

**Turkey Farms and Dead Pools: Competence and Connections in Obama
Administration Appointments***

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Only six months into his presidency, critics lambasted Barack Obama for an issue that has characterized every modern administration: the use of political appointments to satisfy patronage demands. On June 24, 2009, President Obama officially nominated long-time supporter of the Democratic Party John V. Roos to be the ambassador to Japan. In addition to bundling over \$500,000 for Obama's 2008 campaign and personally donating at least \$77,500 to Democrats since 1992, Roos's political history includes presidential campaign work for four democratic candidates, beginning with an internship in the Carter administration. His résumé, including only a long career at a law firm (in addition to his political meanderings) and no professional qualifications for an ambassadorship, epitomizes the profile of a patronage appointee.¹

Yet, Roos is not alone in receiving a political appointment as a reward for political loyalty, and, more importantly, President Obama is not alone in using his appointment power as such. While presidents have traditionally retained roughly thirty to forty percent of ambassadorships for patronage appointees, these positions make up only a small fraction of the large pool of federal jobs. Presidents distribute these jobs to repay campaign work and donations, seek interest group backing, or build congressional and party support (Hecklo 1977; Lewis 2008; Mackenzie 1981; Newland 1987; Pfiffner 1996).² In this context, Roos's case is merely symptomatic of a system of appointment patronage that transcends party and agency.

¹ Beckel, Michael. 2009. "Big Donors & Bundlers Among Obama's Ambassador Picks." OpenSecrets.org, May 28, 2009 (<http://www.opensecrets.org/news/2009/05/big-donors-bundlers-among-obam.html>, last accessed July 16, 2009); "John V. Roos: Expanded Biography." Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati. (http://www.wsgr.com/WSGR/DBIndex.aspx?SectionName=attorneys/bios/117_2.htm, last accessed July 16, 2009).

² Kravev, Nicholas. 2009. "Career Diplomats Protest Obama Appointments." *Washington Times*, July 10, 2009, (<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jul/10/career-diplomats-save-share-of-postings/>, last accessed July 17, 2009).

The proper role of patronage in U.S. democracy has been a controversial and significant issue for much of the nation's history. From George Washington's tendency to nominate only supporters of the Constitution (the key partisan cleavage of his day) to the assassination of President Garfield by a disappointed office-seeker, patronage has been alternately condemned and defended as "a corrupt and vile process" and a "venerable and accepted tradition."³

Despite the subject's significance and historical importance to the discipline of political science, empirical political appointment research in the last forty years has primarily focused on appointments as a tool for political control of the bureaucracy rather than a means to repay or incur political debts (Lewis 2009). Multiple scholars have conducted important analyses of the number of appointments (National Commission on the Public Service 1989, 2003), the means by which appointees influence policy outcomes (Moe 1982; Stewart and Cromartie 1982; Wood 1990; Wood and Anderson 1993; Wood and Waterman 1991, 1994), and the multiple factors influence appointments (see e.g., Edwards 2001; Hecl 1977; Mackenzie 1981), but systematic evaluations of modern patronage practices in the federal government are rare (Bearfield 2009). Without the correct understanding of the practice of patronage it is hard to engage the early normative debates or put more recent charges of cronyism and nepotism into a larger context.⁴ There is also increasing evidence that patronage appointees can dramatically

³ Gray, Jerry. 1996. "Opportunities Knocked; Without Patronage, Is It Politics as Usual?" *New York Times*, July 7, 1996, (<http://www.nytimes.com/1996/07/07/weekinreview/opportunities-knocked-without-patronage-is-it-politics-as-usual.html?scp=22&sq=Clinton+patronage&st=nyt>, last accessed July 17, 2009).

⁴ For example, see Tumulty, Karen, Mark Thompson, and Mike Allen. 2005. "How Many More Mike Browns are there Out There?" *Time*, September 25, 2005, (on-line edition, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1109345,00.html>, last accessed July 25, 2009) and Nakamura, David. 2009. "D.C. Technology Office Scandal Revives Questions of Cronyism," *Washington Post*, March 14, 2009, B01.

hinder government performance and damage the president's reputation making more research timely and important (Gallo and Lewis 2009; Lewis 2008).⁵

In this paper we use new data on over 1,000 persons appointed to positions in the Obama Administration to expand our understanding of patronage practices in the modern presidency. It uses systematically collected appointee biographical data to determine which agencies receive appointees with fewer qualifications and more extensive campaign experience or political connections. It finds that presidents tend to place patronage appointees in those agencies with the same political ideology as the president, that are less central to the president's agenda, and where appointees are least able to hurt agency performance. We conclude...

Research on Agencies and Patronage Appointments

The proper role of patronage in U.S. democracy has been a controversial and significant issue for much of the nation's history (Van Riper 1958; White 1948, 1954). From George Washington's tendency to nominate only supporters of the Constitution (the key partisan cleavage of his day) to the assassination of President Garfield by a disappointed office-seeker, patronage has been alternately condemned and defended as "a corrupt and vile process" and a "venerable and accepted tradition."⁶ While originally the source of significant academic interest in political science, by 1960 Francis Rourke

⁵ More recently patronage has emerged as a salient political issue because of appointee-generated controversies in the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the office of the White House Chief Technology Officer. For details of FEMA see Lewis 2008; Roberts 2006; U.S. Senate 2006). For details about the controversy surrounding Vivek Kundra, Obama advisor and chief technology officer see Nakamura, David. 2009. "D.C. Technology Office Scandal Revives Questions of Cronyism," Washington Post, March 14, 2009, B01. More generally, see Gallo and Lewis (2009).

⁶ Gray, Jerry. 1996. "Opportunities Knocked; Without Patronage, Is It Politics as Usual?" *New York Times*, July 7, 1996, (<http://www.nytimes.com/1996/07/07/weekinreview/opportunities-knocked-without-patronage-is-it-politics-as-usual.html?scp=22&sq=Clinton+patronage&st=nyt>, last accessed July 17, 2009).

would write, “Very few studies exist of the actual operation of patronage systems across the country...In the absence of specific reports and data, one can only proceed uneasily on a mixture of political folklore, scattered scholarship, professional consensus, and personal judgment.” (xx)

In the 40 years since Sorauf wrote, presidents have augmented their White House personnel operation, focused more on the selection of appointees for loyalty, and increased the number and extent of White House control over appointments throughout the executive branch. In turn, scholars have attentively tracked these important developments (see, e.g., Moe 1985; Nathan 1975; Pfiffner 1996; Weko 1995). While scholars have carefully detailed the multiple factors influencing appointments and described how the personnel process handles patronage requests (Hecl 1977; Pfiffner 1996; Weko 1995), systematic evaluations of modern patronage practices in the federal government remain hard to find (Bearfield 2009).

The most recent literature, where it addresses patronage, argues that the personnel process is better characterized as two processes rather than one (cites). The first process involves filling a number of key positions that are essential to the accomplishment of the presidents’ electoral and policy making goals. The second process involves finding jobs for thousands of job-seekers in the new administration. Different factors explain how presidents fill key positions and how they handle patronage demands. While presidents would prefer that all appointees be loyal, competent, and satisfy key political considerations, the pool of available appointees rarely satisfies all three considerations and presidents must make tradeoffs. Parsneau (2007), for example, shows that loyalty plays a more important role and expertise less of an important role in appointments to

agencies on the president's agenda.⁷ Lewis (2008, 2009) argues that presidents put the best qualified appointees into agencies that *do not* share the president's policy views in order to more effectively get control of them. He argues that patronage appointees seek jobs and get placed into agencies that *do* share the president's views about policy.⁸

The difficulty with much of the recent work on patronage is that it rarely relies on actual data about the background and experience of appointees themselves (see, however, Parsneau 2007). Lewis (2008) looks exclusively at different types of appointees (i.e., Senate-confirmed, Senior Executive Service, Schedule C) and assumes that some are more likely to be patronage appointees than others. Lewis (2009) relies on agency managers to evaluate the extent to which campaign connections or experience influenced the selection of appointees in their agencies. Yet, these executives were rarely privy to the private deliberations of White House officials when making appointment decisions.

