

Legislators and Federal Agency Performance[↑]

In this paper, we rely on novel survey data from a 2020 survey of federal executives to evaluate how much effort individual U.S. senators expend to make sure federal agencies are effectively managed, well-run organizations. We review the incentives of members of Congress to expend effort on agency management, noting how this varies by ideology, agency, and electoral timing. We find that more conservative members place a lower priority on making sure administrative agencies are effectively managed, even during a period when Republicans are in the majority and there is a Republican president. This effect is mitigated for agencies perceived as conservative. Individual senators also expend more effort on agencies that provide particularistic benefits, namely discretionary federal grants. Contrary to expectations, U.S. senators up for reelection were perceived as no less involved in overseeing federal programs and agencies. Differences by seniority and position also explain variation in expected ways. We conclude by drawing out implications of these findings for the health of the administrative state in an era of political polarization and generational change.

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In 2018 Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) announced he was retiring from the United States Senate. In some ways his departure reflected a changing legislature. On his departure, former Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH) said, “Lamar is the opposite (of the party ideologues). He is a governing person. He’s in a difficult position.”¹ Gregg noted that Alexander was focused on the work of governing rather than winning elections and engaging in political fights. In 2012 Alexander had stepped down from party leadership (he was No. 3 in the Republican leadership) to focus on his role as the top Republican on the Senate’s Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. His departure raises the question of how many senators like Lamar Alexander work in the Senate? Which senators are doing the hard work of governing, making sure programs are reauthorized and implemented effectively on behalf of the American people?

This is an important question since only Congress can provide certain fundamentals to agency management. Congress (re)authorizes programs, determines their design, and appropriates funds. One of the key responsibilities embedded in Article I is for Congress to review and supervise the actions of administrative agencies (Oleszek 2010). While the Constitution vests presidents with the executive power and tasks them with taking care that the laws are faithfully executed, recent presidents have often been reluctant to fulfill this role, particularly in agencies whose missions presidents oppose (Durant 1992; Lewis 2018; Nathan 1975). During the Trump Administration, White House advisor Stephen Bannon declared the deconstruction of the administrative state as one of the president’s three primary goals.² Through a variety of statements and actions President Trump declared his disdain for the people, process, and organizations of the United States executive

¹ Dylan Scott, “Lamar Alexander, pillar of Washington’s old guard, is retiring from the Senate,” Vox.com, December 17, 2018 (<https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/4/16/16978484/lamar-alexander-retirement-health-care-obamacare-repeal-senate>).

² Jon Michaels, “How Trump is dismantling a pillar of the American state,” *The Guardian*, November 7, 2017 (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/nov/07/donald-trump-dismantling-american-administrative-state>, accessed December 29, 2018); David French, “Trump Wants to Deconstruct the Regulatory State? Good. Here’s How You Start,” *National Review*, February 24, 2017 (<https://www.nationalreview.com/2017/02/administrative-state-deconstruction-trump-steve-bannon-cpac/>, accessed January 4, 2019).

(Bernhard et al. 2018; Lewis 2019). If presidents will not tend to federal programs, this makes Congress's efforts even more important. Attention from elected officials is fundamental to the health of agencies responsible for doing what Americans have asked them to do, tasks as varied as landing airplanes, preventing terrorist attacks, and delivering mail (Kaufman 1986; Lewis 2018).

Scholars of American politics have described the inner workings of Congress in detail, including its investigation and oversight activities (e.g., Wilson 1885; Fenno 1973; Ogul and Rockman 1990; Kriner and Schickler 2016). This includes characterizing members generally as workhorses or showhorses or more diversely by different labels such as policy specialists, party soldiers, district advocates, party builders, ambitious entrepreneurs (Payne 1980; Bernhard and Sulkin 2018). Scholars give these appellations as ways of differentiating how members spend their limited time, pulled in different directions by the need to win reelection for themselves or their party and the hard work of governing (Mayhew 1974; Titiunik 2016; Park 2021). Evaluating how much of that limited time members allocate to ensure the effective management of federal programs is difficult because of this work is hard to observe systematically, occurring in phone calls, private meetings, or staff projects (Aberbach 1990). This makes arbitrating among different explanations for members' investment in promoting agency performance, whether related to reelection, ideology or other factors difficult (Lowande 2018; Lowande and Potter 2021).

