According to this respondent and consistent with several interviews with interest group officials, this behavior was most notable in advance of election years when administrative environments and distributive outcomes changed considerably. That the information environment changes in advance of presidential elections demonstrates that electoral concerns motivate behaviors and the efforts of political actors in the executive branch.

Even state bureaucrats expressed frustration with the overarching impact of administration preferences. One state bureaucrat who, over the course of her career, served in multiple state agencies explained the necessity of communication with appointees at the federal agency as a means of facilitating success or at least understanding the federal grants process. This need is particularly true in the context of competitive federal grants. Either senior state civil servants or state appointees have regular contact with federal appointees in order to learn the interests and preferences of the administration with regard to given programs.

Moreover, universal across interviews with state bureaucrats and interest group officials, it became clear that for many grant programs, there exists a bifurcated system of information. There is a body of information for each grant program that is formal and published. Such materials are often contained in a Request for Proposals (RFP). The RFP details funding ranges, eligibility, purpose, and other application procedures. However, in addition to this formal language exists more information that embodies the actual goals of the funding program and the objectives (political or otherwise) the administration pursues

with that funding. One is publicly available; the other, as an official with a state-based, grant-centered interest group explained, is acquired by fostering and maintaining relationships and an information-sharing environment with key agency actors.

Fostering a communication environment laden with presidential preferences and priorities is one means by which presidential politics influences public policy. However, it alone does not necessarily mean the pressure connected to these priorities translates into an electorally-strategic influence.¹²² Yet, several of the interviews shed light on how presidential objectives can be pursued in electorally-strategic ways.

One political appointee who headed a subnational office of a federal agency explained that geographic bias in the distribution of funds can be accomplished in a preemptive manner. He explained that often programs are designed at the central, federal level within an agency. Those decisions are often influenced by and incorporate administration priorities. These priorities may be purely policy-oriented, but he noted, “issue-based priorities can favor certain states.” An interest group official similarly noted that some agency priorities geographically *preclude* areas, states, and regions. As a result, when grant programs incorporate administration priorities, they can affect the distribution of funds in clear, predictable, and strategic ways.

These two respondents clearly noted that policy priorities have not only distributional implications but geographic implications. Surely, a single policy priority cannot exclusively target all swing states. However, developing objectives that benefit or preclude states based on population or demographic regularities, industrial of service

¹²² For example, during the George W. Bush administration, faith-based initiatives became a presidential priority. While such efforts could be construed as an electoral tool in a position-taking context, it is not clear how such priorities can be used to advance electoral goals in a manner described in this dissertation (a focus on gaining support in swing states at the expense of other states).

sector prominence, natural resources or other reasons can bias the geographic distribution of federal funds in critical and strategic ways. This system allows presidents or his surrogates to develop funding programs that institutionalize an electoral strategy cloaked in a publicly presentable, issue-centered, non-electoral justification.

In this way, the formal language of grant program may suggest that eligibility is fairly universal, but the administration's emphasis within such a program may narrow the programs' scope and have serious distributional implications. For example, during the 1990s and 2000s and in response to an amendment to Superfund laws, the Environmental Protection Agency began a focus on "brownfield" cleanup in an effort to transform polluted land into economically usable space.¹²³ This program formally applied to a broad set of areas, as environmental pollution of all kinds exists in all 50 states. However, in response to the Brownfields Law, the Bush administration made "mine-scarred lands" a priority.¹²⁴ With an emphasis on former mineral mine sites, environmental cleanup eligibility narrowed dramatically, as mineral mines are not geographically universal. Although mine site cleanup certainly achieves noble goals, particularly for the residents in those areas, this administration priority had distributional and electoral implications. In presidential electoral politics, mineral mine sites exist in key swing states including Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, Nevada, and Colorado, among others. In this case, administration priorities sought to focus a broad grant program into a narrow subset of areas, and an emphasis on those areas provided the president key political benefits.

Beyond discrete observations about the information environment in federal agencies, I gained additional leverage from respondents who participated in the federal

¹²³ See *Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act*, P.L. 107-118

¹²⁴ Environmental Protection Agency. 2005. "Mine Site Cleanup for Brownfields Redevelopment: A Three-Part Primer." Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response: Washington, DC.

grants process for several years. The ability to observe change (or stability) from long term experience provides great insight into bureaucratic process. Almost universally, respondents noted that the transition from one president to another causes dramatic changes in the priorities and focus of agencies, in the administrative procedures and processes governing the federal grants process and in the information environment. One long serving careerist in a federal agency explained that while new presidents dramatically change processes, changes in agency leadership can also affect policy and distributive outcomes. She detailed that such changes in appointed management had little effect on the day to day operation of an agency because of the stability of the civil service. However, real effects were felt in funding preferences and the demands for the entertainment of new ideas. Another career bureaucrat noted that discretionary programs can face dramatic redesigns under new leadership for a variety of reasons, some of which are political in nature.

The interest group perspective also reflects the effects of managerial changes in federal agencies. Most interest group officials and state bureaucrats noted the absolute need to foster relationships with federal agency officials. These contacts with the bureaucracy are strengthened in formal and informal ways. He went on to describe the relationship as being helpful in terms of understanding administration priorities. However, he explained that leadership changes cause transitions and periods of adjustment, and it is under this circumstance that lobbyists and other interest group officials rely on their relationships with careerists to understand the preferences and priorities of the new administration. Because changes can be so profound, external actors

must rely on the stability of the civil service to understand fully the nature of a new administration's priorities.

This information environment demonstrates clearly the means by which presidents can affect even micro-level policy. A constant communication flow of administration goals and preferences down a complex chain of command can accomplish two tasks. First, it serves as an effective monitoring mechanism by which individuals closer to the president are constantly being informed about the effectiveness, behaviors, and productivity of those individuals working throughout the administrative apparatus of government. This process helps enhance accountability and institutionally limit shirking and drift. Second, this communication (and more importantly its frequency) ensures that appointees at the lowest levels and career-level staff are constantly informed of the interests of the president, of how well performance reflects those interests, and of any changes or adjustments in preferences that should have an impact on outcomes. In this way, lower-level actors are not only kept informed of administration priorities through this information environment, but it is made clear that they are expected to incorporate them into policy.

ii. Political Appointees' Direct Influence

In addition to the control and conveyance of administration priorities and objectives, political appointees often have a more direct role in the execution of federal grants policy and agency allocation outcomes. Administrative procedures affect the manner in which outcomes come to be. In fact, one long serving careerist in a federal agency noted that it was clear to him that the nature and adjustment of administrative

procedures can have a direct and meaningful impact on policy outcomes. In this way, many agency structures empower political appointees to be the final arbiters for grant allocations. In agencies in which such mechanisms do not exist, appointees often have the ability to modify administrative procedures in a way that offers them decision making authority. One senior career official in a federal agency explained that the role of the appointee in the final allocation decision making “honestly, depends on whether they care.” She went on to note that some appointees arrange processes such that they play a substantial and critical role in allocations. Others, however, are comfortable delegating that power to career staff in order to focus on other priorities. This “lack of caring” may not reflect an appointee’s discretionary decision but the priorities of the White House vis-à-vis that agency or issue area.

What results is a decision making structure that varies depending on appointee interest and initiative and the existing structures within the administrative process. A long-serving senior lobbyist for a Washington -based interest group explained that he lobbies multiple agencies and his decades of experience demonstrated that appointees do not influence all agencies equally. However, what became a chorus among interest group officials both within and without Washington was that the tone set by an appointee or a new administration had a direct effect on the access of a lobbying organization, which can have real distributive consequences.

When appointees take an active role in distributive decision making, their impact is not only direct but can have political and electoral implications. A national interest group grant manager centered in Washington, DC, described an initiative in which she sought funding assistance for her members and subnational sister organizations. A federal

agency worked closely to identify applicants—affiliated with this organization—to distribute funds for a pilot program. The respondents explained that the agency delivered these funds almost exclusively to swing states. When I pressed the respondent about whether this distributive behavior was unique, the question was met with humor and an additional example of another funding program in which federal dollars were funneled to a particular swing state in advance of a presidential election. In fact, in this case the agency asked the respondent to identify prospective applicants in this state, as it was the geographic target for the program.

From the perspective of appointees, the ability to influence outcomes is clear. A federal appointee in charge of an agency's subnational office noted that he could simply change or veto distributive outcomes in a direct way, but he explained his ability to influence was broader. He noted that he could indirectly apply pressure and highlight to career staff certain distributive preferences. Although this appointee explained that while this power structure was available and not unique to his subnational office, he resisted such behaviors because they could complicate an important working relationship between him and his staff.

However, an appointee's deference to careerists' policy recommendations is not a universal behavior and in fact, can lead to an internal conflict for a political appointee. Another subnational federal agency head explained, "I am torn between serving the president and being part of a customer service system." In his case, he estimated that he defers to staff in about 95% of cases, but that individuals from the national office deliver a steady flow of information and demands and "there is a need to make central office suggestions a priority." In this way, this appointee found the need and hierarchical

motivation to step into the allocation decision making and exercise his own discretion. Serving as the formal and final decision maker for a set of grants passing through this subnational office, the appointee was positioned to, when necessary, affect outcomes. A careerist in a federal grant making agency noted that appointee involvement in final allocation decisions can occur for a host of reasons, but “clearly the process can be political.”

The power of appointees to serve as the locus of authority was clear across respondents in federal and state governments and within interest groups. However, the reach of that power and the character of that influence vary. One senior careerist at a federal agency explained that while an appointed agency head wields formal approval authority over allocations, the process was simply a formality—a behavior attributed to the bipartisan and technical nature of that specific policy area.

Other federal careerists noted the myriad and institutionalized ways in which appointees exercise decision making authority over federal grant allocations. As noted above, a careerist explained that in his agency the program design stage offers the appointee the opportunity to make his objectives clear and encourages—even if tacitly—the implementation of those objectives in the program. Another career-level program director described a similar process in her agency, but also explained that when proposed allocations are presented to the appointee, the appointee has veto power. This veto power becomes a blunt instrument of administrative influence. Rather than having the ability to make micro-level adjustments in allocations as was described in other agencies, this agency essentially allows the appointee an up or down vote on a set of allocations.

Not all decision making authority is as blunt, however. Another long serving non-appointed program director explained that a career-level program staffer will prepare a set of different proposed allocations and then formally present them to the appointee. The appointee then chooses the allocation schema that he or she prefers. While this ability to present a series of allocation designs could place discretionary power in the hands of the career staffer, the program director explained that the staffer has a feel for what the appointee prefers and those preferences become institutionalized into the system. Essentially, it would be a waste of man hours for the staffer to propose allocations that are inconsistent with the appointee's preferences, as he is unlikely to choose that proposal. Furthermore, beyond the ability to choose a proposal, the appointee retains the authority to "tweak" allocations. The respondent explained that such tweaking is uncommon, attributing it not to a lack of administration influence but instead to the fact that appointee preferences are already institutionalized into the process.

As suggested above, the influence of administration appointees does not only affect career-level members of the federal bureaucracy. Other appointees feel the impact of political actors in the president's administration in unique ways. A federal agency appointee heading a subnational office noted an additional way that the central office can target funds geographically. There is a pressure for subnational units of federal agencies to spend (distribute) all of their allocated funds or they are returned to Washington. However, they are not sent to the Treasury. Instead, they are transferred back to the central office of the agency head. The agency head is then free to redistribute those excess or unspent funds to subnational offices as he or she sees fit. Such power facilitates

a geographically-targeted distribution schema, but it at least presents the opportunity for one of the president's surrogates to influence directly the distribution of grants.

A challenge in evaluating presidential influence over micro-level policy is understanding how one individual charged with the leadership of a massive bureaucratic organization can affect outcomes at the individual-level in a manner consistent with his needs. The structure, decision making context, and information environment of administrative agencies clearly facilitate and in many cases institutionally assure that presidential interests become the interests of those throughout the system. Appointees are able to capitalize on these formal and informal mechanisms and act as presidential surrogates in order to provide the president critical electoral and political benefits.

Criteria: A Cornerstone of Control

Criteria are an important part of the federal grants process. They outline eligibility requirements that serve as an initial impetus for or disqualifier of prospective applicants. The creation of criteria can hold with it immense power over influencing or determining the allocation of federal funds. This section explores two critical aspects of criteria that are crucial to understanding policy outcomes. First, I consider formal and published grant criteria. Formal criteria are often considered central in understanding who receives grant funding. If criteria are determinative of outcomes, then it is vital to assess who has final authority over the design and approval of them. The second part of this section challenges the importance of formal criteria and instead examines how informal or discretionary criteria can empower decision makers and have serious implications for the distribution

of federal funds. I explore how external actors seek to gather knowledge on, understand and capitalize on informal criteria, and how political appointees or other actors can affect distributive outcomes by effectively superseding eligibility requirements with discretionary criteria.

The development of criteria is often a political process. To this end, political appointees often position themselves at the center of criteria design in order to craft grant programs in strategic ways. A Washington-based interest group grant manager explained that appointees can design criteria so it is targeted in nature. Because criteria can benefit or preclude certain applicants, appointees use criteria in a strategically. The respondent noted that relations with the administrative agency and its appointees are always careful because criteria can be (re)designed to punish or reward certain recipients, organizations, or geographic areas.

Those working within the administration also describe the breadth of power that political appointees wield in designing criteria. As agency executives who are often committed to administration priorities, appointees utilize this authority to ensure that programs and ultimately the distributive outcomes they produce will reflect such priorities. Several interest group officials spoke candidly of the distributional power appointees maintain through criteria design. One lobbyist explained that frequently the distributional implications of criteria are observable from outcomes. For example, broad-based grants to improve waterways could provide eligibility to a large number of areas throughout the country. However, if criteria are designed to give particular priority to the Great Lakes region, priority can be given to critical states in presidential elections

including Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Pennsylvania.¹²⁵ That criteria design is almost exclusively reserved for political actors suggests it is a critical avenue to influence policy outcomes and control administrative decisions.

Even agencies that have central and subnational offices face unique yet still appointee-designed criteria. One subnational federal appointee explained that he has final approval over criteria at the subnational level. Other criteria are created at the central office and almost always require appointee approval. He explained that the manner in which programs are designed and priorities are implemented through that design ensures that certain individuals and states are better positioned to receive funds. This positioning can occur both through choices over issues (as mentioned above) or through the details of eligibility within any program. Another appointee noted that some programs include criteria with immense distributive implications such that “one concern [is] that the process is too formulaic that works for one or two recipients and essentially becomes an entitlement” (sic).

Another Washington interest group grant manager explained that political appointees do not simply influence the design of criteria, but can affect the rules governing the process by which criteria are created. One way appointees affect criteria is to inform career-level staffers of the administration desires and objectives for a given program and then charging them to design the program (and its criteria) within that framework and information environment. In describing this process, one federal bureaucrat explained that staffers must present these pre-influenced criteria to the

¹²⁵ It should be noted this anecdote is used for illustrative purposes and was not provided by the respondent referenced in this paragraph.

appointee for final approval. At that stage, such approval is typically a formality, as the appointee's (or administration's) preferences are already incorporated.