When studies do look at actual background data, they either do not connect variation in background and qualifications to questions about where presidents would place patronage appointees or the samples are too restrictive for meaningful comparisons across types of appointees or multiple departments and agencies. A significant amount of work has surveyed political appointees about their backgrounds and qualifications but with a different focus in mind (Aberbach and Rockman 2000; Maranto 2004; Maranto

⁷ Using indices of loyalty and expertise derived from background information of 364 Senate-confirmed appointees between 1961-2000, Parsneau finds a significant and positive relationship between connections to the president and placement in agencies the president has prioritized in the State of the Union Speech. He finds a significant and negative relationship between expertise and placement in agencies on the president's agenda.

⁸ As evidence, he shows that between 1988 and 2005, lower level, schedule C appointees increase in both liberal and conservative agencies while more influential Senate-confirmed appointees increase only in agencies that do not share the president's policy views. More recently, Lewis (2009) uses a survey of federal executives to show that during the Bush Administration agency executives were more likely to report that appointees in their agencies were selected on the basis of campaign experience or connections if they worked in conservative agencies.

and Hult 1994). Parsneau (2007) evaluates the tradeoff between loyalty and expertise for one type of appointee (Senate-confirmed) but excludes other types of appointees central to the patronage process (appointees in the Senior Executive Service, Schedule C).

In this paper we examine the population of appointees named by the Obama Administration through July 22, 2009. We systematically collected background information on each appointee to provide a means of comparing qualifications and connections across appointees in different agencies and levels. This will allow us to determine whether common views about appointment politics bear out in the case of the Obama Administration.

Which Agencies Does the White House Target for Patronage?

Many presidents have noted with dissatisfaction the tremendous burden placed upon them by job-seekers. Even after civil service reform, presidents spent many hours responding to requests for jobs from supplicants themselves or their patrons in Congress and political parties. For the Obama administration, somewhere between 3,000 and 9,000 jobs await appointment.⁹ The current White House Personnel Office will sift through over 300,000 resumes for these jobs. Though personnel aides have gradually adapted to these demands by routinizing and institutionalizing the process, the job is still overwhelming and politically perilous. Applicants for government jobs are frequently not suited by expertise, experience, background, or temperament for an appointed position in the administration. Yet, many have a strong claim for a job through work on the campaign, fundraising activities, personal connections to the Obama family, or key

⁹ The main difference in the counts depends upon whether one includes judgeships, White House appointments, and part-time advisory commission appointments. See Patterson 2008.

political connections. Decisions to give or not award supporters with jobs can generate a lot of ill-will and poison important relationships necessary for a president's political or policy goals.

As a result, presidents face the difficulty of finding appointees with the requisite competence, while also rewarding some job-seekers with positions even though these applicants lack the required credentials. Appointees need to implement the president's agenda administratively, work effectively with Congress, and not create embarrassing distractions arising from tawdry scandal, mismanagement, or poor judgment. As one personnel official explained, "This is not a beauty contest. The goal is to pick the person who has the greatest chance of accomplishing what the principal wants done..."¹⁰ Yet, the pool of job applicants who have priority because of political considerations often lack the level of competence the president or his staff would prefer. As a result, jobs in some agencies and positions get filled according to the demands of patronage, while only a portion get filled with people because of demonstrated ability.

Pressure Points

Presidents respond by first selecting the best qualified people for the key positions they have identified as central to their agenda and success. Each president prioritizes some positions over others. President Kennedy's transition team tried to identify the "pressure points" in government (Mann 1964). Other personnel officials describe a focus on the "choke points" in government, the positions that were central to any administrative action (e.g., secretaries, general counsels, etc.).¹¹ President Reagan's personnel operation

¹⁰ Clay Johnson, President George W. Bush's first personnel chief, as quoted in Lewis (2008, xx)

¹¹

prioritized the “key 87” positions necessary to his economic policy (Lewis 2008, 28). Other presidential personnel describe how positions central to key “hot button” issues get filled before others.¹² Presidents need these appointees to both have views compatible with the president but also be able to run a large government organization. Appointees need the public management skills necessary to translate presidential mandates into outputs. These positions, because of their visibility and centrality to the success of the president’s agenda, are filled carefully, often with much involvement from the president and his senior staff.

Presidents also must pay close attention to agencies that are not inclined to follow their directions because of differences in ideology or policy. Agencies vary in their views about policy and their willingness to follow presidential direction. Some agencies are liberal by mission and these agencies naturally attract and retain civil servants who believe in the work that agencies are doing. Other agencies are conservative by mission and tend to attract like-minded employees. For example, liberals and Democrats are more likely to self-select into social welfare and regulatory agencies and conservatives and Republicans are more likely to work in the military services or intelligence agencies (Aberbach and Rockman 1976; Aberbach and Rockman 2000; Maranto and Hult 1994). Where an agency’s main policy goals need to be changed because they are at variance with the president’s goals, presidents select appointees with a similar ideology or loyalty *and* substantial political and managerial skill. As one former Reagan Administration official explained this method of change-management, “We did give more emphasis to those agencies [social welfare agencies] because we expected more bureaucratic resistance from them as a natural result of our agenda... We did not target [agencies

¹² Cite

concerned with] defense since we knew their bureaucrac[ies] would like what we were doing.”¹³

Turkey Farms

Presidents largely place patronage appointments into the positions that remain, positions off the agenda and positions in agencies whose views are similar to those of the president. Patronage appointees get named to positions where management acumen and subject area expertise are less central to the president’s success. In every administration certain agencies acquire reputations as “turkey farms” or “dead pools.”¹⁴ Positions in these agencies get filled with less qualified administrators, often by presidents under pressure to find jobs for campaign staff, key donors, or well-connected job-seekers. Throughout much of its history the Federal Emergency Management Agency had this reputation (Lewis 2008; Moynihan 2008; Perrow 2007). In the George H.W. Bush Administration the Department of Commerce was colloquially referred to as “Bush Gardens,” named after the amusement park. Other agencies like the General Services Administration and the Department of Housing and Urban Development have at times assumed this label because political slots were filled by family members of large contributors (Michaels 1995, 276).

Presidents place campaign staff, children of prominent donors, and politically connected applicants with thin resumes in staff positions where the skills they do have (e.g., press, advance, briefing) can be used to greatest effect but their lack of management

¹³ As quoted in Lewis (2008, 67-8).

¹⁴ The term “turkey farm” generally refers to positions or agencies where less qualified career or appointed administrators get placed (Kettl 2008, 45). I use the term here generally refer to agencies where less qualified appointees get placed.

experience is less consequential. In some cases, these staff positions are training grounds for higher level positions later. The chief of staff may eventually become the deputy assistant secretary, or the counselor to the secretary may be groomed to become the general counsel. Of course, some persons with patronage claims actually have greater merit and will be offered higher ranking jobs, albeit in agencies where, to be frank, they can do the most good politically and least damage managerially.