In this paper, we rely on novel survey data from a 2020 survey of federal executives to evaluate how much effort individual U.S. senators expend to make sure their agencies are effectively managed, well-run organizations. We review the incentives of members of Congress to expend effort on agency management, noting how this varies by ideology, agency, and electoral timing. We find that more conservative members place a lower priority on making sure administrative agencies are effectively managed, even during a period when Republicans are in the majority and there is a Republican president. This effect is mitigated for agencies perceived as conservative. Individual

senators also expend more effort on agencies that provide particularistic benefits. Contrary to expectations, U.S. senators up for reelection are perceived by agency officials as directing no less effort to agency oversight. Differences by seniority and position also explain variation in expected ways (McGrath 2013). We conclude by drawing out implications of these findings for the health of the administrative state in an era of political polarization and generational change.

Legislators and Federal Program Management

Scholars of American political institutions have conducted substantial research on congressional oversight of executive departments and agencies. A significant portion of this work has studied Congress or its subcomponents (e.g., committees) rather than individual legislators (Lowande 2018). A rich literature explores the actions of parties, chambers, and committees in investigating the executive branch, focusing on the predictors of investigatory behavior (see, e.g., Harris 1964; Kriner and Schickler 2016; Mayhew 1991; McGrath 2013; Parker and Dull 2009). This literature has emphasized the importance of factors such as divided party government, political polarization, insecure majorities, committee staff capacity, and presidential scandal or overstepping (see, e.g., Bolton and Thrower 2021; Kriner and Schickler 2016; Lee 2016; MacDonald and McGrath 2016; Mills and Selin 2017). Scholars note the massive growth in the size and complexity of the administrative state and the difficulty this creates for legislators (Aberbach 1990; Dodd and Schott 1979). They detail how Congress has organized and reorganized its committee structure to facilitate “continual watchfulness” of the executive to respond to these challenges.

Work that focuses on legislators as individuals has examined how reelection incentives determine the amount and content of oversight activities (see, e.g., Arnold 1979; Ferejohn 1974; Lowande and Peck 2017). The desire for reelection induces members to take actions for which voters will give them individual credit, whether symbolic -- position taking, credit-claiming, and

advertising -- or substantive (Mayhew 1974). For members with limited time, the hard, often obscure, work of congressional oversight may not be the most effective way of securing reelection (Aberbach 1990; Hall 1987; Ogul 1976; Scher 1963). This has led to different appellations for members that respond to these incentives by focusing on public activities such as “showhorses” or “grandstanders” (Payne 1980; Bernhard and Sulkin 2018; Park 2021). Most existing research agrees, however, that incentives to conduct oversight are strongest with agencies that can provide discrete benefits to key electoral interests (see, e.g., Arnold 1979; Ferejohn 1974).³ Legislators often intervene with a bureaucracy to deliver federal benefits to their districts and states (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987; Grimmer et al. 2012; Ritchie 2018).

Recently, scholars have emphasized the ways that ideological differences among legislators influence oversight choices. For example, Lowande (2018) and Lowande and Potter (2021) explore how ideological differences between members and agencies influence member requests for information and participation in agency notice and comment rulemaking, respectively. The estimated effects of ideology in these studies is mixed. Unfortunately, it has been hard to arbitrate between these views since much of the work of oversight is invisible to outside observers. Legislative oversight often happens outside committee hearings in internal communications, staff investigations, and through informal member attention and interest (Aberbach 1990, 221-2; Lowande 2018).

In what follows we explain the key sources of variation among legislators in the effort they put into toward ensuring the effective functioning of the departments and agencies of government, integrating concerns for reelection with ideological differences between the parties. We evaluate this account with new data provided by federal executives about the degree of involvement different U.S. senators have in providing their agency what it needs to be effectively run and well-managed.