Despite the import of criteria design, such control is not always absolute or precise. Many interest group lobbyists and administration officials explained that both grant criteria and the evaluation processes associated with a grant program do not always result in outcomes that align exactly with the objectives of political appointees. In many cases, political appointees wield additional power over the process through the development and exercise of informal or discretionary criteria.

Interest group lobbyists noted in several interviews that just as important as understanding the formal criteria listed in a Request for Proposals is an awareness of the subtext or informal criteria. The chance of success is enhanced only by understanding how criteria will truly be evaluated. Of greater importance, these respondents noted that political appointees typically determine, exercise, and fail to disclose publicly or transparently the nature of such informal criteria.

One interest group official who dealt with grant applications at the state-level explained that one agency maintained a liaison who served as a key information distributor to relevant interest groups and stakeholders. With recent budget reductions, the agency leadership cut several liaison positions. The respondent was concerned about the group's ability to compete effectively for federal funds without this representative. He explained that while reading the criteria within a Request for Proposals served to start the application process, understanding which criteria would be of greatest focus and how agency leadership would evaluate them was a fundamental means of accessing funds. He further explained that changes in agency leadership frequently led to changes in both

formal and informal criteria and expectations for applicants. The liaison relationship was critical to understanding these changes in a direct, rather than trial-and-error way. This liaison example, although itself a significant part of the administrative process, reveals the important role that political appointees play in the design, interpretation, and evaluation of grant criteria. The elimination of such positions—a consequence of fiscal constraints and appointee decision making—also helps mask the influence of informal criteria.

In addition to informal, issue- or priority-based criteria, appointees can use other considerations in the grant evaluation process. Often this power manifests with appointees using discretionary criteria that can assist specific applicants or groups of applicants. This tool empowers appointees to make exceptions to the (peer) review process.

Many grants are evaluated through a peer or administrative review process. Under this process, a group of individuals evaluate, score and rank proposals based on quality.¹²⁶ Panelists read and evaluate each proposal, often based on a criteria-centered rubric that results in a score for each application. Applications, based on their scores, are then ranked and those rankings become a recommendation. Those recommendations are then made to political appointees and/or senior career-level administrators for approval, disapproval, or, in some cases, adjustment.

The adjustment of these recommendations is born out of a discretionary ability of appointees to make final allocation decisions. A grant manager for an interest group explained simply that appointees distribute funds to certain recipients and geographic

¹²⁶ These panels often include individuals from federal agencies, state agencies, policy experts, stakeholders, and citizens to offer diverse views.

areas, even in the face of the peer review process. While this claim was sharp, several other respondents corroborated the point, noting the ability and actions of appointees to override certain peer or administrative review processes.

A long serving state bureaucrat explained that he not only observed the peer review process as an applicant, but he also participated in the process as a reviewer. He described the precise manner in which recommendations, though frequently adhered to and accepted, were not done so universally. He explained after he and his peers ranked proposals, the political appointee in charge of the program played two key roles in this process. First, the appointee was able to set the cut point above which programs would be funded. Second, appointees had the discretion to determine outcomes by changing the ranking of applications after the peer review process concluded. This administrative discretion though not exercised in dramatic fashion affected outcomes. The respondent noted that some proposals were raised or lowered on the list, and in a few cases, proposals that were not well-regarded found their way to the final distribution list. This respondent could not recall specifically who benefitted through such adjustment, but noted that the institutional actors responsible for such decisions—appointees and OMB—are political.

At the subnational level, central office appointees will utilize discretion in order to affect outcomes. Both subnational and central office appointees can add administrative or discretionary points to application scores as a means of enhancing the competitiveness of certain proposals. A career-level staffer at a federal agency's subnational office explained that administrative points added to scores by central and subnational appointees are handled differently. Subnational appointees often devise a justification for

this addition, noting that the justification can include reputational considerations. The respondent explained that while the motivation can be political, the appointee devises an apolitical public justification in case a Freedom of Information Act request is filed. However, administrative points added by the central agency appointees are not made public, but can lead to real changes in the distribution of funds. Despite this discussion, the respondent explained that the role of politics is at the margins and that all funding decisions—peer reviewed or administratively influenced—assisted applicants with real need.

Another subnational federal agency head echoed this perspective, explaining that central agency leadership can influence outcomes over subnational funding allocations. However, some discretionary criteria at the subnational level allow him to influence outcomes. The respondent explained that while these discretionary criteria can be used for political influence, his office typically relied on them to lift proposals that will be more competitive nationally and overcome formal criteria that target funds to a small and select subset of applicants. While this appointee's approach to the use of discretionary criteria or administrative points was offered as magnanimous in nature, he noted that the criteria designed at the national level certainly affect how and where funds are distributed. Often, the respondent described the different uses of discretionary criteria at the subnational and federal levels to be a competition between apolitical and political efforts, respectively.

In sum, presidential preferences can affect outcomes through the design and manipulation of criteria. Because the preferences and objectives of senior administration officials and the president motivate political appointees, the avenues of influence that

appointees can access become key means of translating presidential goals into policy outcomes. In the context of federal grant programs, one such avenue is administrative criteria. Not only are appointees empowered to create the criteria upon which grant allocations are evaluated, but when those criteria result in policy outcomes inconsistent with appointee goals, there exist additional paths to influence. Appointees are able to adjust scores, rankings and outcomes from peer and administrative review processes to advance and hinder certain applicants. These powers allow presidential goals to filter through the offices of political appointees to influence distributional outcomes at the micro-level in critical ways.

OMB: A Checkpoint on the Road to Presidential Influence

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has long been recognized as an important political institution for the White House to advance the goals and preferences of the president. The federal grants process is not spared from this effort. In fact, federal grants fall under the purview of OMB for multiple reasons. First, because of the distributive nature of federal grants the “budget” aspect of OMB oversees fund allocations for fiscal reasons. Second, OMB often serves as an information clearinghouse for federal agencies, ensuring that published communication is consistent with the legal and political expectations of the administration. To this end, the budgetary aspects of OMB offer it a jurisdiction over federal grant allocations and the political motivations of the White House insist upon its role in the policy process.

In addition to its budgetary role, OMB serves as an information control center that can dramatically affect both administrative process and policy outcomes. Specifically, OMB and its satellite offices within departments and agencies affect communication flowing into (such as contact from Congress) and out of bureaucratic institutions. This role positions OMB to be highly influential in administration and in the context of this project, distributive policy.

In detailing the mechanisms of influence afforded to the Office of Management and Budget, this section is divided into three parts. First, I explain how OMB controls the flow, nature, and content of published agency materials. This portion illustrates the manner in which this authority dramatically affects the role of politics in policy making and administration. Second, and of equal importance, I describe how OMB limits and controls external political contact and influence. This discussion outlines OMB's role as a buffer between Congress and bureaucratic institutions and notes how this informational role enhances political control and strategy. Finally, as the budgetary arm of the White House, OMB affects distributive outcomes in direct and formal, yet politically-strategic ways. I explain how this authority allows OMB to affect policy and inject politics into the process.

Senior career-level staff within agencies almost universally noted that OMB contact is a critical aspect of their jobs. One staffer explained that because OMB is such a key player in the administration of funds and flow of communication, it is absolutely critical for her office to get to know them and understand their priorities. It became clear from this discussion that like most procedures respondents describe, efficiency is gained

by understanding and possibly preemptively incorporating OMB preferences and expectations into outcomes.

As part of the legal and political efforts that OMB asserts regularly, every federal agency respondent noted, to some degree, contact and influence of the institution in their daily lives. One senior careerist explained that every published document from his office required not just OMB approval, but editing. In fact, in his cabinet department an OMB extension office existed to which all proposed publications were sent. He detailed clearly the various procedures the office used to monitor publications. In some cases, a document would be submitted and then returned with proposed changes. Other times, after a document is submitted, OMB edits and publishes a final version without first returning it to the agency. Final versions were not always changed in dramatic ways, but he noted, “some were unrecognizable.”

Another long-serving career-level program director explained that in her agency, OMB clearance was needed to for all publications, grant criteria, and even distributive decisions. She described OMB’s role more broadly as regulators of the information environment within an agency. Each document was reviewed and edited (when necessary) by these officials. However, as the respondent detailed, the control was not simply over information but by editing publications and criteria and placing checks on distributive decisions, OMB effectively influences public policy outcomes at all stages of the process. Another career-level agency official explained that included among such influence is the ability to outline or detail the precise processes to distribute funds in ways that have substantial influence on who gets what and when.

The influence of OMB extends beyond control over the information being disseminated from an agency; it also includes a strict control over the information coming into an agency. Because so much of the literature on distributive politics examines the role of Congress, one could imagine that Congress may seek to influence federal grant allocations by contacting agency staff. For career-level staff, I sought to evaluate the level of contact they had with Congress. Quite broadly, respondents noted that OMB handles contact with “the political.”

One senior career-level federal bureaucrat explained agency policy restricts staffers from discussing program details with Congress (members and staff). In fact, if an individual receives a phone call from Capitol Hill, he must immediately transfer it to the department’s OMB staffers to handle the inquiry. Any information deemed necessary from that communication will be relayed to agency staff only through the internal OMB office and not from Congress directly.¹²⁷ Of course, OMB determines what it and the administration considers necessary or important for agencies to learn from Congress.

This institutional dynamic offers increasingly centralized power in multiple ways. First, it ensures that all information being distributed from the agency comes from or flows through a common source ensuring tight messaging and consistency. Second, this intra-institutional structure buffers Congress from influencing those individuals working within federal agencies. In many cases, Congress cannot even *suggest* to career staff where funds should be distributed, unless administration officials convey that information. Like presidents, legislators have a substantial interest in directing federal funds to key constituencies. Given Congress’ oversight and appropriations roles, direct

¹²⁷ Any information that must be requested by or must be communicated back to Congress must also flow through the OMB office on its way up Capitol Hill.

contact from Capitol Hill could easily intimidate bureaucrats into *legislative* responsiveness, at the expense of White House control. By structuring a communication buffer that is staffed by an institution from the Executive Office of the President, it ensures greater executive branch control over distributive powers.

The effects of OMB were also felt outside of Washington and beyond the federal government. Even for state bureaucrats, OMB influence is not simply administrative in nature. A state bureaucrat noted that contact with OMB is quite frequent as monitoring of funds is fairly pervasive. However, beyond such checks, the political nature of OMB shows itself through the implementation of changes. Specifically, as new administrations take office the behavior and expectations of OMB for state grant recipients can change fairly dramatically. However, of greater import, the respondent noted that OMB can change reporting requirements to reflect the preferences and priorities of the incumbent president. For example, during the recent recession, the administration—through OMB—increased the emphasis on reporting job creation through federal funding, even changing the accounting practices for job creation multiple times. Although this requirement did not have distributional implications, it highlights the highly political nature of the Office.

More to the point, a long serving state bureaucrat who, as mentioned above, sat on federal peer review panels in the past, noted the power of this institution from a distributive perspective. He explained that both his first-hand experience within the review process and his relationships over the years with many federal government officials shed light on the OMB role. It functions not simply as a blind budgetary check that compares bottom lines. Instead, he explained OMB has more specific powers noting for many programs after a peer review process produces a ranking of grant applications

by quality scores, OMB can change the order in which proposals are funded. This power can influence the timing, location, and likelihood of funding. Given the political nature of this institution and its institutional position as a political liaison, affording it authority over the manipulation of federal fund allocations will have substantial distributive implications in political and electoral terms.

The respondents describe OMB as a powerful institution within the executive branch. This Office and the subsidiary offices within departments and agencies strictly control the information flow in and out of distributive institutions and have a direct impact on federal fund allocations. This influence, both active and informational, of the Office of Management and Budget controls legislative influence, facilitates presidential control and enhances the ability of the White House to affect micro-level public policy decision making.

Limitations on Legislative Leverage

As mentioned above a dominant theme in the study of distributive politics is the role and influence of Congress. Congressional influence over the distribution of funds has been well catalogued in many areas; however, the focus of this project being on discretionary federal grants should dampen the influence of Congress. A lack of evidence of Congressional influence—as has been outlined in the previous chapters—does not necessarily reflect a weakness in legislative power, but instead the institutional design of the grant programs being analyzed. Despite this expectation, legislative influence serves as a primary alternative hypothesis for this project and one that was extensively explored in the elite interviews I conducted.

In this section, I examine the role of Congress in federal discretionary grant policy. This section addresses this issue in three ways. First, I described respondents' assessment of the direct role of Congress in the context of grant policy. Respondents universally report little communication and influence from the legislative branch. In the second section, I engage this limited communication by focusing on the role that the Office of Management and Budget plays and suggest ways in which Congress may have an impact that bureaucrats have difficulty observing. Third, I discuss avenues of influence Congress maintains in this policy area. Specifically, I note that while Congress is largely restricted in directly affecting distributive outcomes, its institutional role in the legislative process allows a path of influence.

Generally, federal bureaucrats noted a lack of contact with Congress in terms of legislators seeking funds for their constituencies. Instead, one senior careerist explained the extent of dealings with Congress dealt mainly with reporting requirements and discussions about the upcoming appropriations legislation. He noted the extent of legislative impact on the distribution of funds centered not on general grant programs, but on legislative earmarks. With some regularity, legislators will include earmarked appropriations in legislation or in committee reports, and in most cases, agencies are required or expected to honor these Congressional requests. In such situations, a given portion of funding is set aside for that specific (often geographic purpose). However, despite media attention to earmarking, the behavior consumes a very small portion of discretionary funding and has little impact. Beyond earmarking, respondents largely noted that contact with Congress was essentially non-existent.

In fact, as further evidence of the limited influence of Congress within federal grant making agencies, state bureaucrats do not seek help from Congress when applications are under review. In fact, one state bureaucrat noted that it is far more effective to contact relevant interest groups who maintain positive relationships within federal agencies. These applicants often build and foster contacts that advance both their understanding of the grants process and their likelihood of success. That these contacts often do not include congressmen demonstrates the lack of legislative influence within administrative agencies.

State bureaucrats provide additional insight into the limited role of Congress. One would expect that because state bureaucrats apply for funds for select constituencies and federal legislators seek to claim credit with those funds, congressmen may encourage state bureaucrats to seek federal funding opportunities out of mutual benefit. However, interviews with state bureaucrats universally demonstrated that they have little or no contact from members of the national legislature. These bureaucrats did note that pressure comes from state legislators and the offices of governors, particularly because federal funds help balance state budgets. Generally, state bureaucrats suggest that while state and local officials understand the beneficial implications of pursuing federal grants, congressmen make little effort to achieve the same.

Instead of direct contact, interaction between many agencies and Congress flows through OMB, as mentioned above. This system ensures that legislators have limited influence within agencies and that contact with agencies is made directly with political appointees. In fact, the constancy federal bureaucrats observe across transitions in party control of Congress is evidence of the limitations on legislative influence. Two senior

careerists in federal agencies explained that because their contact with Congress was so infrequent (and in the case of one individual, was restricted), changes on Capitol Hill would have little impact. One suggested that even though communication flows through OMB officials within the cabinet department, the information flowing from those officials to the program staff remains fairly constant.