Agencies that are likely to house patronage appointees possess a few characteristics implied by the discussion above. First, these agencies are less visible. These agencies that generally bypass the public consciousness often house patronage appointees. In a vast bureaucratic universe with 15 cabinet departments and 55-60 independent agencies, appointee day-to-day performance in a given agency is observed sporadically at best and often much less. Even very visible agencies such as the National Park Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or the Department of the Air Force toil in relative obscurity in the public consciousness. Agencies such as the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, the Veterans Benefits Administration, or the Office of Justice Programs generate even less attention unless scandal emerges. Poor performance by an appointee in any of these agencies generally would not reach public consciousness unless it was egregious.

Second, agencies that attract patronage appointees often tend to implement the president's agenda without much direction from the White House. Just as some agencies require special presidential attention because they do not share the president's views about policy, others are predisposed to do what the president wants because they share the president's views. When an agency's staff includes many experienced career

professionals with the “right” views, it can operate well regardless of competent appointee leadership. This makes such agencies ideal places to put less qualified appointees since little change is required and the career professionals in the agency can compensate for deficiencies in appointee leadership.

This arrangement often works well for both the administration and job-seekers. Job-seekers in a new administration aspire to and are best qualified for jobs in agencies that will advance their career prospects in and around their political party. These jobs tend to be located in agencies that share the president’s views about policy (Lewis 2008). Each party has long standing relationships with certain firms, organizations (e.g., labor unions, chamber of commerce, National Rifle Association), and officials based upon work in areas central to the core policy commitments of the party.¹⁵ Work in some agencies can advance an appointee’s career within this constellation of groups more than others, causing appointees to prefer jobs in certain agencies. One Republican personnel official explained, “Most people [Republicans] do not see Labor in their long term future... You are not going to be able to make a living from that pattern of relationships.”¹⁶ This implies that conservatives are more likely to prefer jobs in agencies such as those involved in national security, trade, or business. Following suit, liberals are more likely to prefer jobs in traditionally liberal agencies such as social welfare and regulatory agencies..¹⁷

¹⁵ Examples of related groups might be a think tank like the Center for American Progress, an insurance company that grew its business working through labor unions, or a large contracting firm that regularly does business with a specific agency like the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

¹⁶ As quoted in Lewis (2008, 64).

¹⁷ This arrangement is also consistent with the interests of the Presidential Personnel Office (PPO). PPO officials want to place appointees into jobs for which they are defensibly qualified. If appointees have resumes that list experience in business, education, or health, personnel officials will, where possible, try to match their skills with specific departments like Commerce, Education, or Health and Human Services. Since, partisans from each party are also more likely to be qualified for positions in these agencies based

The foregoing discussion suggests two expectations about patronage appointments:

H1. Agencies on the president's agenda are less likely to house appointees selected to satisfy patronage considerations.

H2. Agencies that share the president's policy views are more likely to house appointees selected to satisfy patronage considerations.

Of course, some agencies like FEMA gain reputations as “turkey farms” across Republican and Democratic Administrations. Features other than their presence on or off the agenda or their ideological leanings explain why they regularly house patronage appointees. The main factor involves whether an agency can house patronage appointees without any visible influence on performance or if it is very sensitive to the skills and qualifications of appointees. In his 1833 inaugural address Andrew Jackson justified the “democratization” of the civil service on the grounds that government work was so simple that any reasonably competent layperson could do it (White 1954, XX). Today, however, the work of government agencies varies from the mundane to the incredibly complex. In agencies where work is simple and straightforward, appointees can manage and conduct it without much harm to performance. In agencies where work is complex, however, skilled appointees are essential and their absence can dramatically influence agency performance. Performance considerations should constrain the patronage choice and lead to the following expectation:

H3. Agencies performing complex or technical tasks are less likely to house appointees selected to satisfy patronage considerations.

upon previous work experience, the patterns of patronage appointments described above where liberals get appointed to liberal agencies and conservatives to conservative agencies are reinforced by the practical necessity of trying to appoint people to positions for which they are arguably qualified. Democrats are more likely to have work experience in a labor union, a housing non-profit, or a grass-roots environmental organization while Republicans are more likely to have experience working for the Chamber of Commerce or a defense contractor.

In total, these three expectations result in clear predictions about the way that President Obama should staff his administration. He should place less qualified but better connected appointees in agencies off the agenda. He should be more likely to place them in liberal agencies than conservative agencies. Agencies with less complex tasks should be less likely to receive patronage appointees.

Data, Variables, and Methods

To evaluate these claims, we use a new dataset of Obama Administration appointees as of July 22, 2009, or six months into the new administration.¹⁸ Along with the names, titles, and appointment information for each appointee, we collected biographical information from a variety of sources, namely the *Federal Leadership Directory*, *Washington Post's* Head Count and WhoRunsGov.com websites, and the White House website.¹⁹ In total there were 1,307 appointees named after six months. There were 370 Senate-confirmed appointees (PAS), 380 non-career assignments in the Senior Executive Service (NA), and 557 schedule C appointees (SC).²⁰

Measures of Competence and Connections

¹⁸ The dataset is comprised of a complete list of appointments to all federal departments, agencies, committees, and advisory councils, including the Executive Office of the President. It does not include appointees in the judicial or legislative branch. The dataset differentiates between four types of political appointments: Presidential appointments that require Senate confirmation (PAS), noncareer appointments to the Senior Executive Service (NA), Schedule C appointments (SC), and other presidential appointments that do not require Senate Confirmation (PA).

¹⁹ For PAS appointees, we used Washington Post's "Head Count" website (<http://projects.washingtonpost.com/2009/federal-appointments/>), WhoRunsGov.com, *Federal Leadership Directory* (online at <http://www.leadershipdirectories.com/products/fldo.html>), and the White House website (http://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing_room/PressReleases/). Information on NA, SC, and PA appointees was taken solely from the *Federal Leadership Directory* (Online; <http://www.leadershipdirectories.com/products/fldo.html>).

²⁰ We include all PAS appointees that were announced. Since NA and SC appointees do not require confirmation, announcement is the same as appointment.

We use appointee background information to measure various dimensions of appointee competence and political connections.²¹ To measure variation in appointee competence we coded each appointee according to the following characteristics²²: education level (0-HS, 1-Bachelors, 2-Masters level, 3-MD or DDS, 4-doctorate)²³, whether the appointee was an appointee in the Bush or Clinton administrations (0,1; 17.60%), previous experience in the agency to which they were appointed (0,1; 26.70%), subject area expertise deriving from work outside the agency to which they have been appointed (0,1; 35.88%)²⁴, previous federal government experience (0,1; 40.86%), and previous public management experience (0,1; 22.95%). Notable among the features of

²¹ The bulk of the biographical information came from *Federal Leadership Directories Online*, the electronic version of the *Federal Yellow Book* publication. This is a subscription-based electronic portal and available at <http://www.leadershipdirectories.com/products/FLDO.html>. In addition to the characteristics we discuss here, we coded for whether the appointee worked in Congress, private and not-for profit management experience, and a connection to Harvard. We chose to exclude a discussion of work in Congress and a Harvard connection because these characteristics could indicate either competence or political connections. Other management experience was excluded since it was less relevant to public management roles.

²² After the initial collection, we coded the biographical information with a team of two other researchers. Each of the researchers was given a subset of appointee biographical entries to code. One researcher was responsible for all PAS and PA appointees. Another was responsible for all NA appointees. The final researcher was responsible for all SC appointees. Coders agreed upon coding rules prior to the start of coding. When problems arose regarding the proper coding of certain biographical information, researchers quickly discussed and made a decision as a group, so that the coding was executed as uniformly as possible. One example of such a question might be whether to categorize an appointee's last job as a congressional staffer as "politics" or "other." As soon as a questionable instance arose, we agreed to classify this as "politics," and proceeded to correct any misclassifications in our individual lists. After coding was complete, the researcher who compiled the initial list randomly selected 10 entries from each researcher's coded entries to ensure the coding was conducted consistently. When systemic discrepancies were found, the researcher adjusted the coding to be uniform across the lists.