³ This includes interest groups that care intensely about agency outputs (McKay and Yackee 2007; Yackee and Yackee 2006).

Which Legislators Focus on Management Effectiveness?

One of the primary responsibilities of the legislative branch is to conduct active and regular oversight of the departments and agencies of government (see, e.g., Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 [60 Stat. 812]; *McGrain v. Daugherty* [273 U.S. 135] 1937). Yet, the electoral incentives of legislators regularly lead members to focus their attention on activities more directly related to reelection concerns (Aberbach 1990; Hall 1987; Ogul 1963; Scher 1963). The drive for reelection also focuses legislator attention on some agencies more than others since the activities of some agencies are more directly related to reelection than others.

Reelection-minded legislators focus on activities that will lead voters to return them to office. Voters, however, know very little about the bureaucracy or American politics. Only one-third to one-half of voters can name all three branches of government.⁴ Voter knowledge of the federal executive branch is even more limited. Most voters rarely think about government agencies and when they do, they tend to hold negative views, partly due to the overwhelming media focus on government failures or scandals rather than successes (Goodsell 2015; Yackee and Lowery 2005).⁵ Legislators adopt views and actions consistent with these voter attitudes. If voters do not prioritize federal agencies and their management, legislators will not. If voters have negative views of administrative agencies, so will legislators.

While bureaucracy is unpopular, federal programs are popular. Indeed, federal agencies implement programs that were favored by House and the Senate majorities at some point and most

⁴ See, for example, Reid Wilson, “Only 36 percent of Americans can name the three branches of government,” *Washington Post*, September 18, 2014 (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/govbeat/wp/2014/09/18/only-36-percent-of-americans-can-name-the-three-branches-of-government/>) and Valerie Strauss, “For Constitution Day, a sobering new finding on 2021 survey on Americans’ civics knowledge,” *Washington Post*, September 17, 2021 (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2021/09/17/americans-civics-survey-sobering-insurrection/>).

⁵ See also Lisa Rein and Ed O’Keefe, “New Post poll finds negativity toward federal workers,” *Washington Post*, October 18, 2010 (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/17/AR2010101703866.html>), accessed January 8, 2019). Voters’ views of specific agencies are often quite positive even while overall perceptions of the bureaucracy are negative (Goodsell 2015; Verkuil 2017).

federal programs remain overwhelmingly popular.⁶ A majority of legislators usually share an interest in these programs being effective and efficient. The problem is that few legislators have the incentive to provide this attention themselves, particularly given growing partisan disagreement over the administrative state (Moe 1989; Teles 2008). When it comes to effective agency performance, members free-ride on the actions of others even with what the agency is doing (Clinton et al. 2014).

The preferences of members' key electoral constituencies also influence member willingness to expend effort ensuring high performance. Winning party nominations and general elections require members to demonstrate fealty to key principles (Fenno 1978). Conservatives, at least since the 1970s, have expressed concerns about administrative policymaking, specifically government regulations. In this view, bureaucrats empowered with vague statutory mandates from Congress are promulgating rules that infringe on the rights of individuals and groups in violation of the Constitution and good policy. Legal concerns about agency officials promulgating regulations range from concerns about democratic accountability—i.e., unelected officials are setting policy—to separation of powers concerns since Congress has given administrative officials the authority to “implement, interpret, and prescribe law.” In addition, many administrative agencies also exercise some combination of legislative and judicial powers which raises concerns under a strict vision of separation of powers. Along with legal concerns, conservatives prefer (and believe the Constitution imagines) a smaller and more limited national government, which they believe will better foster economic growth and individual flourishing. For liberals, administrative policymaking involves the application of technocratic expertise in response to appropriate legislative direction. They see fewer problems of accountability due to the structures and processes put in place to allow participation

⁶ John Gramlich, “Few Americans support cuts to most government programs, including Medicaid,” Pew Research, May 26, 2017 (<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/05/26/few-americans-support-cuts-to-most-government-programs-including-medicaid/>).

and legislative and judicial accountability. Further, liberals believe the regime of rulemaking is the best means of protecting against market failure and the promotion of human welfare.