This constancy in information, even in the face of transitions in Congress suggests one of two scenarios. Congressmen rising to committee power or a party seizing the majority make no new demands on a federal agency, allowing them to continue to administer the law without political pressure. Alternatively, this steadiness may demonstrate that the OMB officials within the government effectively shelters bureaucratic staffers from legislative demands and influence.

However, OMB's control of the information environment in federal agencies does not mean Congress has no influence over the process. Congress cannot simply apply pressure directly to federal bureaucrats. Instead, it must work with key executive branch institutions to seek influence. In specific cases, and considering the inter-institutional nature of the legislative process and the cooperative nature of policy making, it is safe to assume that OMB will accept some legislative requests and actively influence bureaucrats to be responsive to them. Yet, unless the source of such a request is clearly discussed between OMB and the bureaucrat, the latter will simply observe political pressure and influence from the former. In this context, civil servants are unable to distinguish the original source of influence. Thus, respondents noting that the Office of Management and Budget applies political pressure do not necessarily reflect an absolute reflection of executive branch interests. Instead, OMB pressure reflects some

combination of presidential interests and Congressional policy preferences that are administration approved.

The relationship between interest groups and Congress can illustrate the existence or extent of legislative influence in the context of the federal grants process conceived more broadly. Generally, interest group lobbyists and grant managers explained that their relationship with Congress exists on two fronts: information sharing and appropriation seeking. One lobbyist explained that because his organization was a leading voice in that given policy area, Congress relies heavily on information from it. The organization has a broad network and comprehensive understanding of public policy issues and maintains an expertise that is unmatched in Congress. In a similar way, Congress largely conveys to the interest group legislative proposals and discusses the possible (in)ability for legislative success in upcoming sessions. The relationship that this lobbyist describes is a traditional one, long profiled in the political science literature, but that remains stable in contemporary policy contexts.

In terms of interest in specific appropriations, Congress has profound influence in federal grant policy. Interest groups are motivated to increase appropriations for the policy areas that they support. In this way, interest group respondents explained that they frequently work closely with Congress in an effort to increase, or at least maintain, funding levels, particularly for federal grant programs. One interest group grant manager explained that because of the persuasive effectiveness of interest groups and their policy expertise, federal agencies often contact these organizations in an effort to lobby Congress for their own appropriation. While federal agencies serve policy communities, they do not have a constituency in the same way that an interest group does. These

organizations are effective at mounting information and/or grassroots campaigns in an effort to securing funding. This relationship between agencies, interest groups, and Congress was also echoed by federal agency staffers as a crucial element of securing funding. And in this context, Congress is a critical player.

An interview with a subnational federal appointee demonstrated this Congressional role most clearly. This appointee oversaw a subnational region in which his “cardinal” hailed. That is, the subnational region included the congressional district of the House Appropriations Subcommittee chair with jurisdiction over that agency. This institutional alignment should present the most effective opportunity for legislative influence over executive branch fund allocations. However, the appointee explained that he experienced no influence from the cardinal to distribute funds to that congressional district or in any other way. Instead, rather than the proximity of the cardinal being a challenge or source of political influence, the appointee found it to be a perk. The appointee had greater access to the individual charged with shepherding the appropriations bill that funds his agency and found the relationship to be beneficial to that segment of the executive branch.

This relationship distinguishes the role of Congress in fiscal matters. Often the legislative branch’s appropriation power is conflated with distributive power. It is true that the legislators are often successful at securing funding for their constituencies, but that is true under specific institutional contexts such as legislative earmarking, block and formula grant programs, and contact with the Office of Management and Budget and other political appointees. However, for funding programs that are discretionary, legislative influence is not as pervasive. Although Congress does have some opportunity

to influence outcomes, other preferences factor into distributive outcomes. In this way, it is important to distinguish the appropriator from the distributor. For all programs, Congress serves as the appropriator and the interview respondents for this project suggested an awareness of this institutional dynamic in their dealings with the legislative branch. However, with regard to the funding programs being analyzed in this project, the executive branch and particularly the political appointees within it play the role of distributor.

Thus, Congress is limited in its ability to influence the distribution of federal funds in the context of discretionary grant programs. Most agencies have little contact with federal legislators or their staffs. Instead, much of the communication between the branches flows through specific channels, often officials affiliated with the White House. This effectively limits the ability of the legislature to influence directly administrative agencies. Instead, Congress must cooperate and communicate with the political institutions of the executive branch in order to extract policy benefits. As a result, federal discretionary grants provide an important context to distinguish appropriation power from distributive authority, and illustrate the power of the president relative to that of Congress.

The Apolitical Nature of the Federal Grants Process: A Commentary

The results from the systematic analyses in this dissertation do not suggest that federal grants provide the president unfettered political and electoral tools. Instead, the findings provide evidence that an electoral strategy in the allocation of funds is observed at the margins. While federal discretionary grant dollars are spread all over the United

States, those states that are electorally important to the president receive disproportionately more funding. The results of the elite interviews conducted as part of this project also support this finding.

A senior career-level federal bureaucrat best put this concept into perspective. He explained that there is no doubt external forces influence grant allocations and that some of those forces are political in nature. However, he noted that despite the influence of politics and efforts to direct funds in specific ways, “people who get grants are all in need.” He distinguished the way that politics manifests in the grants process. Even when political or electoral forces influence outcomes, agencies do not deliver benefits to those who have much, but instead identify those in need for whom delivering funds may be politically or electorally beneficial to principals.

The universal nature of need allows individuals involved in public policy—and specifically in federal grants—to work effectively within a political framework. An interest group grant manager explained that even when politics influences the system and programs are designed to have geographic biases, it is easy to identify people in need in those geographically- targeted areas. In fact, the respondent noted that need in her policy area is substantial and universal and that the demand for assistance *always* outpaces supply. In this way, politics does not enhance this shortfall, but rather, she explained it simply directs that shortfall. She described a situation in which the administration chose to target certain states for federal grants and even under this scenario, there existed no shortage of prospective applicants in those states.

Every respondent had a keen awareness that they were working to create policy in a system that politics influences. Rather than it motivating discontent, it was accepted as

an aspect of their working life. Further, the role of politics did not function as a limitation on their ability to help those in need. Instead, several respondents including state bureaucrats, federal bureaucrats and political appointees claimed that 90-95% of grants were allocated because of technocratic considerations, rather than for political reasons. This estimate reflects the results reported from the systematic data analysis in previous chapters.

Despite an institutional framework that either allowed political actors to determine outcomes or at least internalize into the system specific preferences, those who I interviewed believed that need was being met by the assistance they could provide. In fact, the focus on both need and the ability to help emerged as a driving force in the work ethic of respondents. Their jobs were not carried out with a mechanized, stereotypically bureaucratic, faceless monotony. Instead, these respondents saw the human aspect of their work, realizing that, in most cases, their decisions affected the lives of Americans. In this way, respondents clearly understood that need—sometimes serious or dire need—existed and that the federal government was charged with helping citizens. However, because government was called upon to act, so, too, was politics. This perspective was nearly universal despite diversity among interviewees. I interviewed individuals at the start and nearing the end of their careers, young and old, Democrat and Republican, liberal and conservative and found a general uniformity in this viewpoint, despite expected differences.¹²⁸

In an effort to meet need and be increasingly effective as policy makers, respondents also demonstrated bureaucratic innovation—a concept often deemed

¹²⁸ While I never directly asked individuals about their ideological predispositions or partisan affiliations, many volunteered that information during the course of the interview or it was easily observable based on responses.

paradoxical. A senior career official in a federal agency explained in an effort to meet growing and changing needs, her agency has a constant focus on modifying program details to reflect these changes. She describes this process not as an internal, administrative effort, but one that integrates staff, policy experts, prospective applicants, and key stakeholders in the community. The goal is to get the program “right” in the sense that it effectively meets the needs of the policy community.

Another senior career official in the federal government detailed similar processes in his agency. He explained that previously, allocations were made on a first-come, first-served basis. However, it became clear over time that this procedure helps states that are more efficient in applying for funds—a characteristic not necessarily correlated with need. The program was eventually redesigned in an effort to level the playing field and serve those in greatest need. This respondent further explained that short term events can also lead to short term need-based responses. He noted that the economic recession placed greater need on his agency (and many others) but was not accompanied with increases in appropriations. Rather than staying the course, he and his colleagues worked actively to modify programs in an effort to help more people in a more effective way. This process revealed a responsive and responsible aspect of discretionary programs. While the malleability of programs can and are exploited for political purposes, it can also be used to help those facing hardship.

Beyond the efforts of individuals in the Washington, DC, offices of federal agencies, the focus on the apolitical nature of the federal grants process extends. Officials on the ground and in the field constantly work to understand local need, changes in that need, and the ways in which agencies can respond. The network of policy makers

includes a web of contact among federal and state government officials and interest groups nationally and locally to try to stay informed as to citizen need.

An interest group official at the state office of a national organization explained that he and his colleagues go into communities to help information about funding opportunities and even help individuals with grant preparation. He explained that some applicants truly struggle to prepare materials for grants. However, his organization's expertise and experience with a process that can be complex and at the mercy of informal criteria can help deliver increased grant funds to those in need.

This approach of responding to and meeting local need drives the behaviors of those at subnational offices of federal agencies—even at the appointee level. An interview with one such appointee revealed that a large part of his job involves holding (or being invited to) town hall meetings in which he and his staff mount an information campaign to spread the word about relevant funding opportunities. He also explained that he and his staff recognize a serious problem in the grants process involving applicants. Those applying for funds were typically struggling with need or faced enormous time constraints as they seek to deal with such need. As a result, prospective applicants often had limited time and training to complete what had become onerous amounts of paperwork to apply for funds.

The solution that his office implemented was two-fold. First, they worked to streamline the application process to make it less intimidating for prospective applicants. Second, in addition to making staff available to help with grant preparation, they also modified the evaluation process to take into account resource limitations among applicants. This change allowed staff to meet the needs of applicants based not on the

perfection of a grant proposal but by a thorough identification of real need. What this discussion revealed was that a political appointee—one who acknowledged that political demands enter the policy process and influence outcomes—still saw his role as an assistance provider to the community, and despite serving at the pleasure of the president, he worked to assist communities and provide public goods.

There is no doubt that presidential politics plays an influential role in the distribution of federal grants. Although this dissertation focuses on the political and electoral forces that affect fund allocations, it must be noted that the system is not purely political, stripped of technocratic and need-based considerations. Instead, bureaucrats at the state and federal levels, interest group officials, and even political appointees understand that while political principals must be satisfied, the core part of the policy process involves service to the public.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I offer a textured look at the federal grants process and illustrate decision making structures, loci of power, and mechanisms of influence. To accomplish this empirical effort, I employ elite interviews and design an across-group diversified sample that includes federal and state bureaucrats and interest group officials to probe political and electoral influence over distributive public policy. These interviews demonstrate how presidents are able to affect federal grant policy in a substantial way. Unlike common perceptions of presidential power that focus on broad-based authority over macro-policy issues, this chapter illuminates the mechanisms by which presidents

influence policy at the micro-level. Moreover, this chapter shows that in the context of distributive public policy, electoral considerations drive both presidential preferences and bureaucratic outcomes.

Often there exist competing views of political influence in policy making. These views disagree over the source of such influence (the president or Congress) as well as whether influence is direct (through decision making) or indirect (through efforts like the application of political pressure). This chapter shows that none of these explanations is false. Instead, they are a radically incomplete accounting of the realities and complexities of policy influence and political control. These views miss a tremendous amount of detail regarding how politics works in administrative process. This chapter offers a detailed look at this process, demonstrating how presidents effectively control even minor details of policy making within a burgeoning central government. Moreover, this analysis helps explain why scholars and observers of the executive branch often mischaracterize or underestimate the role of the election driven president in manipulating policy. The often opaque or hidden and always strategic approach of presidents and their surrogates ensures that this influence lacks transparency and that only (and particularly) the outcomes are for public consumption.

The federal grants process is a complex, diverse, multi-stage process that affords political actors in both the executive and legislative branches specific and unique opportunities to influence outcomes. Presidents rely substantially on political appointees and the Office of Management and Budget to affect policy in key ways. They tightly control information environments within federal agencies. While OMB functions as a bureaucratic buffer from external political influence, appointees foster a communication

environment that continuously keeps bureaucratic actors informed of administration priorities and preferences. Additionally, political appointees and OMB affect distributive outcomes in indirect ways such as strategic program design and criteria creation and in more direct ways by institutionalizing their role in policy decision making hierarchies.

In the end, this chapter provides insight into the black box of the bureaucracy. It identifies the key mechanisms in the policy process that facilitate political influence and control. Additionally, it illustrates how such political control can have distributional implications that can easily conform to political elites' electoral interests. In so doing, a picture of an electorally-driven, micro-policy-oriented, highly political president becomes clearer, and as a result, the character, motivation, and overall scope of presidential power is reconceptualized.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Presidents are election driven individuals who use the formal and informal tools of their office to advance those interests. They engage in a basic, strategic and widely used behavior among elected officials: porkbarrel politics. Presidents wield extensive spending authority and direct federal dollars to swing states in advance of elections, as Swing states represent a critical constituency where presidential elections are won or lost. Discretionary spending power serves incumbent presidents as a campaign tool to further their reelection effort and the efforts of their same-party successor.

Presidents have the motive, means, and opportunity to engage in porkbarrel politics. However, political scientists often view such behaviors as beneath or beyond the president and as an exclusive political tool of legislative actors. Because of Congress' role as chief appropriator and Members' manageable constituencies, the literature focuses on their desire and ability to target funds in strategic ways. In a similar way, presidents capitalize on delegated spending power to motivate a broad bureaucracy to be responsive to his electoral interests. White House officials, the Office of Management and Budget, and political appointees serve as an army of responsive surrogates using leadership positions to ensure policy outcomes reflect presidential preferences. These political actors use a host of tools and mechanisms to assist the president's penchant for pork. These include direct efforts such as distributive intervention, budgetary oversight, and personnel politicization as well as informal means such as the manipulation of funding criteria,

strategic design of grant programs, and the application of political pressure. What results is a complex system of political tools that empower presidents to behave in electorally strategic ways.

This project illustrates the comprehensive and successful efforts presidents mount in order to achieve electorally-strategic policy responsiveness from their administrations. This work rests on two claims that challenge standard research on the presidency. First, presidents are *primarily* election-driven individuals. This view challenges arguments that such motives are ancillary or non-existent. Second, presidents are able to influence and determine policy even at the micro-level in a more effective way than Congress. This perspective insists upon a re-examination of theories of presidential behavior and demonstrates the significant distributional consequences when presidential electoral interests drive policy administration.