²³ The percentages for education are 0 (43%), 1 (12%), 2 (38%), 3 (1%), 4 (7%).

²⁴ This variable is coded with a 1 if the appointee has previous work or educational experience (graduate degree) in the same subject area as the core policy mission of the agency to which they are appointed. This may include experience in other government agencies (not their current agency), but excludes work in relevant congressional committees. For example, appointees in the Department of Labor would receive a '1' here if their biography included experience in any of the following: a labor union, a state-level labor department, the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission (or similar agency), or teaching position in a relevant area. The coding is agency based rather than task based so that someone appointed to be Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Policy, Management, and Budget would be coded with a 1 not for a management degree or management experience but rather subject area expertise in an area covered by the Department of the Interior such as national parks, Land Management, or Indian Affairs.

this set of early appointees is the high number of appointees with previous federal management experience of some type.

To measure political factors in an appointee's background that are related to patronage we coded each appointee on the following characteristics: work on the campaign or transition (0,1; 14.23%), whether the appointee was a major donor (0,1; 2.60%), whether the appointee had a previous personal connection to the Obamas (0,1; 1.45%), and whether the appointees most recent previous job was in politics (0,1; 27.88%) as compared to work in another sector such as industry, academia, law, etc. Notable among the descriptive statistics here is that 14 percent (186 members) of the appointees who received appointments in the first six months of the new administration worked on the campaign or transition. Interestingly, of the close to 1,300 appointees 28 percent were drawn most immediately from jobs in politics as compared to 34 percent whose last job was in government or the military, 10 percent whose last job was in academia or a think tank, and 13 percent whose last job was in industry.

Some caution should be given to the interpretation of the absolute levels of competence or connections, however, because of potentially incomplete data. Basic information on some appointees, such as education and career history, has not been recorded by our sources, though the highest level positions (PAS) contain very few such instances.²⁵ The reason for these lapses varies among individual cases. Either our sources are missing information or some appointees actually have had no notable career history. By cross-referencing PAS appointees whose biographical information was available elsewhere, we can tell that the *Federal Leadership Directories Online*, which

²⁵ Of the entire list, 245 of the 558 SC appointees, 67 of the 381 NA appointees, and only 2 of the 370 PAS appointees have no biographical information available

provided the sole information on NA and SC appointees, contains insufficient information in some cases. For instance, the White House website indicates that Jim Esquea, an appointee in the Department of Health and Human Services, worked as an analyst for the Senate Budget Committee, yet Federal Leadership Directories Online does not list this in his career history. In other cases, career histories may be complete, but degree information is lacking. While acknowledging the problems with the data, we assume that flaws in the biographical information are more or less random within level of appointee (i.e., PAS, NA, SC), and missing information should be missing uniformly across all agencies. We also note that our coding does not show if an appointee lacks a given criteria; it only indicates positive fulfillment of the criteria.²⁶

Key Independent Variables

One of the key expectations from the discussion above was that agencies on the president's agenda should be less likely to attract patronage type appointees. In order to determine which agencies are important to achieving President Obama's policy goals, we rely on the president's first televised speech before Congress.²⁷ We coded all agencies

²⁶ When assigning an appointee a '0' for a given variable, this does not mean the individual has not fulfilled the criteria, it simply means we have found no positive indication that this is true. We have also estimated the models that follow only with cases where biographical information was listed and the results confirm what is reported here with a few exceptions (N=956). First, in the models of agency or federal government experience in the coefficient on proportion technical employees is smaller and becomes marginally significant or loses significance ($p < 0.09$, 0.49). In the model of subject area expertise the coefficient on liberal agency is marginally significant ($p < 0.13$) in the wrong direction. In models of education level the coefficient on agency is noticeably larger. In models of education level and campaign or transition experience, the coefficient on liberal agencies is smaller and loses significance ($p < 0.21$, 0.26).

²⁷ Obama, Barack. "The President's Address Before a Joint Session of Congress on the State of the Union." February 24, 2009. The process for categorizing agencies according to their significance to the president's agenda proceeded in two steps. First, we each read the address independently and formed unique lists of all issues mentioned, as well as the relevant agencies and bureaus. Then we compared lists and coded with a 2 all agencies/bureaus that were on both lists, a 1 those that were only on one list, and a 0 otherwise. After consultation we excluded a few cases that were obviously incorrect. We use the more generous coding here, coding all agencies on the list with a 1 and all other agencies a 0. Because some

who are responsible for a policy or issue raised in the speech with a 1 and all other agencies with a 0 (0,1; 51.49% of cases).²⁸ For instance, President Obama states that “our survival depends on finding new sources of energy.”²⁹ This means that the Department of Energy and relevant bureaus within DOE (in this case the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy) are included in the list of agenda agencies. Some agencies coded as being on the agenda were those involved in the economic crisis (Treasury, Commodity Futures Trading Commission, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, etc.), the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Defense, military services), and education reform (Education). Some of the larger agencies that did not have programs mentioned in the State of the Union include the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Interior, and Transportation and other agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency and the Small Business Administration.

In Table 1 we summarize appointee background characteristics by whether or not the agency is responsible for an issue on the president’s agenda. The data in the table reveal that agencies on the president’s agenda had appointees with more demonstrated competence than agencies that were not on the president’s agenda. Specifically, the

appointees are in the specific bureaus that may be more directly involved in carrying out a given issue and others are only in the larger department, we created two measures of the “agenda” variable. In the first, we indicate all appointees who serve in a large department on the agenda, including those who may not work in a specifically relevant area, and in the second we mark those appointees in the bureaus that directly relate to an agenda issue. These data are available upon request from the authors.

²⁸ We have also estimated models using a measure where we code for whether bureaus rather than departments are on the agenda. The results differ somewhat from the models here. In models of agency experience the coefficients on agenda and liberal agency are smaller but still significant at the 0.05 level. The coefficient on proportion of technical employees, however, is noticeably smaller and no longer significant. In models of federal government experience the agenda measure is smaller and no longer significant. In the models of subject area expertise and public management experience, the coefficient on the agenda measure is substantially larger and significant at the 0.05 and 0.10 level, respectively. In models of education level, the coefficient on liberal agency is only significant at the 0.10 level. In the models of campaign or transition experience and work in politics, however, the coefficients on agenda and liberal agency are estimated less precisely ($p < 0.26, 0.42; 0.14, 0.21$).

²⁹ Obama 1

management teams in these agencies were comprised of a higher proportion of appointees from previous administration and appointees with more government and management experience across the board. The table also includes information on the patronage aspects of appointee backgrounds. Appointees who worked on the campaign or came from political jobs prior to their work in the administration were less likely to work in agencies managing a key issue area for the president. Agencies on the president's agenda were slightly more likely to attract appointees who were major donors or who had a personal connection to the president, however, although there are few cases to draw from in either category. While not entirely consistent across the board, together this evidence suggests that less qualified-patronage-type appointees are placed where they can do the least harm to the president's agenda.

[Insert Table 1 here.]