What We Know: The Effects of Electorally Strategic Policymaking

And if the president ends up with total discretion over spending, we will see even more clearly where his priorities lie.

–Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) November 15, 2010

It is well understood among the Washington establishment that presidential spending authority is a critical power that allows the White House to generate policy that will deliver political and electoral benefits. In many ways, Congress delegates this authority out of necessity because it is resource constrained from implementing policy and in so doing, offers the president a critical political and electoral tool. This dissertation provides answers to several basic questions about presidential policy making in this

arena. First, do presidential electoral interests motivate public policy outcomes? Second, what tools do presidents have to induce responsiveness from a burgeoning bureaucracy? Third, what are the policy implications of an electorally strategic administration of policy?

Discretionary grants provide an ideal context for testing theories of presidential policymaking and electoral behavior. This area of spending totals approximately \$100 billion dollars each year, and the executive branch wields broad discretion regarding the design of programs, recipient eligibility, allocation criteria, and eventually distribution. I capitalize on this area of federal spending to show that presidential electoral preferences substantially influence both *where* and *when* these funds are distributed.

Electoral strategy for presidents centers on swing states. Every election cycle a cohort of states—some new, some seemingly perpetual—composes this critical constituency. Because of demographic and political forces within these states, their electoral outcomes are uncertain. It is in these states that presidential candidates wage the fiercest campaign wars, spending millions (now hundreds of millions) of dollars on advertising, rallies, campaign visits, get out the vote efforts, and staff organization. Incumbent presidents have an additional tool of campaign resources to target to swing states: federal grants. Citizens and organizations within swing states receive hundreds of millions of additional grant dollars every year, simply because of their states' electoral competitiveness. As a presidential election draws near, this swing state-focused spending increases dramatically, delivering additional funds to these key constituencies.

One concern in studying the presidential porkbarrel involves evaluating how one individual's preferences influence a plethora of policy outcomes even at the micro- or

individual-level. Because of concerns over agency drift and monitoring, how do presidents command broad electoral responsiveness? In the context of the presidential porkbarrel, the chief executive has several tools at his disposal. In fact, straightforward, well-publicized, easily interpreted presidential electoral preferences assist this endeavor by reducing the chance of agency loss due to incomplete information. In some complex areas of policy, difficulties can exist in conveying preferences and goals from the White House throughout the broad bureaucracy. However, for distributive policy, communicating preferences about key states is simple.

Although preferences are straightforward, which tools allow presidents to have an impact on such a broad set of policy decisions? Such an answer is far more complex because of presidents' range of options in the context of federal spending. First, presidents can use political appointees in a wide variety of highly effective capacities. Appointees influence policy administration in a host of ways, and in terms of the political and electoral manipulation of fund distribution, numerous opportunities for influence exist. Appointees can position themselves to have direct decision making authority over distribution, essentially serving as gatekeepers for grant allocations. However, there are more subtle ways in which these hand-picked agency leaders can affect outcomes. They can foster an environment of intense political pressure where expectations regarding the behavior of civil servants are clear and controlling, and civil servants benefit from responsive behavior that avoids the negative consequences of that environment. Appointees can also affect internal administrative procedures and processes in ways that can facilitate political control and maximize presidential influence. In the context of federal grant programs, appointees and even the Office of Management and Budget (and

its appointees) can predetermine or at least powerfully influence outcomes by manipulating eligibility requirements, grant criteria, approval procedures, scoring or evaluation rubrics, and even through choosing who and by what process applications are evaluated. Each of these efforts can affect outcomes in various ways and are selected according to their effectiveness in a given context, policy area or agency.

Additionally, while the administration of policy in the executive branch involves thousands of decisions each day, it is clear from this project that presidents consider the distribution of federal funds to be particularly important—given its electoral efficacy. To maintain an impact in this area, presidents ensure that key personnel not only reflect and are willing to support his interest, but that those individuals serve in critical decision making roles in the policy process. Specifically, presidents make sure that political appointees have characteristics that are likely to generate responsiveness. Appointees have more political experience and are ideologically aligned with the president. They act as surrogates of the president’s political and electoral interests and of information he finds critical to the administration of policy. Making sure that appointees “look the part” or have the traits presidents find important is a basic story of politicization that the literature has described effectively. However, this project shows that when politicizing personnel, presidents take a keen interest in officials with distributive authority. Because distributors can deliver key electoral benefits, presidents ensure these individuals embody qualities that make them amenable to playing electoral politics with policy. In a direct way, this suggests that personnel politicization is a form of “electorization” in the context of administration posts with spending authority. Presidents are electorally strategic and desire their surrogates to be, too.

This project also illustrates that the election-driven interest in distributors extends beyond political appointees and into the civil service, as well. Distributors are likely to be recruited by high level agency officials and are subject to greater dissatisfaction with the actions of political actors in an administration. The result is a personnel system for federal fund distribution that is powerfully politicized to induce responsiveness to presidential electoral interests.

Presidents are broadly effective at using their spending authority and power over bureaucratic processes to engage in porkbarrel politics. However, this electorally-strategic policy control is not uniform across the executive branch. Instead, specific institutional designs condition presidential control and policy responsiveness to electoral interests. This project offers broad support for the idea that designing federal agencies with commission structures—fixed and staggered terms, parity requirements, reduced regulatory review, etc.—serves as an effective means of buffering presidential control. Broadly, presidents are unable to induce policy responsiveness to his electoral interests from independent commissions.¹²⁹ Congress structures commissions for the purpose of limiting presidential control over policy, and this project shows that the additional legislative benefit of such design is a constraint on the president's ability to engage in porkbarrel politics. For Congress, however, this effort comes at a cost. Unlike in other agencies, commissions also fail to provide benefits to key legislative constituencies.

Commission structure is not the only way in which presidential power over pork can be limited, however. Whereas responsiveness to presidential electoral interests is ubiquitous in cabinet agencies, it is conditional in independent agencies. In these

¹²⁹ This story is one that will seem sensible to members of the academy who often view grant evaluation processes at the National Science Foundation. This institution is widely regarded as evaluating proposals based on scientific quality, rather than political considerations.

moderately insulated institutions, presidents require higher levels of politicization in order to induce responsiveness. In independent agencies with a lower saturation of political appointees, presidents are less able to target funds to swing states. Despite these structural constraints on presidential power, the ability of presidents to engage in porkbarrel politics remains robust and profound. While independent commissions and some independent agencies can resist his spending preferences, the large majority of federal funds flow through and from agencies in which presidential influence is pervasive, ensuring that these limitations are only marginally limiting.

A unique contribution of this research is that it illustrates the power of the executive branch and specifically presidential preferences in an area widely believed to be the purview of Congress. Moreover, the behaviors discussed in this dissertation—strategically manipulating the distribution of funds for electoral gain—is a behavior commonly associated with legislative actors. However, this project effectively demonstrates that presidents, facing the same electoral motivations, behave in a manner similar to Members of Congress. Despite these claims, this dissertation does not suggest that Congress is powerless to influence funds. While outlining the importance of presidential influence over federal grants, I have evaluated the influence of the legislative branch in the process. In some settings legislative power is severely limited. This reduced Congressional role is attributable to the area of spending under analysis. By focusing on discretionary spending power, I purposefully examine funding for which Congress has delegated powers—essentially choosing to have a reduced role in distributive decisions. At the same time, delegation does not strip Congress of power entirely. Congress—even in the context of distributive spending—can impose some constraints on the executive

branch and retain some level of legislative influence.¹³⁰ Additionally, because this spending authority depends on an express transfer of power from the legislative branch to the executive, presidents will seek to keep Congress happy in order to preserve this possibly precarious discretionary relationship. For these reasons, Congress can continue to have an effect, and this project suggests that it does. Congressional appropriators fare well in the distribution of *discretionary* grants. A state's representation on the Senate Appropriations Committee translates into additional benefits for those constituents.

The agency-level analysis in this project allows for an even more nuanced examination of the Congressional role and offers broad support for the idea that legislative benefits in federal grant allocations arise from strategic presidential intervention, rather than from Congressional efforts. I demonstrate that beyond simple membership on the Senate Appropriations Committee, legislative benefits are targeted to a subset of legislative officeholders: members of the relevant House and Senate Appropriations subcommittees that oversee those agencies. The executive branch enjoys and capitalizes upon discretionary spending authority for its own electoral benefit. However, the president realizes that *Congress giveth and Congress taketh away*. Presidents know their ability to engage in porkbarrel politics largely depends on delegation, and to preserve this power, they ensure that the Congressional actors most directly charged with determining discretion benefit from pork, as well. Moreover, none of the other measures of legislative interests—institutional, political, or electoral— influence the distribution of grants. If Congress were more directly involved in the distribution of funds, it would certainly provide benefits to other key legislative

¹³⁰ What is key to this point is that discretion is not a dichotomous concept. In many ways, operates along a continuum ranging from total discretion to no discretion.

constituencies. The results of this project support the notion that presidential strategy, centered on the strategic use of pork and the preservation of the authority to do the same, drives them to direct funds to key *legislative* interests.

Presidents capitalize on their spending authority to use large portions of the federal largesse as a campaign war chest. They advance their electoral interests and influence policy outcomes through personnel, process, and placation. Presidents are able to select political appointees and even civil servants based on criteria that make them more likely to be responsive to their political and electoral goals. The White House positions these actors in key decision making roles, particularly if they have distributive authority. There is a conscious awareness within an administration that distributors can provide important electoral benefits, and staffing these positions becomes a careful practice. In addition, presidents and their surrogates also influence administrative processes to induce responsiveness. They empower political actors to design programs and program details in strategic ways that foster path dependency toward electoral benefits. Political actors also create a highly politicized administrative environment, particularly around distributors, that ensures that information flowing into and out of agencies is tightly controlled, monitored, and will facilitate presidential electoral goals. Last, in order to preserve this spending authority presidents seek to placate Congressional appropriators who deliver discretionary power to the executive branch. Although presidents enjoy the ability to manipulate the delivery of federal funds, this power is not organic or formal, but delegated. To ensure that this critical electoral tool remains in the presidential quiver, agencies target funds to these key legislative constituencies, satisfying the political appetites at each end of Pennsylvania Avenue.

What We Think: A Re-examination of Presidential Behavior

Presidential Motives and Incentives

Sidney Blumenthal was right. In 1992, he explained that presidents face the *Permanent Campaign*. As quickly as presidents finish their inaugural address, step inside from the West Front of the Capitol Building, and submit their first nominations to the US Senate, they begin running for reelection. Presidents face the permanent campaign and distinguish themselves as consummate campaigners. They devote extensive staff, time, planning, strategy and resources to reelection and the election of their same-party successor. However, many scholars view the president as differently focused. Whereas there exists little debate about the legislative obsession with electoral goals, presidents are seen as unique, national actors who behave in fundamentally different ways than Members of Congress. Rather than president-as-politician, the literature often describes the “national” president with a unique vantage point in the American political system and policy making arena.

This narrow and misguided view of the unique, “national” president emerges from four assumptions about presidential behavior that fail to withstand theoretical (and as is demonstrated in this project, empirical) scrutiny. Scholars argue first that presidents as the only nationally elected official face a national constituency. Second, the 22nd Amendment to the Constitution, instituting presidential term limits, ensures that the electoral interest dissipates in a president’s second term. Third, even in one’s first term, the electoral motive takes a backseat to interests like legacy, broad-based policy initiatives, and institutional power. Fourth, presidents are resource constrained from

engaging micro-level policy because of their unitary nature atop a burgeoning branch of government.

This project shows that the reality of presidential politics is much different than this standard view. The nearly unobstructed focus on swing states ensures that presidential constituencies are substantially smaller than national and the institutional design of the Electoral College requires presidents to think differently about their constituency and the ways in which they can connect to it. Furthermore, presidents have legitimate, vested interests in seeing their party retain control of the White House even after term limits bar the sitting president from seeking reelection. Presidents work to maintain their party's support nationally and prop up the standard bearer nominated to succeed him. The 22nd Amendment does not nullify presidential electoral interests; it simply redirects them. Next, it is certain that presidents have a host of motives, but like any elected official, presidents first require electoral success as a necessary condition for pursuing any other goals. Legacy, institutional power, and policy influence *require* success at the ballot box, and as such, presidents must be primarily driven by electoral interests. Finally, the view of the resource-constrained president stands contrary to the expansive work on the institutional presidency. Presidents, though the singular elected official in the executive branch (save the vice president), operate as leader of a complex and expansive network of appointees who brandish a combination of political finesse and policy expertise. This army of responsive actors empowers presidents not simply to realize their preferences through broad-based policy, but to make certain their interests permeate policy formation and outcomes at all levels.

This theoretical discussion and the subsequent empirical support demonstrate that scholars of the presidency must move away from the view of the president as a unique, national actor too busy or disinterested to engage in common political and electoral behaviors. Instead, the role of electoral interests is critical in evaluating presidential behavior. The electoral incentive is not a minor White House consideration, nor an interest that ebbs with reelection. Instead, like Members of Congress, presidents are politicians who use the powers of the office to manipulate policy to advance their goals in the electoral arena. Particularly in the context of a common electoral behavior—porkbarrel politicking—presidents are uniquely positioned, substantially empowered, and fiscally endowed to direct enormous sums of federal money to key constituencies at critical times. Presidential behavior is election-centered and constituency-oriented and employs the profound resources of the executive branch to affect policy at all levels.

The Effect of Electoral Institutions on Presidential Incentives

The institutional design of the Electoral College drives presidential incentives over policy making. The Electoral College requires that presidents be chosen not by a national plebiscite—an institutional structure that could induce a more universal-policy-oriented chief executive. Instead, presidents face a series of 50 state-level elections. For many of these races, no level of campaigning will affect electoral outcomes. The president's party identification will be the sole determining factor in whether he wins many states. However, for a subset of states, electoral competitiveness is intense, as outcomes are not only uncertain but malleable.

The competitiveness of a small subset of states makes the presidential electoral constituency manageable in size. Rather than appealing to a constituency of 300 million Americans, presidents are able to focus their efforts and resources in swing states. It is this reduced constituency that empowers and facilitates presidential porkbarrel politics. Additionally, an evaluation of state electoral competitiveness is available immediately after a presidential election, and if needed, it can be updated as often as is necessary given advances in political polling. Preferences over how to expend resources or design policy to reward constituencies is easily conveyed to agents and makes inducing responsiveness within the bureaucracy easier through clearly and universally understood information. In this way, the competitiveness of swing states provides straightforward instructions to presidents and their surrogates on how to maximize the impact of policy and distributive decisions for electoral gain.

The Electoral College also provides insight into the nature of porkbarrel spending in presidential politics and engages a central debate in the study of distributive politics. Scholars of the topic often clash over the proper constituency that elected officials should target with government revenue. The conflict, often labeled the swing vs. core debate, centers on the effectiveness of targeting funds to marginal voters in an effort to change minds or base voters in an effort to stimulate turnout. In the legislative arena this debate continues to generate substantial theoretical and empirical scholarship. However, in the context of presidential politics, the design of the Electoral College provides an easy solution to an often complex theoretical issue. Clearly, funneling government revenue (or campaign time, energy, and resources) to core states will offer the president no marginal benefit. A Democratic president who purchases advertising time or targets federal grant

allocations to the Baltimore media market will win Maryland's 10 electoral votes.

However, a Democratic president is just as likely to win those 10 electoral votes without that resource expenditure. Essentially, targeting funds to core presidential constituencies has no payoff because regardless of whether a candidate wins a state by 1% or 70%, he receives the same electoral benefit: that state's electoral votes. Instead, a president must (and does) focus energy, resources, and porkbarrel spending to swing states with the hope that those expenditures will move electoral votes from his opponent's column to his own.

The result of this evaluation of presidential elections and the impact of the Electoral College system is support for the swing hypothesis at the interstate level. However, this perspective does not settle questions of effective presidential campaign resource targeting at the intrastate level. When a campaign targets funds to a swing state, where are those funds directed *within* that state? Some evidence suggests that those funds are (and should be) targeted to core constituencies. This project is silent on this point, as the unit of analysis (the state) cannot provide an effective empirical evaluation of such a question. Yet, from a theoretical perspective, the targeting of core voters within swing states has merit. In the aggregate, presidential elections strive not for turnout, but for the strategic combination of state-level successes to total 270 electoral votes. However, at the state-level, campaigns focus tremendous time turning out core constituencies in an effort to affect the final vote tally in that state. Democratic candidates rely on public employee unions, conservation groups, college organizations, and women's rights advocacy groups to turn out their voters to support the party's standard bearer. Republican candidates rely on church groups, family values organizations, chambers of commerce and groups focused on individual liberties and federalism to generate enthusiasm among their

members and sympathizers. Bringing higher numbers of partisans to the polls within swing states may be the key to winning not just the state but the day.

The Electoral College may institutionalize a unique and somewhat schizophrenic campaign focus for presidents. It may induce presidents to implement an interstate swing strategy and an intrastate core strategy in order to maximize effectiveness. This dissertation has provided substantial evidence that swing states benefit significantly when strategic presidents seek to advance their own electoral interests. However, more work should and must be done in order to evaluate more comprehensively presidential strategy. By examining in a systematic way presidential resource strategy, research can offer a complete view of presidential electoral behavior both across and within states.

Federal Spending Power in Other Areas

The executive branch allocates approximately \$100 billion dollars in discretionary federal grants annually, offering presidents substantial resources to target to key constituencies. The analysis of these grants provides an ideal setting for assessing questions of presidential power and electoral interests, political control, and the president's role in public policy. However, the focus on federal grants in this project demonstrates one part of a broad area of presidential power: spending authority. Discretionary spending authority offers presidents substantial influence in the policy process and extends far beyond grants. Contracts and procurement, licenses, cooperative agreements, and government insurance provide presidents a host of other opportunities to affect distributive outcomes. The focus on a singular area of presidential spending power allows for a detailed, systematic and nuanced analysis of the people and processes that

define and determine policy outcomes. This project has offered such analysis for grants and provides insights that likely extend to the other areas of discretionary authority.

Other research can extend this analysis by applying the same or similar questions to other areas of spending. Such analysis will provide important information regarding presidential power. Similar findings that suggest that presidential electoral interests influence the distribution of funding sources such as cooperative agreements or contracts will illustrate the broad scope of presidential porkbarrel politics. If such behavior extends across discretionary spending areas it would demonstrate that the federal funds available to presidential campaigns are greater than what this project shows. Alternatively, if the electorally strategic allocation of federal funds is restricted to grant distribution, it will facilitate another important avenue of research into presidential policy power and administrative control. Such a finding would suggest that the ability to exploit discretionary authority for electoral gain is not uniform. Instead, some intervening factor(s) condition presidential power or incentives. Understanding how differences in personnel and processes across these spending areas affect outcomes will shed greater light on which bureaucratic structures and policy making procedures condition presidential spending power. This project provides evidence of such conditionality within one area of spending, but the analysis can be improved through an extension into other areas.

What Can Be Done: The Policy Implications of Presidential Pork

The Positives and Negatives of Presidential Pork

One question that naturally arises from the study of political influence over public policy involves the normative implications of such behaviors. Presidents systematically manipulate the distribution of federal funds in order to advance their electoral interests. In so doing, they target large sums of federal grant dollars to swing states at the expense of other states—a behavior robust across political parties and over time. The result is a geographic bias in the allocation of government revenue which advantages certain Americans simply by virtue of the state in which they reside or the proximity to a presidential election. Is such political manipulation of public policy detrimental to the administration of government and citizens' equitable access to relief?

To evaluate the normative effects of this funding schema, it is critical to put distributive influence into context. This project illustrates clearly the ways in which presidents divert funds to swing states at key times. However, presidents do not pull money from needy constituencies, citizens, and groups and redirect them toward groups with abundant resources. Such a scenario would not only be a failure of policy, but a failure of the moral intent of federal assistance. In reality, the president's strategic efforts to influence fund allocations are aided by copious need and limited resources. Almost universally, citizen and group demand far outpaces the supply of funds in grant programs. As a result, even the most scientific, need-based, automatic, apolitical allocation of federal funds will result in some needy applicants being denied assistance. For example, for a Department of Energy grant program intended to assist low income families in making energy efficient improvements to their homes, widespread need exists. Families in Wisconsin may be just as needy as families in North Dakota for improvements that

allow homes to withstand the Upper-Midwest winters. Yet, not all need across or within these states will be met. There may only be enough funding to help 25% of those who can use such assistance. Appropriations determine the level of unmet need, not presidential or executive branch behavior. Instead, presidential politics determines the allocation of that unmet need.

The effects of political (or electoral) influence exist at the margins. Some amount of funds is allocated without absolute regard for need. In the Energy Department example, some families in Wisconsin with slightly less need may receive funds instead of certain North Dakotans with slightly more need. In this way, some of the unmet need is shifted from Wisconsin to North Dakota. However, what the system does not involve is a perverse means of distribution where wealthy Wisconsinites see subsidies while impoverished North Dakotans suffer. The marginal impact of presidential electoral interests ensures that outcomes generally reflect need while still preventing serious policy failure.

In an ideal setting, federal funds would be allocated strictly based on need and the likelihood of achieving program goals. If a federal program has 1,000 grants to give out, the 1,000 neediest individuals would receive funds, regardless of their residency in a swing state, representation in Congress, or gubernatorial partisanship. However, policy in the United States is developed, designed, approved, and implemented in a political system. It should come as no surprise that political values and interests affect outcomes. In fact, one means of policy accountability is through politicization. By empowering elected officials to participate in all stages of the policy process, it allows voters to blame or reward individuals for failure or success. The political nature of the system

institutionalizes a form of democratic values and accountability that could be lost in one devoid of politics and the influence of political actors. In this way, political influence, as described throughout this project, is a consequence of the design of the American system. Yet, that *consequence of design* should not be conflated with a mistake or an error.

Taken to its logical extreme, presidential electoral interest in the distribution of federal funds could result in profound policy failure. If all \$100 billion dollars in annual discretionary federal grants were directed to Ohio, Florida, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and a few other highly competitive states, many citizens would suffer as need went grossly unmet. However, under this scenario institutional mechanisms in the democratic process could respond to such behaviors. Congress could redesign federal spending programs to restrict presidential power; oversight investigations could be launched into every federal agency participating in such distribution, and even voters in states unlikely to be competitive could respond in presidential elections.¹³¹ What would result is a democratic response that penalizes such behaviors. Instead, presidents are generally protected from such forces through a more measured and marginal incorporation of electoral strategy in policy implementation.

That voters and other democratic institutions allow presidents to behave in this way suggests one of two processes is at play. First, presidents may behave in electorally strategic ways outside of the observations of voters and democratically elected officials. This scenario speaks to the measured nature of the presidential effort. If such behaviors led to profound misallocations of funds—particularly in system with such heavy

¹³¹ While this project has capitalized on the premise that non-swing states' electoral outcomes are foregone conclusions in the presidential arena, such a claim may not be the case in the face of a profound abuse of office for electoral gain—particularly among states who are victimized by it. However, beyond the presidential general election, voters could rise up during the primary process to penalize incumbent presidents and party candidates for such behaviors.

oversight and reporting requirements and one in which data on federal fund distribution are public—these individuals and institutions would take note. The ability of presidents to behave in such ways without detection speaks not to the imperceptible nature of such behaviors, but rather the generally innocuous nature of this influence.

Second, the undetectable influence hypothesis could explain the president's ability to affect federal fund allocations; however, it is unlikely. Media and other political elites are well aware that executive branch spending powers are used for political and electoral gain—even if the details of such behaviors are assumed rather than concretely known. Voters also expect politicians to use their power and authority for such gain. As a result, another idea may explain why presidents are effective at engaging in porkbarrel politics without a democratic response. Citizens and other elected officials may be comfortable with this presidential behavior and by failing to respond, tacitly approve of it. Under this explanation, the threat or risk of democratic response exists, as relevant actors are aware that presidents use federal funds as electoral tools. However, what keeps at bay a public demonstration against such actions is a tempered use of the presidential porkbarrel. So long as presidents affect grant allocations at the margins and need is generally being met (given resource constraints), this type of presidential behavior will be (and is) allowed to continue.

Addressing Presidential Influence

If this presidential behavior is considered a normative ill in the system, how could policy changes reform the process? To affect presidential behavior—specifically the influence over federal fund distribution for electoral gain—either presidential powers or

incentives must be manipulated. Policies and/or institutional reforms can be enacted that induce different behaviors and ultimately influence the nature of distributive outcomes. However, in evaluating any of these systemic changes, it is vital to assess the likelihood of such change as well as their consequences.

i. *Limiting Discretion*

The president's ability to influence the distribution of federal funds depends centrally on discretionary spending authority. This power, delegated from Congress, allows the executive branch to make allocation decisions over large sums of federal dollars. One means of limiting presidential influence in this area is through the restriction of discretion. Restricting distributive discretion withdraws from the executive branch the authority to design programs, criteria, and evaluation procedures as well as the power to make allocation decisions. By reducing discretion, Congress retains power over these facets of the funding process.

The Congressional restriction of distributive discretion is an unlikely scenario, however, for two reasons. First, presidents are not passive recipients of policy discretion. As a key player in the legislative process, presidents use discretion as a bargaining chip with which they negotiate in exchange for his signature. Because of the executive's role in the creation and approval of legislation, Congress cannot simply reduce discretion unilaterally. In the context of spending power and its associated electoral benefits, presidents should be particularly territorial over such discretionary authority and resist any Congressional effort to retain that power.

Additionally, Congress may not want to retain the spending authority it typically delegates to the executive. Discretion is critical for Congress, serving as a time saving device and institutional response to the legislative branch's limited capacity. Powers are

delegated to the executive because Congress lacks the time, staff, and expertise to codify funding procedures for all types of federal spending. Even Congressional time saving devices for federal spending, such as the creation of formula and block grant programs, require extensive, internal negotiation—a task that would become unwieldy in the aggregate. As a result, while the delegation of spending authority empowers presidents to use funds in electorally strategic ways, it also serves to benefit Congress.

Even if the president were to accept the restriction of discretion and Congress could effectively handle the dramatic increases in policy making and legislative resource burdens, such a change would be ineffective at removing politics from policy. Rather than depoliticizing federal fund distribution, the restriction of discretion would simply redirect that political influence. The president would no longer be able to target funds to swing states. However, the result would be Congress directing federal dollars to key legislative constituencies. The literature on distributive politics describes the manner in which legislative interests influence allocations and which characteristics will induce greater funding (i.e., seniority, partisanship, committee assignment, electoral vulnerability). In fact, research by Frances Lee and Bruce Oppenheimer demonstrates that when designing legislative formulas, states with the smallest populations receive the greatest benefit, as a low cost way of gaining Senators' support. Under such a scenario, smaller populations receive disproportionate benefits because of (Congressional) political influence. In the context of presidential interests, larger portions of the American public live in targeted areas (swing states) and can benefit from such influence.¹³² As a result, restricting discretion, while institutionally unlikely, will also do little to strip politics from

¹³² For example, after the 2000 election, 125 million Americans lived in states that were decided by 10 percentage points or fewer.

federal fund allocations. It simply empowers a different branch, composed of a higher number of elected officials, to make distributive decisions.

ii. *Insulating away Influence*

Another possible proposal to limit presidential electoral influence over the distribution of funds involves insulating bureaucratic institutions. The empirical evidence presented in this dissertation illustrates that insulated administrative design can effectively limit presidential power. Specifically, independent agencies with lower levels of politicization and independent commissions render presidents unable to extract distributive benefits in an effort to advance their electoral interests. New agencies can be designed with commission structures including fixed and staggered terms for commissioners and party balancing requirements (among other traits). Alternatively, new independent agencies can be created with a restricted number of political appointees relative to staff size. Additionally, existing cabinet agencies can be redesigned in order to reflect those same characteristics. Such institutional reforms would give agencies the structural characteristics that this dissertation confirms will limit the influence of the president.

The legislative process ensures that insulating institutional reforms are significantly unlikely to occur. Presidents would resist such legislative efforts. Because the creation of new agencies and the re-design or reorganization of existing agencies require a presidential signature to take effect, the White House would be unlikely to support a dramatic curtailing of presidential power. Moreover, because such efforts would be aimed at limiting presidential spending authority and influence over distributive outcomes, presidents would be particularly resistant to restricting a power that supports a critical behavioral incentive: the electoral interest. As evidence of such resistance, recent

presidential behavior has entailed efforts aimed in the opposite direction: *de-insulation*. As mentioned previously, President George W. Bush sought greater administrative power during the creation of the Department of Homeland Security in 2003. In fact, part of this government reorganization involved transferring the Federal Emergency Management Agency (an independent agency) to the cabinet. Additionally, President Bush sought to *increase* the number of political appointees in the new Department, rather than maintain or decrease that figure. In 2012, President Obama's request for greater reorganization authority under the *Consolidation Authority Act* sought to transfer independent institutions including the Small Business Administration, the Export-Import Bank, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, and US Trade and Development Agency into a new cabinet department. This effort seeks to remove the insulating structures of institutions and transfer them to the part of the executive branch in which presidents wield the most pervasive political and electoral influence. These recent presidential moves demonstrate how unlikely institutional reforms that *increase* insulation are to receive the president's signature.

Although these reforms are incredibly unlikely to occur, they could be effective if they were implemented. The empirical evidence presented in this project suggests that independent commissions and less politicized independent agencies effectively buffer presidential influence. That is, in these institutions, presidents are generally unable to manipulate outcomes in order to advance their electoral interest. There is no systematic relationship between state electoral competitiveness and the receipt of federal grants. By expanding such institutional designs to a broader set of federal agencies, strategic presidential spending power would likely be limited.