A second key expectation was that the ideological predisposition of the agency would influence whether or not the agency attracted patronage appointees. To measure the ideology of agencies we code agencies as liberal (0,1; 19.20%), moderate (0,1; 32.21%), or conservative (0,1; 48.81%) using agency preference estimates created by Clinton and Lewis (2008).³⁰ Some prominent liberal agencies include the Departments of Education, Housing and Urban Development, and Labor. Prominent conservative

³⁰ All agencies whose estimates were negative and statistically distinguishable from 0 were classified as liberal and all agencies whose estimates were positive and statistically distinguishable from 0 were classified as conservative. The remainder is coded as moderate. We have also used a different cutoff for liberal, coding those agencies in the bottom quartile of the data as liberal. The results are virtually identical to what is reported here.

agencies include Treasury and Defense and notable moderate agencies include the departments of Agriculture and State.³¹

[Insert Table 2 here.]

Table 2 includes measures of appointee competence and political experience broken down by agency ideology with significant differences between moderate or conservative agencies and liberal agencies denoted by asterisks. Liberal agencies are significantly less likely to have appointees who were appointees in earlier administrations and have lower average levels of education. Appointees in liberal agencies are also less likely to have agency, federal government, or public management experience. There are no competence characteristics on which appointees in liberal agencies have an advantage over both moderate or conservative agencies. By contrast, liberal agencies were more likely to house persons whose last job was in politics, had a personal connection to the president, or who worked on a campaign or transition. Major donors, however, were significantly more likely to work in moderate or conservative agencies. On their face, these simple descriptive statistics seem to confirm expectations discussed above about what agencies attract presidential patronage.

Of course, the influence of appointees on performance varies across agencies depending upon a number of factors including the complexity of agency tasks. To measure the complexity of agency tasks, we use the percentage of an agency's employees that are scientists, engineers, architects, mathematicians, and statisticians (mean 0.09; SD

³¹ A larger number of appointees naturally work in conservative agencies since the largest agencies in the executive branch such as the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security are conservative.

0.15, min 0, max 0.83).³² Our assumption the proportion of such employees is a measure of agency task complexity and our expectation is that agencies with a higher proportion of such employees attract appointees with more qualifications and fewer connections to the campaign or politics.³³ Agencies that have high proportions of such employees include the Department of Energy (0.27), the Environmental Protection Agency (0.40), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (0.65) while those that have low proportions include the Department of Education (0.00), the Department of Housing and Urban Development (0.01) and the Department of Homeland Security (0.03).

Controls and Methods

To capture generic differences in agencies that influences the politics of appointments we control for a number of other agency characteristics including the natural log of agency employment and whether the agency is located in the Executive Office of the President (0,1;), the cabinet (0,1;), or a commission (0,1;). Since the data are ordinal, we estimate a series of bivariate or ordered logit models of appointee characteristics based upon the characteristics of different agencies. The data are arguably not independent because some of the 1,300 appointees are placed into the same agencies

³² Source: fedscope.opm.gov. Specifically we count the number of employees in September 2008 in the following categories in the White Collar Group classification (under the *Occupation* pull down menu): natural resources management and biological sciences, engineering and architecture, physical sciences, mathematics and statistics.

³³ We have also used the percentage of agency employees that are professionals as a measure of task complexity (source: fedscope.opm.gov). The results are generally stronger than the results presented in the paper. This measure is now marginally significant or significant in models of federal government experience, work in the Clinton Administration, education level, work on the campaign or transition, and last job in politics ($p < 0.12$; 0.13; 0.05; 0.05; 0.07). In one model, the model of public management experience, the coefficient becomes insignificant ($p < 0.19$). The other changes of note are that the coefficient indicating that the agency implements a policy on the president's agenda becomes smaller, though still significant at the 0.05 level in several models. In one model this variable becomes significant at only the 0.08 level. In the model of work on the campaign or transition the standard errors on the liberal agency variable are smaller and the coefficient becomes significant at the 0.05 level.

and because they are placed into one of three types of appointed positions (PAS, NA, SC).³⁴ As such, we report robust standard errors.³⁵

Results

Model estimates, with some exceptions, generally confirm what emerged in simple difference in mean values reported in Tables 1 and 2. Agencies that are not on the

³⁴ We have also estimated models on each type of appointee separately. Estimating these models was complicated by the fact that some variables perfectly predicted outcomes such as appointment in the Executive Office of the President. For example, no Schedule C appointees served in the Clinton Administration and worked in Obama's Executive Office of the President. In addition, as one might expect, the standard errors in these models are generally larger since the models are estimated on fewer cases. For models of PAS appointees the coefficients on agenda agencies and proportion technical employees were often larger while the coefficients on liberal agencies were often smaller and not significant. For models of NA appointees, the coefficient on proportion technical was often larger and significant while the coefficient on agencies on the agenda was often smaller and insignificant. For models estimated on Schedule C appointees, the coefficient on agenda agencies was often insignificant and occasionally had the wrong sign. The coefficients on liberal agencies and the proportion technical employees were often larger and more significant in models of qualifications. In models of political connections coefficients on the proportion technical employees had the wrong sign and were significant at the 0.07 or 0.08 level. In total, breaking up the analysis by appointee type weakened the results by decreasing the precision of the estimates. It made some results stronger and some weaker than what is reported in the main text. These results are available upon request from the authors.

³⁵ We have also estimated models clustering on different features of the data including agency and appointee type (PAS, NA, SC). The results for clustering on department are generally consistent with what is reported here except the standard errors are generally larger. Specifically, in models of experience in the Clinton Administration the coefficients on presence on the agenda loses significance ($p < 0.26$). In models of education level and campaign or transition experience, the coefficients on the president's agenda and liberal agency move from significance at the 0.05 level to close to significant or significant at the 0.10 level (i.e., $p < 0.20, 0.10; 0.08, 0.18$). The measure of the proportion of technical employees loses significance in the model of agency experience ($p < 0.14$). Interestingly, the indicator on the Executive Office of the President gains significance at the 0.10 level in models of agency experience and subject area expertise. In models clustering on appointee type the standard errors also tend to get somewhat larger for the key variables. In the model of agency experience the agenda and technical proportion variables lose significance ($p < 0.20, 0.43$). In the models of federal experience and Clinton Administration experience the standard errors for the coefficients on agenda get larger so that the coefficients are only marginally significant ($p < 0.11, 0.12$). In the latter model the variable on liberal agency also becomes marginally significant (0.14). In the model on subject area expertise the standard error on the proportion technical employees variable gets smaller and the coefficient becomes significant ($p < 0.00$). In the model of education level the coefficient on the president's agenda loses significance ($p < 0.49$). In the model of campaign or transition experience coefficient on liberal becomes only marginally significant ($p < 0.11$). Fixed effects for agency are not feasible because of the small number of cases in different cells that result. For example, if one includes a fixed effect for the Department of Veterans Affairs, there are eighteen cases in this department. In some cases, none of the appointees in the agency have one of the 10 characteristics we analyze in this paper. The fixed effect perfectly predicts the outcome. In addition to the fixed effect, other regressors are included such as agency ideology, agency size, and location in the EOP such that inferences are made on a small number of cases in any particular cell.

president's agenda, liberal agencies, and agencies with low proportions of technical employees tend to attract appointees with fewer qualifications and greater evidence of political connections. Collectively, these results provide evidence of systematic patterns of presidential patronage even in these early stages of the Obama Administration. They help us understand more fully why some administrative agencies become turkey farms in different administrations.