This project also shows that in more insulated federal agencies, Congressional influence is also restricted. The institutional, political, and electoral interests of Congress tend not to affect distributive outcomes in independent commissions and less politicized independent agencies. In fact, Congressional interests are more likely to be satisfied through the distribution of funds from cabinet agencies. Insulation thus creates a paradoxical institutional incentive for Congress. Congressional interests are advanced by empowering presidential control over federal fund distribution. Limiting insulation not only pays dividends for the election driven president, but substantially benefits legislators seeking greater federal funds. This incentive structure also decreases the likelihood that such reforms can be enacted. Surely presidents would resist efforts to insulate federal agencies, but the evidence presented in this dissertation suggests that Congress should also resist insulation.

Finally, insulating federal agencies from presidential influence would not necessarily mean that politics is wholly purged from policy making. This project tests the influence of presidential electoral interests (as well as a host of Congressional interests) in evaluating the role of politics in agency process. However, the research does not test the role of other political influences within independent agencies and commissions. Such influences such as interest group capture may play powerful roles within these independent institutions, and the expansion of such designs would simply expand the role of different forces across broader areas of policy.

iii. *Reforming the Electoral System*

Another means of limiting presidents from targeting federal funds to swing states would require changing presidential incentives. This project shows that the institutional

design of the Electoral College induces presidents to target attention and resources to swing states. To stop or modify this behavior, one option is a reformation of the process by which presidents are selected. Various proposals exist to eliminate the Electoral College and replace it with a different system. Each of these will create different and varied incentives that will drive presidents in the quest for electoral success. Two of the most common proposals involve dramatic shifts in the way votes are counted. Under one, the Electoral College system is largely kept in place, but states apportion their votes in different proportional ways.¹³³ Under another proposal, the presidential electoral system would be transformed to a national plebiscite by which the winner of the national popular vote is elected president.

The likelihood of these proposals coming to fruition is also low. The first would require either a constitutional amendment or broad legislative efforts at the state level. Of course, a constitutional amendment is an onerous process that is rarely used and is particularly burdensome for the purpose of reforming the political process. Additionally, states are unlikely to transform the manner in which their electoral votes are allocated, particularly if it negatively affects the party in power. For example, in the state of Massachusetts, Democrats frequently control a supermajority of both houses of the state legislature. In a related way, Massachusetts is a core Democratic state in presidential elections. The Democratic controlled state legislature is unlikely to reform their electoral vote allocation system in a way that will deliver some of those votes to a Republican presidential candidate. This state legislative unwillingness to reform the system similarly reduces the likelihood of such changes occurring through state legislation or a

¹³³ One proportional proposal requires all electoral votes to be allocated proportionally according to how well candidates perform in each state. Another requires two electoral votes to be allocated to the candidate who wins the state, while all other votes are allocated proportionally.

constitutional amendment. The second type of reform—a national plebiscite—requires a constitutional amendment and faces the same institutional stumbling blocks for passage. Not only will several states be unwilling to support a constitutional amendment because it would empower the other party, Congress would be hesitant to report out such an amendment for the same reasons. Similarly, this project illustrates that swing states benefit from their electoral competitiveness in the distribution of funds. Rational legislative actors in these states would resist such reforms because it can mean a reduction in the level of grant funding. Beyond grant funding, such reforms would also entail less campaigning from presidential candidates and fewer campaign dollars flowing into those states. Perennial swing states should be particularly resistant to any proposal—legislative or constitutional—that seeks to change or eliminate the Electoral College.

If an effort to reform the Electoral College could and did succeed, how would it change presidential preferences and what would be the effect on distributive policy outcomes? The precise effects of electoral reform would, of course, depend on the details of the new system. It is likely that swing states would become less of a target for presidential candidates. For example, if the system were transformed into a national plebiscite, states would no longer be the unit of focus for campaigns. Instead, campaigns would implement broad efforts at voter turnout—particularly among core voters. The focus of presidential campaigns would be to target areas which are ideologically aligned with the candidate's party and his or her values. Presidential candidates may target areas that display more partisan homogeneity or those with higher population densities so messaging efforts can reach more people more efficiently. There are likely strategies to target key geographic constituencies that will increase the likelihood of electoral success

based on the institutional structure of presidential elections—however reformed. The result is not the removal of electoral politics from distributive policy making. Instead, such reforms are likely to redirect that political influence to a new set of recipients. Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and New Mexico will no longer be the targets of presidential campaigns. Instead, Republicans may target funds to Texas, Tennessee, and Louisiana, while Democrats target New York, New Jersey and California. Simply reforming the electoral system cannot ensure the removal of politics. Because electoral institutions influence the incentives of campaigns and candidates, presidential influence over the distribution of federal funds is likely an attribute of the American system that will remain robust through time and even in the face of institutional reforms intended to stop it. Presidents will remain powerful, and porkbarrel politics will continue to prevail.

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER II

Appendix 2.A1 Description of Variables

Variable	Coding	Source
<i>Dependent Variable</i>		
Number of Grants	logged number of grants per 100,000 people per state-year	FAADS, Census Bureau
Grant Dollars	logged real grant dollars per 100,000 people per state-year	FAADS, Census Bureau
<i>Electoral Competitiveness</i>		
Swing State	dichotomous, based on incumbent two party presidential vote from previous election if share is between 45-55%	CQ Politics in America
Core State	dichotomous, based on incumbent two party presidential vote from previous election if share is greater than 55%	CQ Politics in America
Lost Cause State	dichotomous, based on incumbent two party presidential vote from previous election if share is less than 45%	CQ Politics in America
<i>Timing</i>		
First Term	dichotomous, 1 = First Presidential Term	
Election Proximity	dichotomous, 1 = Presidential Election Yr. and Prior Yr.	
<i>State-Level Congressional Controls</i>		
Senate Appropriations Comm.	dichotomous, 1 = State is represented on the Senate Appropriations Committee	CQ Politics in America
Appropriations Comm.	dichotomous, 1 = State has a Senator on the Appropriations Committee who is up for reelection in a given year	CQ Politics in America
Election Yr.	dichotomous, 1 = State has a Senator seeking reelection in a given year	CQ Politics in America
Incumbent Senator Election Year	dichotomous, 1 = State has a competitive Senate election in a given year as defined by CQ Weekly ranking "leans" or "no clear favorite"	CQ Weekly
Competitive Senate Election	dichotomous, 1 = State is represented by a Senator who is a floor leader, whip, or caucus chair	CQ Politics in America
Senate Leadership Majority Party Membership	Number of Senators from a state from the majority party in the Senate (0,1,2)	CQ Politics in America
House Delegation with President	Dichotomous, 1=state has a majority of the US House delegation from the President's party	CQ Politics in America
Cardinals	Dichotomous, 1=state has a representative who serves as chair of a House Appropriations subcommittee	CQ Politics in America
<i>Intergovernmental Controls</i>		
Governor's Election Year	dichotomous, 1 = Governor is up for reelection in a given year	CQ Politics in America
Governor-President Party Align	dichotomous, 1 = Governor and President come from the same party	CQ Politics in America
Gov. Election Yr. X Alignment	dichotomous, interaction of Governor's Election Year and Governor-President Party Align	
<i>State Controls</i>		
Real Gross State Product	logged real gross state product	Department of Commerce
Roads	logged miles of roads	US DOT
Research Institutions	number of hospitals and universities	Depts of Educ. and HHS
Percent Elderly	percentage of population aged 65 and over	Census Bureau
Disaster	1 = New York in 2001, 2002, 2003; Louisiana and Mississippi in 2005, 2006, 2007	

Appendix 2.A2. Model of Federal Discretionary Grants Isolated for Election Proximity

	Number of Grants		Grant Dollars	
	Proximate	Distant	Proximate	Distant
<i>State Competitiveness</i>				
Swing State (0,1)	0.091** (0.033)	0.057* (0.031)	0.045 (0.039)	0.050 (0.034)
<i>Timing</i>				
First Term (0,1)	0.090** (0.016)	-0.115** (0.016)	0.178** (0.024)	-0.144** (0.029)
<i>State-Level Congressional Controls</i>				
Senate Appropriations Committee (0,1)	0.047 (0.030)	0.053 (0.054)	0.069 (0.044)	0.113* (0.057)
Appropriations Committee Election Yr. (0,1)	-0.055 (0.028)	0.031 (0.026)	-0.019 (0.051)	0.010 (0.054)
Incumbent Senator Election Year (0,1)	0.025 (0.019)	-0.029 (0.023)	-0.120** (0.024)	0.034 (0.043)
Competitive Senate Election (0,1)	-0.002 (0.027)	-0.011 (0.019)	0.037 (0.027)	-0.017 (0.023)
Senate Leadership (0,1)	-0.036 (0.031)	-0.046 (0.047)	-0.059 (0.048)	0.044 (0.078)
Majority Party Membership (0,1)	0.004 (0.013)	-0.015 (0.010)	0.016 (0.021)	-0.020 (0.014)
House Delegation with President (0,1)	-0.019 (0.024)	-0.005 (0.026)	0.011 (0.030)	0.035 (0.030)
Cardinals (0,1)	-0.023 (0.034)	0.048 (0.049)	-0.063 (0.039)	0.056 (0.071)
<i>Intergovernmental Controls</i>				
Governor's Election Year (0,1)	0.061* (0.028)	-0.045* (0.021)	-0.002 (0.047)	0.057 (0.035)
Governor-President Party Align (0,1)	-0.021 (0.027)	-0.032 (0.019)	-0.015 (0.046)	-0.052 (0.036)
Gov. Election Yr. X Alignment (0,1)	-0.064** (0.042)	-0.005 (0.024)	-0.093 (0.051)	0.078* (0.043)
<i>Controls and Constant</i>				
Real Gross State Product	-0.715** (0.124)	-1.127** (0.119)	0.038 (0.144)	-0.178 (0.155)
Roads (miles)	-0.262 (0.286)	-0.216 (0.207)	-0.464 (0.269)	0.516* (0.287)
Research Institutions	-0.001 (0.002)	0.000 (0.001)	0.001 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)
Percent Elderly	-0.122** (0.045)	-0.128** (0.036)	-0.153** (0.053)	-0.041 (0.054)
Disaster	-0.048 (0.051)	0.051 (0.033)	0.835** (0.106)	1.088** (0.379)
Constant	6.046 (3.517)	10.425** (2.931)	23.448** (3.512)	13.852** (4.055)
R ²	0.43	0.48	0.17	0.003
Obs.	350	300	350	300

Note: The dependent variable in models 1 and 2 is the logged number of grants per 100,000 people per state year. The dependent variable in models 3 and 4 is the logged real grant dollars per 100,000 people per state year. **p<.01 (one-tailed test) *p<.05 (one-tailed test). All models are estimated using ordinary least squares with fixed effects for state and year. Robust standard errors are reported. In all models, the reference case for state competitiveness is Non-Swing State.

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER III

Appendix 3.A1 Description of Variables

Variable	Coding	Source
<i>Dependent Variables</i>		
Number of Grants	number of grants per agency-state-year	FAADS, Census Bureau
Grant Dollars	logged grant dollars per 100,000 people per agency-state-year	FAADS, Census Bureau
<i>Electoral Competitiveness</i>		
Swing State	dichotomous, based on incumbent share of two party presidential vote in previous election if share is between 45-55%	CQ Politics in America
<i>Timing</i>		
First Term	dichotomous, 1 = first presidential term	
Election Proximity	dichotomous, 1 = presidential election year and prior year	
<i>Agency Characteristics</i>		
Ideological Congruence	dichotomous, 1 = liberal (conservative) agency under a Democratic (Republican) president	Clinton-Lewis Ideal Points (2008)
Politicization	ratio of political appointees (Senate-confirmed, Schedule C, or non-career SES) to managers (career-SES)	Office of Personnel Management
Department Appointed Leadership	count of number of appointees in offices of department leadership (i.e., office secretary, office of policy)	Administrative Agency Insulation Data Set (Lewis 2003)
Cabinet Secretary	dichotomous, 1 = cabinet secretary's office	
Cabinet Bureau	dichotomous, 1 = cabinet-level bureau	
Independent Agency	dichotomous, 1 = independent agency	
Independent Commission	dichotomous, 1 = independent commission	
<i>Congressional Controls</i>		
Senate Approps Comm. Member	dichotomous, 1 = state is represented on Senate Approps. Comm.	CQ Politics in America
Senate Majority Party Member	dichotomous, 1 = state is represented by a majority party Senator	CQ Politics in America
Incumbent Senator Election Year	dichotomous, 1 = a Senator is facing reelection	CQ Politics in America
Senate Leadership	dichotomous, 1 = floor leader, whip or caucus chair	CQ Politics in America
House Appropriations Oversight	dichotomous, 1 = state is represented on a House Approps subcommittee with oversight over a given agency	
Senate Appropriations Oversight	dichotomous, 1 = state is represented on a Senate Approps subcommittee with oversight over a given agency	
Divided Government	dichotomous, 1 = divided government	CQ Politics in America
<i>Intergovernmental Controls</i>		
Governor's Election Year	dichotomous, 1 = governor is up for reelection in a given year	CQ Politics in America
Governor-President Party Alignment	dichotomous, 1 = governor and president come from the same party	CQ Politics in America
Governor Elect. Year X Alignment	dichotomous, interaction of previous two variables	
<i>State Controls</i>		
Gross State Product	logged real gross state product	Dept of Commerce
Roads	logged miles of roads per state	US DOT
Research Institutions	logged number of hospitals and universities	Depts. Educ. and HHS
Percent Elderly	percentage of population aged 65+	Census Bureau
Disaster	1 = NY in 2001-3; LA and MS 2005-7	
Population	logged state population	Census Bureau

Appendix 3.A2 The Effect of Insulated Independence on Discretionary Grant Allocations, Estimated with Tobit, 1996-2008