Turkey Farms and Appointee Competence

We measured agency competence in a number of ways, namely previous agency experience, previous federal government experience, work as a Clinton or Bush appointee, subject area expertise, public management experience, and education levels. To which agencies has Obama appointed more and less qualified appointees by these measures? One answer that emerges from estimates in Table 3 is that appointees who work in agencies implementing policies on the president's agenda look different from appointees in other agencies. Agencies responsible for policies on the president's agenda are more likely to have appointees with background characteristics we reasonably associate with competence. Appointees in these agencies are more likely to have previous agency experience or federal government experience. They are more likely to have worked as an appointee in the Clinton or Bush Administration and they have higher estimated education levels. The coefficients on the variable for whether or not the agency implements a program mentioned in the president's State of the Union were all positive, indicating that a mention in the State of the Union is positively correlated with an appointee's competence. These coefficients were significant at the 0.05 level in four of

the six models. Substantively, appointees in agencies on the president's agenda were 12-15 percentage points more likely to have agency or federal government experience and they were 6-8 percentage points more likely to have been an appointee in a previous administration or have a masters level degree such as an MBA or a JD.

[Insert Table 3 here.]

These results add credence to the argument that presidents need appointees who not only support their initiatives but also have the skills to push for and execute new policies. Competent appointees are necessary to spearhead important presidential priorities. While this practice is understandable from the perspective of presidents, the results are troubling for agencies off the president's agenda and particularly troubling for agencies such as FEMA that spend long periods off the president's agenda. Historically, FEMA has only been on any president's agenda after a crisis has occurred. In the intervening periods FEMA has been stocked with second and third tier political types with few qualifications for their jobs (Lewis 2008). When Hurricane Katrina ripped into the Gulf Coast only one senior manager in FEMA had emergency management experience prior to their work in the agency.

These results imply that one key factor that determines whether or not an agency exhibits turkey farm characteristics is whether or not it implements policies on the president's agenda. A second feature which influences the qualifications of appointees is the ideological character of the agency and its work.³⁶ Appointees in liberal agencies are

³⁶ What is less clear in the model estimates is that statistically distinguishable differences also emerge between conservative and moderate agencies in some cases. This is somewhat surprising given that there was only one statistically distinguishable case between moderate and conservative agencies in the bivariate analyses in Table 1 and Table 2. So, while our general expectations with regard to the differences between liberal and non-liberal agencies emerged as expected, there were some cases where a difference exists between conservative and moderate agencies such that very conservative agencies got more patronage-type appointees than moderate agencies. One possible explanation is that these results are driven by a few

significantly less likely to have the background characteristics listed in Table 3. The coefficient on the liberal agency indicator is negative and significant at the 0.10 or 0.05 level in four of the six models. Appointees in liberal agencies are 12-19 percentage points less likely to have agency or federal government experience prior to their appointment. They are 5 to 6 percentage points less likely to have been an appointee in either the Bush or Clinton Administration. This is a large amount given that only 17.6% of appointees in the Obama Administration had served before. Appointees in liberal agencies were also 8 percentage points less likely to have a masters degree level education. In the first six months, the Obama Administration put the most competent appointees in moderate or conservative agencies. This seems to confirm that when the president confronts an agency that has policy views different from his own, he not only needs an appointee with the “right” views but an appointee that is competent enough to bring change to such an agency.

In liberal agencies, however, career professionals are less likely to resist the direction of the Obama administration, making the management task easier and the competence of appointee management less crucial to the president’s policy goals. Liberal agencies are also attractive places to put patronage appointees since many aspiring Democratic appointees see work in a liberal agency as a means of enhancing their future career prospects within the party or constellation of groups around the part. These findings are consistent with other work showing that presidents increase the number of patronage-type appointees in agencies that share their views about policy (Lewis 2008).

influential cases such as the State Department were many appointees, ambassadors aside, have significant State Department and foreign policy experience and expertise prior to appointment. When models are estimated excluding the state department, the statistically distinguishable differences between moderate and conservative agencies disappears.

The estimates in Table 3 provide some evidence that presidents appoint more competent appointees to agencies with the highest proportion of technical employees (scientists, engineers, mathematicians, etc.). The coefficients are all positive, indicating that the higher the proportion of technical employees, the greater the probability that an appointee has one of the background features listed. Only two of the coefficients are significant at the 0.05 level, however. Substantively, they indicate that the average agency with workforces comprised of 9-10 percent technical employees will be 4-6 percentage points less likely to have an appointee with previous agency experience or public management experience than an appointee in an agency with 30 to 40 percent technical employees (e.g., Federal Highway Administration, Environmental Protection Agency). This provides some evidence that appointees with higher skill levels are necessary to manage agencies with complex tasks. Whether or not an appointee is well qualified arguably can have a much greater impact on performance in agencies such as these than other agencies where the work of the agency is more straightforward.

A few other interesting results emerge from the estimates. Where there was a relationship between the size of the agency and appointee competence it was positive, indicating that appointees with stronger backgrounds are appointed to larger agencies. There were also differences among agencies in the Executive Office of the President, the Cabinet, commissions, and other independent agencies (base category). Specifically, appointees in cabinet agencies were significantly less likely to have previous agency or government experience. They were also significantly less likely to have been an appointee in a previous administration or come to their appointment with other subject

area expertise. Appointees to commissions were significantly less likely to have had previous public management experience.

Turkey Farms and Campaign Experience and Connections

The qualification of appointees is only one side of the turkey farms and patronage story. Appointees selected with less competence are selected for another reason, namely campaign experience or connections of another type. Table 4 includes estimates from models of appointee campaign/transition experience and whether the appointee's last job was in politics. We do not report models of whether or not appointees were major donors or have a personal connection because of the paucity of cases (34 major donors and 17 personal connections). Instead we present the raw data in Table 5 and discuss it qualitatively below.

[Insert Table 4 here.]

The results in Table 4 are generally consistent with our expectations about patronage appointees and turkey farms. They suggest interestingly that those appointees with the closest connection to politics are less likely to work in large agencies or commissions. Agencies like the Small Business Administration or the General Services Administration might be more likely. Importantly, those appointees who worked on the campaign or transition and those appointees drawn from the political sphere are significantly more likely to work in agencies that implement policies omitted from the president's agenda and liberal agencies. The coefficients on these variables are in the expected direction and significant at the 0.10 level. The estimated probability that an appointee worked on the campaign or transition is about 13 percent. However, those

appointees who work in moderate or conservative agencies or agencies on the president's agenda are 5 percentage points less likely to have worked on the campaign or transition (8%). Agencies that implement policies on the president's agenda or moderate or conservative agencies are 11 to 13 percentage points less likely to get appointees whose last job was in politics, either a congressional staff, electoral campaign, or elected office. Together, when these results are combined with the results from above suggest that appointees with the fewest qualifications and greatest connection to the campaign or politics are most likely to work in agencies off the president's agenda and liberal agencies, all else equal.

[Insert Table 5 here.]

The results for appointees who are major donors or who have personal connections to the President are less clear, however. Table 5 lists the number of appointees who were major donors (i.e., bundlers) alongside the number of appointees with prior personal connections to President Obama. On its face, the pattern of major donor appointments does not mesh with our expectations about patronage and appointments to agencies on the agenda, liberal agencies, and agencies with complex tasks. The agency with the most major donors is the State Department (15) with almost half of all the major donors appointed in the first six months. All of these appointments were to ambassadorial positions. The State Department is coded as moderate in our data and it is considered on the president's agenda given its role in important foreign policy decisions in Iraq, Afghanistan, and North Korea. Yet, the ambassadors selected are unlikely to play a key role in any of those key issues. While Roos arguably had some claim to a role North Korean diplomacy, his portfolio has already been parsed out to

other diplomatic actors including former president, Bill Clinton. In general terms it appears that major donors have been appointed to positions where they are likely to do the least damage, as expected.

Other agencies with a noticeable number of major donors were the Departments of Commerce and Justice as well as the Executive Office of the President. The former is a common resting place for major donors as President George W. Bush's appointments of Don Evans and Carlos Gutierrez suggest. More generally, however, Commerce and Justice contain positions that are well paid in the private sector—business, economics, law. It is not terribly surprising that a wealthy businessperson or lawyer would be rewarded with a job in a subject area in which he or she had experience. Major donors often do not look like other patronage-type appointees since the process of making large sums of money often involves a more extensive career history and training than for a typical campaign worker. The raw biographical information confirms that each of the eight major donor appointees in the Department of Justice, such as Attorney General Eric Holder, are among the most qualified appointees in either department.

The appointment patterns of those with personal connections to President Obama look more like what we expected. The three agencies with the largest number of appointees with prior connections to Obama include Education (5), Health and Human Services (3), and Agriculture (2). There is a liberal bent to these appointments. That said, both Education and Health and Human Services are on the president's agenda and some of the agencies include high percentages of technical employees. One explanation for this given that there are only 17 cases and these are the first of the people with connections to Obama appointed. It is possible that these appointees who defy our expectations are

justifiably qualified, if only by chance. This being the case, these few personnel decisions might have been guided less by the “do no harm” policy and more by a policy of placing appointees where their experience makes them the best fit. For example, Margaret Hamburg, the appointed Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration in the Department of Health and Human Services (an agenda agency) who also happens to be on the board of trustees at the Obama children’s Chicago school, is entirely qualified: she has an M.D. from Harvard University, experience as the New York City Health Commissioner and was Assistant Secretary in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services during the Clinton Administration. A similar argument could be made for Arne Duncan, a close friend of the president who has had over ten years of experience in the Chicago Public School System and now serves as Secretary of the Department of Education, an agency that is central to carrying out the president’s agenda.

Together, the results from the donor and personal connections information are inconsistent with many of our expectations, if only because there are too few instances of each to draw legitimate conclusions. At best, these numbers illustrate precisely how complicated patronage is as an issue, and it may very well be that the rules governing the patronage assignments of donors and those with personal connections are different from the rules for campaign workers or Democratic Party loyalists. For instance, we could interpret these results as evidence that donors and people with personal connections to Obama are placed into comfortable positions (like ambassadorships) or places of their own choosing, rather than in positions where they can do the least harm (liberal agencies and agencies off of the agenda). Plainly, more detailed research is needed to fully understand these results.

In total, however, the results show an overall pattern where appointees with fewer qualifications and more campaign and political experience tend to cluster in certain types of agencies in a predictable pattern. Features such as whether the agency implements an issue on the president's agenda, the ideological disposition of the agency, and the complexity of agency tasks help explain some of the variance in the types of appointees named but clearly not all of the variance.

Discussion

The findings from our data with, some notable exceptions, generally support the prediction that the patterns of patronage appointments vary predictably across agencies in the federal government. Importantly, we found that agencies not on the president's agenda and liberal agencies have a greater likelihood of attracting appointees with less competence but more political connections. Similarly, appointees in the least technical agencies have generally less agency and public management experience, and vice versa. These results suggest that presidents aim to place patronage appointees into agencies where they will do the least damage both to government performance and to the president's own policy goals.

Several implications emerge from this analysis. First, there is a diversity of patronage. What limited evidence we have about major donors and appointees with personal connections to President Obama suggest that they may be appointed according to different patterns. For example, in measures of both position on the president's agenda and ideology, donor appointment patterns were the opposite of what we expected. Major donors were more likely to be appointed to agencies on the president's agenda and

moderate or conservative agencies. Of course, these results were importantly driven by the fact that almost half of major donors appointments were in ambassadorships in the State Department and a component of the remainder was appointed to the Commerce Department where major donors often are appointed.

These findings, however, highlight the fact that there is still significant variance in patronage appointment politics that remains to be explained. For example, patronage patterns may vary depending upon what interest is to be satisfied. Some senior officials such as Secretary of State Clinton bring subordinate appointees with them. Other appointees get positions because of roles on key congressional committees and relationships with influential members of Congress. How influential are these factors? Similarly, some positions seem to have their own logic of appointment. For example, positions like the aforementioned ambassadorships may be an example. We know that ambassadorships historically have been and will continue to be prime positions for rewarding large donors, regardless of the ideology of the current president or the State Department's importance to his or her agenda. Similarly appointments to US attorney positions are subject to their own rules.

Second, taking a step back, this data illustrates the broader significance of patronage's role in personnel decisions even at this early stage in the administration. While one might expect that presidents save patronage considerations for much later in the process, we find significant patterns already emerging after only six months of President Obama's administration. Patronage arguably plays a larger role in personnel decisions than is widely believed. Appointments not only are driven by concerns for loyalty and competence but also political factors.

At the same time, we must recognize the limitations of data that only includes information on appointees as of the first six months of one term of one administration. We should exercise caution in generalizing from this period to later in the Obama Presidency and to other presidents. Still, to find discernible patterns this early in the administration strongly suggests that we will find greater evidence of predictable patronage later in the term. The patterns also notably look consistent with previous empirical work on patronage (Lewis 2009a,b).

Third, these findings suggest the importance of research on the implications that patronage has on government performance. When a president chooses personnel based on their political connectedness rather than their qualifications, we have reason to question this practice's impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of the government. In fact, new studies have begun assessing appointee managers as compared to careerists by evaluating the quality of different government programs (Gallo and Lewis 2009). The effects of patronage can influence not only agency management but the performance of the presidency itself. As one political consultant recalls, President Clinton once complained when faced with internal conflict in the White House over balancing the federal budget, "I spent all my time before I took office choosing my Cabinet...But I didn't spend the time I should have choosing my staff. I just reached out and took the people who had helped me get elected and put them on the staff. It was a mistake."³⁷ Where this paper can only assess the extent of patronage, more work must be done to evaluate its consequences.

Conclusion

³⁷ Morris, Dick. 1997. *Behind the Oval Office: Winning the Presidency in the Nineties*. 97-98.

It is unclear how well John Roos will perform in his new role as ambassador. He has no diplomatic experience and is little known to U.S. or Japanese officials. By all accounts, however, he is an accomplished lawyer and he enjoys strong personal ties to the president. He was chosen over former Harvard Dean and Assistant Secretary of Defense Joseph Nye.³⁸ Ambassadorial appointments such as Roos often have deputies who are career foreign service officers to help them avoid missteps. In other agencies, however, appointees are not so fortunate. They are surrounded by other appointees selected for campaign experience or connections more than policy expertise or public management experience.

It was precisely concerns about patronage appointees that led to the creation of the civil service system in the United States. Yet, patronage persists. Presidents have refused to reduce the number of appointees, fill a higher proportion of ambassadorial positions with career foreign service officers, or generally limit their prospects for patronage. Presidents are hesitant to give up this important source of political capital. The careful distribution of government jobs can induce work for the president or party, mollify key interests, and help hold coalitions together. Reducing the president's supply of patronage through a reduction in the number of appointees or by attaching qualification requirements to appointed positions would remove a valuable resource from the president's political arsenal and thereby imperil the president's ability to accomplish the purposes for which they were elected. The debate over presidential patronage, like the debate over the spoils system, highlights the uncomfortable role of bureaucracy in a

³⁸ Weisman, Jonathan, and Yuka Hayashi. 2009. "Donors Find a Home in Obama's Ambassador Corps." *Wall Street Journal*, July 6, 2009 (on-line at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124658149328689699.html>, last accessed August 5, 2009).

democracy and the tension between a desire for presidential accountability and administrative performance.