	Grant Dollars	Number of Grants	Grant Dollars	Number of Grants
<i>State Competitiveness</i>				
Swing	-0.309 (0.197)	-0.116 (0.078)	-0.309 (0.197)	-0.116 (0.078)
<i>Agency Characteristics</i>				
Cabinet Secretary Office	-0.951** (0.206)	-0.876** (0.082)		
Cabinet Secretary * Swing	0.387 (0.314)	0.121 (0.125)		
Cabinet Bureau	-0.175 (0.135)	-0.621** (0.053)		
Bureau * Swing	0.375* (0.200)	0.140* (0.079)		
Cabinet Agency			-0.230* (0.134)	-0.639** (0.053)
Cabinet Agency * Swing			0.376* (0.199)	0.139* (0.079)
Independent Agency	-1.786** (0.182)	-1.263** (0.072)	-1.807** (0.182)	-1.270** (0.072)
Independent Agency * Swing	0.546* (0.268)	0.235* (0.106)	0.545* (0.268)	0.235* (0.106)
Liberal Agency	2.896** (0.058)	1.355** (0.023)	2.883** (0.058)	1.350** (0.023)
Staff (logged)	0.417** (0.014)	0.243** (0.006)	0.422** (0.014)	0.245** (0.006)
<i>Congressional Controls</i>				
Senate Appropriations Committee	0.022 (0.108)	0.039 (0.044)	0.023 (0.108)	0.040 (0.044)
Senate Majority Party	0.013 (0.034)	0.005 (0.014)	0.013 (0.034)	0.005 (0.014)
Incumbent Senator Election Year	-0.006 (0.073)	0.004 (0.029)	-0.006 (0.073)	0.004 (0.029)
Senate Leader	0.035 (0.126)	0.014 (0.051)	0.035 (0.126)	0.014 (0.051)
Senator with Oversight	-0.119* (0.070)	-0.028 (0.028)	-0.118* (0.070)	-0.029 (0.028)
House Member with Oversight	0.041 (0.059)	-0.026 (0.024)	0.040 (0.059)	-0.026 (0.024)
<i>Intergovernmental Controls</i>				
Governor Election Year	-0.026 (0.095)	-0.010 (0.038)	-0.026 (0.095)	-0.010 (0.038)
Gov. -President Party Align	-0.072 (0.072)	-0.014 (0.029)	-0.072 (0.072)	-0.014 (0.029)
Governor Elect * Align	0.029 (0.125)	0.005 (0.050)	0.029 (0.125)	0.005 (0.050)
<i>Controls and Constant</i>				
Real Gross State Product (logged)	-0.370 (0.672)	-0.267 (0.332)	-0.366 (0.672)	-0.265 (0.332)
Miles of Roads (logged)	-0.375 (0.759)	-0.103 (0.304)	-0.371 (0.759)	-0.101 (0.304)
Research Institutions (logged)	-0.391 (0.736)	-0.168 (0.307)	-0.387 (0.736)	-0.166 (0.307)
Percent Elderly	0.079 (0.101)	-0.007 (0.040)	0.080 (0.101)	-0.007 (0.040)
Disaster	0.346 (0.245)	0.097 (0.098)	0.346 (0.245)	0.097 (0.098)
Population (logged)		0.492 (0.494)		0.490 (0.494)
Intercept	9.108 (13.738)	-2.956 (7.337)	8.986 (13.739)	-2.985 (7.337)
Obs.	59050	59050	59050	59050
Pseudo R ²	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.03

Note: All data are estimated using tobit with fixed effects for state and year. In the first two models, the Cabinet-level institutions are divided into secretary's office and bureau. In the second two models, all Cabinet-level institutions are grouped under the same variable "Cabinet Agency."

Appendix 3.A3 The Effects of Politicization and Ideological Congruence on Discretionary Grant Allocations for Cabinet Secretary Offices and Cabinet Bureaus, Estimated with Tobit, 1996-2008

	Cabinet Secretary Office		Cabinet Bureau	
	Grant Dollars	Number of Grants	Grant Dollars	Number of Grants
<i>State Competitiveness</i>				
Swing	0.919* (0.463)	0.276* (0.132)	0.165 (0.116)	0.053 (0.046)
<i>Agency Characteristics</i>				
Ideological Congruence	0.776** (0.292)	0.134 (0.085)	-0.457** (0.078)	-0.185** (0.031)
Congruence * Swing	-0.792* (0.382)	-0.237* (0.110)	-0.046 (0.116)	-0.020 (0.046)
Politicization (logged)	-1.328** (0.203)	-1.339** (0.057)	0.309** (0.074)	0.287** (0.029)
Politicization * Swing	-0.355* (0.192)	-0.112* (0.054)	-0.103 (0.107)	-0.017 (0.042)
Liberal Agency	12.288** (0.287)	5.078** (0.083)	2.194** (0.065)	1.054** (0.026)
Staff (logged)	0.613** (0.093)	-0.053* (0.026)	0.334** (0.016)	0.221** (0.006)
<i>Congressional Controls</i>				
Senate Appropriations Committee	-0.241 (0.392)	-0.035 (0.114)	-0.061 (0.120)	0.004 (0.049)
Senate Majority Party	-0.082 (0.114)	-0.024 (0.033)	0.024 (0.037)	0.007 (0.015)
Incumbent Senator Election Year	-0.267 (0.250)	-0.082 (0.071)	0.010 (0.081)	0.010 (0.032)
Senate Leader	-0.184 (0.439)	-0.010 (0.125)	0.024 (0.140)	0.005 (0.056)
Senator with Oversight	0.543* (0.274)	0.168* (0.079)	0.299** (0.079)	0.049 (0.031)
House Member with Oversight	0.656** (0.211)	0.207** (0.059)	0.145* (0.066)	0.024 (0.026)
<i>Intergovernmental Controls</i>				
Governor Election Year	-0.073 (0.325)	-0.002 (0.092)	-0.037 (0.106)	-0.011 (0.042)
Gov. -President Party Align	0.089 (0.258)	-0.029 (0.073)	-0.091 (0.080)	-0.021 (0.032)
Governor Elect * Align	0.127 (0.427)	0.013 (0.122)	0.029 (0.139)	0.003 (0.055)
<i>Controls and Constant</i>				
Real Gross State Product (logged)	-5.846** (2.450)	-2.925** (0.870)	0.015 (0.747)	-0.048 (0.366)
Miles of Roads (logged)	-7.735** (2.943)	-1.108 (0.857)	0.037 (0.843)	-0.015 (0.335)
Research Institutions (logged)	-7.833** (2.720)	-1.831* (0.815)	-0.081 (0.818)	-0.070 (0.339)
Percent Elderly	-0.150 (0.368)	-0.188* (0.107)	0.101 (0.112)	-0.001 (0.045)
Disaster	0.151 (0.796)	0.010 (0.224)	0.332 (0.273)	0.100 (0.108)
Population (logged)		2.654* (1.294)		0.302 (0.544)
Intercept	190.331** (51.372)	17.690 (19.107)	-1.106 (15.261)	-4.561 (8.091)
Obs.	2650	2650	47900	47900
Adj. R ²	0.19	0.37	0.01	0.03

Note: All data are estimated using Tobit with fixed effects for state and year. **p<.01 (one-tailed test) *p<.05 (one-tailed test).

Appendix 3.A4 The Effects of Politicization and Ideological Congruence on Discretionary Grant Allocations for Independent Agencies and Commissions, Estimated with Tobit 1996-2008

	Independent Agencies		Independent Commissions	
	Grant Dollars	Number of Grants	Grant Dollars	Number of Grants
<i>State Competitiveness</i>				
Swing	-0.363 (0.345)	-0.135 (0.141)	-0.449 (0.288)	-0.107 (0.136)
<i>Agency Characteristics</i>				
Ideological Congruence	0.094 (0.273)	-0.009 (0.112)	-0.911** (0.253)	-0.501** (0.127)
Congruence * Swing	-0.199 (0.390)	0.005 (0.159)	0.261 (0.299)	0.020 (0.143)
Politicization (logged)	-3.545** (0.677)	-2.470** (0.280)	1.759** (0.105)	0.321** (0.049)
Politicization * Swing	1.500** (0.634)	0.435* (0.260)	0.129 (0.128)	0.041 (0.060)
Liberal Agency	-4.172** (0.356)	-1.865** (0.147)	12.863** (0.259)	6.572** (0.128)
Staff (logged)	1.384** (0.074)	0.551** (0.030)	1.829** (0.050)	0.809** (0.024)
<i>Congressional Controls</i>				
Senate Appropriations Committee	0.585 (0.369)	0.244 (0.155)	-0.205 (0.258)	-0.077 (0.124)
Senate Majority Party	-0.037 (0.118)	0.006 (0.049)	-0.033 (0.081)	-0.014 (0.038)
Incumbent Senator Election Year	0.071 (0.248)	0.030 (0.101)	-0.097 (0.171)	-0.026 (0.080)
Senate Leader	0.204 (0.441)	0.102 (0.182)	0.046 (0.299)	0.027 (0.141)
Senator with Oversight	-0.752** (0.253)	-0.378** (0.104)	0.353* (0.180)	0.131 (0.085)
House Member with Oversight	-0.323 (0.220)	-0.310** (0.090)	-0.412** (0.145)	-0.130* (0.068)
<i>Intergovernmental Controls</i>				
Governor Election Year	0.035 (0.326)	-0.009 (0.134)	0.073 (0.222)	0.000 (0.104)
Gov. -President Party Align	-0.162 (0.251)	-0.031 (0.103)	0.027 (0.172)	0.020 (0.080)
Governor Elect * Align	0.118 (0.429)	0.056 (0.176)	-0.111 (0.293)	-0.031 (0.137)
<i>Controls and Constant</i>				
Real Gross State Product (logged)	-0.162 (2.299)	-0.246 (1.173)	-1.737 (1.591)	-1.197 (0.927)
Miles of Roads (logged)	-3.147 (2.581)	-0.696 (1.065)	1.626 (1.761)	0.390 (0.837)
Research Institutions (logged)	-0.901 (2.521)	-0.381 (1.080)	0.558 (1.736)	-0.055 (0.851)
Percent Elderly	0.064 (0.344)	0.039 (0.142)	0.035 (0.237)	-0.010 (0.112)
Disaster	1.036 (0.873)	0.127 (0.358)	-0.018 (0.591)	0.092 (0.275)
Population (logged)		1.178 (1.759)		1.192 (1.399)
Intercept	35.750 (46.833)	-7.734 (26.050)	-19.045 (32.275)	-16.612 (20.691)
Obs.	4350	4350	4150	4150
Pseudo R ²	0.05	0.08	0.16	0.21

Note: All data are estimated using Tobit with fixed effects for state and year. Agency clustered standard errors are reported. **p<.01 (one-tailed test) *p<.05 (one-tailed test).

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER IV

Table 4.A1 Careerists' Perceptions of Relative Influence of Institutions

<i>Respondent Type</i>	<i>Institutions</i>					
	<i>Committees</i>	<i>W.H.</i>	<i>Committees</i>	<i>OMB</i>	<i>Committees</i>	<i>Appointees</i>
Distributors	2.24*	2.16*	2.24*	1.86*	2.24*	1.70*
Non-Distributors	2.48*	2.25*	2.48*	2.06*	2.48*	1.81*
	<i>W.H.</i>	<i>OMB</i>	<i>Appointees</i>	<i>OMB</i>	<i>W.H.</i>	<i>Appointees</i>
Distributors	2.16*	1.86*	1.70*	1.86*	2.16*	1.70*
Non-Distributors	2.25*	2.06*	1.81*	2.06*	2.25*	1.81*

Note: The values represent the mean response among noted respondents to the question, "In general, how much influence do the following groups have over policy decisions in your agency?" Responses ranged from 1 = A great deal to 5 = None. *p<.05 (one-tailed test), signifying differences between institutions by cell. N(distributors) = 947. N(non-distributors) = 579.

Appendix 4.A2 Appointees' Contact with Political Institutions

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Distributors</i>	<i>Non-Distributors</i>
White House	3.29	3.39
Congressional Committees	2.76*	3.31*
Congressional Republicans	2.90*	3.41*
Congressional Democrats	3.00*	3.34*
Political Appointees	1.32	1.45

Note: The values represent the mean response among political appointees to the question, "How often do you have contact with (Institution)?" Responses ranged from 1= Daily to 5 = Never. *p<.05 (one-tailed test) signifying a difference between distributors and non-distributors. N(distributors) = 94. N(non-distributors) = 81.

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER V

This appendix serves to provide an overview and detail the methodological and implementation approaches to elite interviewing for this dissertation. It is divided into three sections: design, identification/sampling, and instrumentation. The identification and instrumentation sections will also provide the precise documents used in the conduct of each aspect of this method. As a note, while some information relevant to the techniques used in this project would be helpful to understand more clearly this approach, in some cases limited detail comes as a result of privacy restrictions implemented in response to the consummate expertise and unimpeachable knowledge of the Vanderbilt University Institutional Review Board.

Design

As detailed extensively in this chapter, I conducted interviews with federal agency employees (bureaucrats and appointees), state bureaucrats, and interest group lobbyists. Respondents were drawn from a series of issue areas; however, in several cases, interviewees across respondent types were connected by issue areas.

In total between August 2010 and June 2011, I conducted 22 interviews, including nine federal agency employees, six state bureaucrats and seven interest group officials. Most federal agency employees worked in the central offices of agencies. However, three respondents (2 appointees and one careerist) worked in sub-national offices of federal agencies. All interest group officials (lobbyists and grant managers) worked in

Washington, DC, offices of their institutions' national headquarters, with one exception. One interest group grant manager worked at a multi-state office of an interest group.

Interviews at the state level included respondents from swing, core Democratic, and core Republican states. For all respondents, two individuals worked for their institution for less than one year. Seven respondents had served in their institution for 1-3 years. Four respondents served their institution for 4-9 years. Ten respondents served their institution for 10+ years.

Interviews typically lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. The shortest interview was 30 minutes; the longest lasted just over two hours. Initially, I requested that respondents allow a tape recording of the interview. Very quickly, I found that most respondents were uncomfortable with the request, and they declined. Moreover, I found many respondents who declined the recording were initially more guarded in their responses. In these cases, as the interview proceeded the "recording-request effect" abated, and information became more accessible. After the fourth interview, I stopped requesting the opportunity to record and relied on handwritten notes. In all cases, I analyzed and clarified notes as soon as was possible after the interview.

Nearly all interviews were conducted in person. Two exceptions were phone interviews. One respondent requested a phone interview because of serious scheduling conflicts. Another requested a phone interview because of weather-related issues. All other interviews were face-to-face. Each was conducted either in the office of the respondent or a nearby conference room with one exception. Because of scheduling conflicts, one interview began in a Starbucks restaurant and continued onto a subway train at the request of the respondent. Although this setting was less than ideal, I was

given the choice between a sub-optimally set interview or no interview. I chose the former. Each interview was also conducted one-on-one, with one exception. Two federal agency employees requested to be interviewed together. Both respondents were careerists, but one respondent was senior to the second. My interview request was to meet with the senior staffer, and given the topic (federal grants), she asked that another individual whose job centered on grants be present.

All interviews were guided by a similar set of foundational questions and topics to be explored. The precise foundational instrumentation is provided in a later section. However, all interviews were open-ended and often explored other (related) topics based both on responses offered and the avenues that the respondent wished to explore. Respondents were guided back to relevant topics when the discussion became uselessly tangential, but generally, such tangents were uncommon. Instead, the direction respondents explored were sometimes unexpected revealing rich and important information.

Identification/Sampling

The identification of prospective respondents began first by using data on the universe of federal agencies and grant programs for this project. This list encompassed the institutions that allocated all federal discretionary grants between 1996 and 2008. During this period of time, not every agency allocated grants in every year. However, most agencies were consistent during this period. I did not disregard agencies that failed to allocate funds in *every* year, but all agencies identified for possible research sites were frequent or universal distributors.

I eventually narrowed a list to 12 agencies based on diversity in issue area and institutional location and construct. I included 10 cabinet institutions and two independent institutions; however, all federal agency respondents eventually hailed from cabinet institutions. Next, by utilizing each agency's website and often their organizational chart, I was able to identify which individuals most closely dealt with federal discretionary grants.¹³⁴ I contacted each prospective federal agency respondent through their government email address, using my own Vanderbilt University email address. The text of that email can be found in Figure 5.A1.

Upon gathering responses and scheduling interviews, I next identified relevant interest groups that worked with federal grant issues in the agencies in which respondents hailed. Often, the relevant, issue-based, national interest groups were easily identifiable. However, in some cases, I did supporting research that used Congressional reports, published reports from agencies and media accounts of related stories to identify the relevant interest group sources. Similar to the manner in which, federal bureaucrats were contacted, I used staff directories available online to identify key prospective respondents in those organizations. I subsequently contacted each via email using language contained in Figure 5.A2.

Next, I chose states that represented a diversity of backgrounds in terms of presidential electoral competitiveness. I utilized swing, Democratic core, and Republican core states.¹³⁵ Once again, I identified state agencies that often served as issue-based institutional complements to the federal agencies in which interviews were to be

¹³⁴ In some instances, such resources were insufficient and I relied on the *Federal Yellow Book*. When both methods failed, I chose to email a career staffer most closely identifiable with federal fund distributions and requested the contact information of the proper individual.

¹³⁵ Once again, per privacy restrictions required by the Vanderbilt Institutional Review Board, I am unable to identify which states were used. However, states were medium to small in size.

conducted. Using online staff directories, I was able to identify key prospective respondents at these state institutions who dealt most frequently with federal grant programs. I contacted these individuals and requested interviews via email, using language contained in Figure 5.A3.

To be sure, the sampling technique in this project is purposefully non-random. However, the sampling did meet the goals of this project. First, within a respondent type, respondents dealt with different issue areas. However, across respondent types, respondents were frequently linked by similar policy areas in issue-based groups. Second, interviewees from each respondent type were sampled. Third, respondents at the state level were drawn from states with varied presidential electoral competitiveness.

Instrumentation

As mentioned previously, interviews were open-ended in nature and while they explored similar themes, institutional processes, and political dynamics, each played out very differently. I sought to explore pre-determined areas of inquiry. However, the path (and in some cases the ability) to explore such topics was difficult dependent on the respondent's comfort and willingness to answer questions. Typically, respondents were quite open and forward in responses to my questions. In certain cases, it was clear when respondents were uncomfortable and guarded. When this occurred, the path forward included initial attempts at motivating answers and subsequently (when unsuccessful) veiling the question for use later in the interview.

Although interviews were open-ended, the Vanderbilt University Institutional Review Board required and subsequently approved a set of sample questions for each respondent type that had to be offered and made available to each respondent. These

served more as a topical guide than a strict questionnaire format, as respondents often explored and offered insight into different, related, and important areas of inquiry. The sample questions are found in Figure 5.A4.

In designing the sample interview instrument for this project, I found it was important to be sensitive to the institutional position of the respondent vis-à-vis the information being requested. For example, explicit questions about the influence of the White House, OMB, or political appointees may cause resistance among federal agency officials who may be unwilling to discuss such a topic. Similarly, for state bureaucrats and interest group officials, questions that probe how personal connections within the agency benefit their grant proposals may cause interview tension. As such, these topics were either delicately approached or were accessed using veiled questions. In this way, a federal bureaucrat may not be willing to explain that OMB can change grant allocations. However, that respondent may be more willing to respond to a series of questions asking about OMB contact, oversight, and role in decision making. Such techniques were used frequently during the interviews—a technique that was refined over time and with experience within and across interviews. They produced useful information from nearly every respondent, even though the means of accessing that information varied by respondent type and even by respondent.

Finally, it is important to note, respondents were informed in a consent form (Figure 5.A5.) that they had the right to decline answering any questions. Such a decline to answer occurred twice over the course of all interviews and in each case reflected what was poor wording of a question in the context of that interview. In an effort to overcome

such issues, I explained to all respondents that because of a sensitivity to privacy,¹³⁶ no information would be revealed in reporting results that could identify them. To clarify for respondents, I noted that if I were a journalist, the information would be considered for background or deep background and that I would simply identify their respondent type. Often this explanation satisfied respondents. However, on a few occasions, respondents requested portions of the interview be off the record.

In the end, flexibility in instrumentation and a responsiveness to interviewees' preferences or needs was the most straightforward means of accessing information. By relying on a foundation of topics and questions to motivate each interview as well as a keen awareness of topical boundaries and phrasing techniques, this portion of the project proved quite successful.

¹³⁶ In reality, this came at the request of the Vanderbilt University Institutional Review Board.

Figure 5.A1. Federal Agency Contact Letter.

DATE

Dear NAME:

I am writing today to request an interview with you regarding my doctoral dissertation. I am writing about executive branch influence over the federal grants process and public policy outcomes. I am interested in how federal agencies allocate grant money. I want to ask you about this process in the context of your current position as a grant manager in the AGENCY NAME. Because of your role at AGENCY NAME, you will provide keen insight into the federal grants process. Political scientists know very little about the grant allocation mechanisms inside federal agencies and my research seeks to advance our understanding of this important operation of the United States government.

I am currently completing my Ph.D. at Vanderbilt University in the Department of Political Science. This project is part of the final requirements of my degree. I have enclosed a short copy of my vita which tells you a little about myself.

I am hoping to arrange a time to interview you in person. I will be in Washington, DC, from July 12th to July 28th and can meet with you at your place of employment at your convenience. I can also send you the questions in advance if you would prefer. . The interview will last approximately 30 minutes. During the interview you are, of course, free to decline to answer any questions or request that certain responses be off the record. In short, I am happy to make whatever arrangements that are necessary in order to get you to agree to the interview.

If you are willing to do the interview, or would like additional information before making a decision please feel free to email me directly (john.hudak@vanderbilt.edu) or call 203-231-0287 and we can discuss arranging an interview.

Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

John Hudak

John Hudak
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Political Science
Vanderbilt University
john.hudak@vanderbilt.edu
cell: 203.231.0287
office: 615.322.6222

Figure 5.A2. Interest Group Contact Letter

DATE

Dear NAME:

I am writing today to request an interview with you regarding my doctoral dissertation. I am writing about executive branch influence over the federal grants process and public policy outcomes. I am interested in how federal agencies allocate grant money. I want to ask you about this process in the context of your current position with the firm FIRM NAME. Because of your role at FIRM NAME, you will see and participate in the federal grants process in a unique and important way. Political scientists know very little about the forces and influences driving grant allocations inside federal agencies and my research seeks to advance our understanding of this important operation of the United States government.

I am currently completing my Ph.D. at Vanderbilt University in the Department of Political Science. This project is part of the final requirements of my degree. I have enclosed a short copy of my vita which tells you a little about myself.

I am hoping to arrange a time to interview you in person. I will be in Washington, DC, from July 12th to July 28th and can meet with you at your place of employment at your convenience. I can also send you the questions in advance if you would prefer. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes. During the interview you are, of course, free to decline to answer any questions or request that certain responses be off the record. In short, I am happy to make whatever arrangements that are necessary in order to get you to agree to the interview.

If you are willing to do the interview, or would like additional information before making a decision please feel free to email me directly (john.hudak@vanderbilt.edu) or call 203-231-0287 and we can discuss arranging an interview.

Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

John Hudak

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Department of Political Science
Vanderbilt University
john.hudak@vanderbilt.edu
cell: 203.231.0287
office: 615.322.6222

Figure 5.A3. State Agency Contact Letter

DATE

Dear NAME:

I am writing today to request an interview with you regarding my doctoral dissertation. I am writing about executive branch influence over the federal grants process and public policy outcomes. I am interested in how federal agencies allocate grant money to the states. I want to ask you about this process in the context of your current position as a grant manager in the STATE AGENCY NAME. Because of your role at STATE AGENCY NAME, you will provide keen insight into the federal grants process as a recipient agency. Political scientists know very little about the grant allocation mechanisms inside federal agencies and my research seeks to advance our understanding of this important operation of the United States government.

I am currently completing my Ph.D. at Vanderbilt University in the Department of Political Science. This project is part of the final requirements of my degree. I have enclosed a short copy of my vita which tells you a little about myself.

I am hoping to arrange a time to interview you in person. I will be in (LOCATION), from DATE to DATE and can meet with you at your place of employment at your convenience. I can also send you the questions in advance if you would prefer. The interview will last about 30 minutes. During the interview you are, of course, free to decline to answer any questions or request that certain responses be off the record. In short, I am happy to make whatever arrangements that are necessary in order to get you to agree to the interview.

If you are willing to do the interview or would like additional information before making a decision, please feel free to email me directly (john.hudak@vanderbilt.edu) or call 203-231-0287 and we can discuss arranging an interview.

Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

John Hudak

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Figure 5.A4. Sample Interview Questions for Release

Principal Investigator: John J. Hudak
04/14/2010

Version Date:

Study Title: Presidential Influence over Federal Grants
Institution/Hospital: Vanderbilt University

Proposed Survey Questions for each respondent type:

Federal Grant Managers:

- 1) Please describe the processes by which grant applications move through your agency.
- 2) Please describe your role in the grant application process.
- 3) Do there exist procedures that “fast track” applications?
- 4) Describe the grants process in terms of the structure of your agency.
- 5) After your role, which actors process applications next?
- 6) Who has final approval over grant allocations?
- 7) How often are your recommendations accepted?
- 8) How much contact do you have with
 - a. applicants?
 - b. senior agency staff?
 - c. agency and department heads?
 - d. the Office of Management and Budget?
 - e. White House staff?
 - f. Congressional Member/Committee staff?

Interest Group Lobbyists:

- 1) Please describe your role in the federal grants process.
- 2) Please describe the ways in which you aid clients seeking support from the government.
- 3) Who are the individuals most responsible for the success/failure of grant applications?
- 4) What other means do clients use to enhance their success before federal agencies?
- 5) Do political appointees in agencies work closely in the federal grants process?
- 6) Who has final approval over federal grants?
- 7) Does the White House have contact with the relevant actors in the federal grant process?
- 8) Do political appointees have such contact?
- 9) Does the Office of Management and Budget have such contact?
- 10) Does Congress have such contact?

Local Officials:

- 1) Please describe your role in the federal grants process?
- 2) Are there any specific individuals or offices in federal agencies that you deal with directly?

Figure 5.A4 continued

- 3) Are there any procedures to use or individuals to talk to that can fast track an application?
- 4) What is your office's success rate at applying for federal grants?
- 5) During your tenure in this office have formal or informal application procedures changed dramatically across presidential administrations?
- 6) Has your success in the grants process changed dramatically across presidential administrations or over time?
- 7) When your applications are being considered do you contact any federal agency officials on a regular basis?
- 8) Do you contact any other local officials on a regular basis?
- 9) Do you contact any officials in a Congressman or Senator's office on a regular basis?
- 10) Do state agencies rely on the help from any interest groups in advancing their success in terms of the federal grants process?

Figure 5.A5. Vanderbilt University Institutional Review Board Informed Consent Document for Research

Principal Investigator: John Hudak

Revision Date: 05/18/2010

Study Title: Presidential Influence over Federal Grants

Institution/Hospital: Vanderbilt University

This informed consent document applies to adults.

(Example: adults, child 12-17 years, parent, legal representative, healthy volunteer, etc.)

Name of participant: _____ Age: _____

The following information is provided to inform you about the research project and your participation in it. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions you may have about this study and the information given below. You will be given an opportunity to ask questions, and your questions will be answered. Also, you will be given a copy of this consent form.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You are also free to withdraw from this study at any time. In the event new information becomes available that may affect the risks or benefits associated with this research study or your willingness to participate in it, you will be notified so that you can make an informed decision whether or not to continue your participation in this study.

1. Purpose of the study:

The purpose of the study is to gain information regarding the bureaucratic processes that govern federal grants in the United States. The interviews are being conducted as part of the fulfillment of requirements for a Ph.D. in political science at Vanderbilt University. You are being asked to participate in a research study because of your integral role in this process.

2. Procedures to be followed and approximate duration of the study:

This study will be conducted from June to September 2010. For each participant, the study involves a single interview conducted in person with a researcher from Vanderbilt University. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes. With the consent of the participant, interviews will be audio recorded. However, if a participant prefers the interview not be digitally recording, the research will simply take hand written or typed notes. The interview will include questions about the actual processes at work in federal grant administration as well as inter- and intra-agency contact with executive branch and legislative staff.

In case the interviewer requires additional clarification, you may be contacted further via email or telephone.

3. Expected costs:

There are no costs to participation in this study.

4. Description of the discomforts, inconveniences, and/or risks that can be reasonably expected as a result of participation in this study:

Any inconvenience or discomfort from the interview will simply be the half hour taken out of your day to participate as well as any discomfort you have in answering questions, any of which you may decline to answer

5. Good effects that might result from this study:

a) The benefits to science and humankind that might result from this study. This study will offer a clearer description of the federal grants process at each stage. It provides a deeper understanding of this process that helps inform the general public and the academic community in a way that facilitates the process itself.

b) The benefits you might get from being in this study. This study offers no direct benefit to you.

6. Alternative treatments available:

N/A (individuals who choose not to participate will not be included in the study).

7. Compensation for participation:

There is no compensation for participation.

8. Circumstances under which the Principal Investigator may withdraw you from study participation:

N/A

9. What happens if you choose to withdraw from study participation:

If you choose to withdraw from the study, your responses in the interview will not be used in the project.

To withdraw, you can simply contact the principal investigator, John Hudak at XXX.XXX.XXXX or email him at john.hudak@vanderbilt.edu and request withdrawal from the project.

10. Contact Information. If you should have any questions about this research study or possibly injury, please feel free to contact **John Hudak** at **XXX.XXX.XXXX** or my Faculty Advisor, **NAME** at **XXX.XXX.XXXX**.

For additional information about giving consent or your rights as a participant in this study, please feel free to contact the Vanderbilt University Institutional Review Board Office at (615) 322-2918 or toll free at (866) 224- 8273.

13. Confidentiality:

All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep your personal information in your research record confidential but total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. *All responses from the interview will be kept without personally identifying information attached. A numerical code will be used so that the researcher knows which participant is associated with that interview, but that code will not be shared beyond the researcher. Any responses that are used in projects and reports will be deidentified and will not include any information that can be used to trace the response to an individual. Additionally, upon completion of the project all digital audio recordings will be deleted from all data storage systems.*

14. Privacy:

Your information may be shared with Vanderbilt or the government, such as the Vanderbilt University Institutional Review Board, Federal Government Office for Human Research Protections, if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.

STATEMENT BY PERSON AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY
I have read this informed consent document and the material contained in it has been explained to me verbally. All my questions have been answered, and I freely and voluntarily choose to participate.

I consent to this interview being audio recorded using a digital audio recording device.

Date Signature of participant

I DO NOT consent to this interview being audio recorded using a digital audio recording device.

Date Signature of participant

Consent obtained by:

Date Signature

Printed Name and Title

Date of IRB Approval: 05-21-2010

Date of IRB Expiration: 05-20-2011

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