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Table 1. Agency Appointee Characteristics by Mention in State of the Union

Appointee Characteristics	On Agenda	Not on Agenda
<i>Competence</i>		
Education (0-4)	1.23**	1.09
Worked in Clinton Administration (0,1)	0.19*	0.15
Agency Experience (0,1)	0.29*	0.25
Subject Expertise (outside of government) (0,1)	0.38*	0.33
Federal Government Experience (0,1)	0.43*	0.38
Public Management Experience (0,1)	0.23	0.22
<i>Campaign Experience or Connections</i>		
Campaign or Transition Experience (0,1)	0.13	0.15
Major Donor (0,1)	0.03*	0.02
Personal Connection (0,1)	0.02	0.01
Last Job was in Politics (0,1)	0.25**	0.31

Note: N=1305 (673 work in agencies on the president's agenda). * difference in means is significant at the 0.10 level (two-tailed tests); ** difference of means significant at the 0.05 level. Education: 0-High School, 1-Bachelors, 2-Master's Level, 3-MD or DDS, 4-Doctorate.

Table 2. Agency Appointee Characteristics by Ideology of Agency

Appointee Characteristics	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
<i>Competence</i>			
Education (0-4)	0.98	1.24**	1.19**
Worked in Clinton Administration (0,1)	0.13	0.20**	0.16
Agency Experience (0,1)	0.17	0.31**	0.28**
Subject Expertise (outside government) (0,1)	0.34	0.33	0.38
Federal Government Experience (0,1)	0.27	0.45**	0.44**
Public Management Experience (0,1)	0.21	0.31**	0.19
<i>Campaign Experience or Connections</i>			
Campaign or Transition Experience (0,1)	0.16	0.14	0.14
Major Donor (0,1)	0.01	0.04**	0.02
Personal Connection (0,1)	0.04	0.01*	0.01**
Last Job in Politics (0,1)	0.36	0.25**	0.27**

Note: N=1307 (248 in liberal agencies, 421 in moderate agencies, and 638 in conservative agencies). * significantly different than liberal agency mean at the 0.10 level (two-tailed test); ** significantly different than liberal agency mean at the 0.05 level (two-tailed test). No difference in means between moderate and conservative agencies is statistically distinguishable at the 0.05 level except public management experience. Education: 0-High School, 1-Bachelors, 2-Master's Level, 3-MD or DDS, 4-Doctorate.

Table 3. Models of Appointee Backgrounds by Agency Characteristics

	Previous Agency Experience	Previous Federal Government Experience	Worked in Clinton Admin.	Subject Area Expertise Outside Agency	Public Management Experience	Education Level
<i>Key Variables</i>						
Agency Policy Mentioned in President's Speech (0,1)	0.61** (0.17)	0.65** (0.15)	0.44** (0.19)	0.24 (0.15)	0.04 (0.18)	0.36** (0.13)
Liberal Agency (0,1)	-0.68** (0.21)	-0.83** (0.18)	-0.33 (0.25)	0.08 (0.18)	-0.08 (0.22)	-0.44** (0.17)
% Technical Employees	1.09** (0.48)	0.60 (0.45)	0.12 (0.57)	0.32 (0.45)	1.28** (0.47)	0.38 (0.44)
<i>Controls, Cut Points and Constant</i>						
Ln (Agency Employment)	0.06* (0.03)	0.05 (0.03)	0.04 (0.04)	0.10** (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)
Executive Office of the President (0,1)	-0.36 (1.14)	-0.19 (0.93)	0.03 (1.14)	-0.77 (1.13)	0.07 (1.14)	-0.10 (0.68)
Cabinet Agency (0,1)	-0.59** (0.23)	-0.71** (0.21)	-0.56** (0.26)	-0.51** (0.21)	0.28 (0.24)	-0.21 (0.18)
Commission (0,1)	0.34 (0.27)	0.25 (0.26)	-0.89** (0.38)	-0.29 (0.26)	-0.74** (0.36)	0.16 (0.23)
Constant	-1.39** (0.30)	-0.50* (0.28)	-1.66** (0.35)	-1.23** (0.30)	-1.42** (0.32)	--
N	1292	1292	1292	1292	1292	1292
Number of Appointees w/Characteristic	349	534	220	469	300	--
X^2 (6 df)	44.42**	58.41**	15.04**	23.91**	23.64**	19.03**

Note: * significant at the 0.10 level; ** significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed tests). Education: 0-High School, 1-Bachelors, 2-Master's Level, 3-MD or DDS, 4-Doctorate. Cutpoints from the model of education level omitted (-0.09 [0.26]; 0.39 [0.26]; 2.71 [0.28]; 2.85 [0.29]).

Table 4. Models of Appointee Connections by Agency Characteristics

	Campaign or Transition Experience	Previous Job was in Politics
<i>Key Variables</i>		
Agency Policy Mentioned in SOU (0,1)	-0.47** (0.19)	-0.66** (0.20)
Liberal Agency (0,1)	0.40* (0.24)	0.54** (0.22)
% Technical Employees	-0.77 (0.60)	-0.17 (0.51)
<i>Controls, Cut Points and Constant</i>		
Ln (Agency Employment)	0.02 (0.04)	-0.07** (0.03)
Executive Office of the President (0,1)	0.02 (1.14)	0.19 (1.25)
Cabinet Agency (0,1)	-0.16 (0.25)	0.55* (0.26)
Commission (0,1)	-1.83** (0.50)	-0.82** (0.37)
Constant	-1.49** (0.38)	-0.48 (0.33)
N	1292	956
Number of Appointees w/Characteristic	186	269
X^2 (7 df)	22.18**	28.40**

Note: * significant at the 0.10 level; ** significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed tests).

Table 5. Location of Major Obama Donors and Personal Connections

Agency	Major Donor	Personal Connection	Agency	Major Donor	Personal Connection
Appalachian Regional Commission	0	0	Federal Labor Relations Authority	0	0
Broadcasting Board of Governors	0	0	Federal Maritime Commission	0	0
Commission on Civil Rights	0	0	Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service	0	0
Commodity Futures Trading Commission	0	0	Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Comm.	0	0
Consumer Product Safety Commission	0	0	Federal Reserve System	0	0
Department of Agriculture	1	2	Federal Trade Commission	0	0
Department of Commerce	3	1	General Services Administration	0	1
Department of Defense	1	0	Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation	0	0
Department of Education	1	5	Merit Systems Protection Board	0	0
Department of Energy	1	0	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	0	0
Department of Health and Human Services	0	3	National Credit Union Administration	0	0
Department of Homeland Security	0	0	National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities	1	0
Department of Housing and Urban Development	0	1	National Labor Relations Board	0	0
Department of Justice	5	1	National Mediation Board	0	0
Department of Labor	0	0	National Transportation Safety Board	0	0
Department of State	15	1	Nuclear Regulatory Commission	0	0
Department of Transportation	1	1	Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission	0	0
Department of Veterans Affairs	0	0	Office of Government Ethics	0	0
Department of the Interior	0	0	Office of Personnel Management	0	1
Department of the Treasury	0	0	Office of the Director of National Intelligence	0	0
Environmental Protection Agency	0	0	Overseas Private Investment Corporation	0	0
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	0	0	Peace Corps	0	0
Executive Office of the President	3	1	President's Comm. on White House Fellowships	0	0
Export-Import Bank	0	0	Securities and Exchange Commission	0	0
Farm Credit Administration	0	0	Small Business Administration	0	0
Federal Communications Commission	2	1	Social Security Administration	0	0
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	0	0	Trade and Development Agency	0	0
Federal Election Commission	0	0	U.S. Agency for International Development	0	0
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	0	0			