While election minded legislators generally have few incentives to focus on the effective functioning of the departments and agencies of government, these ideological distinctions should inform how members allocate the oversight effort they put forth. Conservative legislators see it in their interest to neglect or actively work to deconstruct the administrative state rather than ensure its health and functioning. Liberal legislators are more motivated to focus on program effectiveness as part of their belief in the federal government and its programs.

H1: *Ideology*: Conservative legislators will allocate less effort toward ensuring the effective functioning of the departments and agencies of government.

However, liberal and conservative legislators are more or less enthusiastic about agencies depending on agency missions. For example, liberal members may be less enthusiastic about the Department of Defense and conservative members less supportive of the Environmental Protection Agency, and these differences may inform the time and effort legislators put into ensuring the agency is well-run and effectively managed. This is notable because the overall health of the administrative state can be heavily influenced by the politicized patterns of oversight. The federal government's ability to collect taxes, provide security, and ensure equal access to markets and politics is importantly determined by the collective willingness of Congress to invest time and effort into providing resources and making sure these resources are used effectively.

H2: *Mismatch*: Legislators will allocate more effort toward ensuring the effective functioning of the departments and agencies of government whose missions are consistent with their ideology.

Individual legislators face reelection every two or six years and make decisions with an eye toward delivering credit-worthy accomplishments in that time frame. This means focusing on agencies that can influence reelection. Federal agencies perform a variety of different functions, from regulating to providing advice to internal management. Some

federal agencies, however, distribute federal resources to districts and states through grants or other federal distributive actions such as decisions to buy specific goods and services (Arnold 1979; Cain et al. 1987; Dahlstrom et al. 2021; Ferejohn 1974; Grimmer et al. 2021). Federal agencies make decisions that are essential to key district or state interests. The Department of Agriculture, for example, is central to the lives of residents of many farm states. The Department of the Interior plays a key role in the West through grazing and mining decisions. While legislators have few general incentives to oversee departments and agencies, they may exert more effort if the agency can or does provide particularistic benefits to the legislator's constituents or electorally relevant groups (Scher 1963).

H3. *Particularistic*. Legislators will allocate more effort toward ensuring the effective functioning of the departments and agencies of government that give out particularistic benefits.

Finally, variation in the degree of effort legislators must put forth to ensure reelection, given both the timing of elections and their relative electoral security, may affect how much effort they have remaining to expend on agency oversight activities. One of the distinctive features of Senator Alexander was his long seniority and his relative popularity in Tennessee. He was first elected in 2002 and, unlike his colleagues in the House, he faced election every 6 years. Alexander won reelection with more than 60% of the vote in both 2008 and 2014. Part of what allowed Alexander to focus on governance was his relative election security. Had Alexander represented a more competitive state, he may have had less time and resources to make governance a personal priority. In addition, it is possible that Alexander was less able to prioritize promoting agency performance when he was up for reelection relative to earlier years of each of his terms, as reelection years require legislators to attract support from voters, party leaders, and donors through public and private events. More generally, members may be freer to do the hard work of management when they do not face impending reelection or competitive electoral environments.

H4. *Electoral Security*. Legislators will allocate less time to ensuring the effective functioning of the departments and agencies of government when they face a competitive election.

Data, Variables, and Methods

One difficulty with evaluating the time and effort individual members of Congress put into managing the executive branch is that much oversight activities is unobservable. While the hard work of making sure executive agencies function effectively includes members' public activities like oversight hearings, it also encompasses considerable and private action by members and staff including reading materials, holding meetings, making telephone calls, and conducting site visits.

Acknowledging this limitation, we instead measure the individual effort and concern of specific legislators using novel survey data from a 2020 survey of federal executives. In this survey, we solicit agency officials' perceptions of the extent to which senators working on committees with jurisdiction over their agencies exert time and effort to promote the efficiency and performance of those agencies. This data comes from the Survey on the Future of Government Service, which was fielded through a collaborative enterprise with Mark Richardson at Georgetown and other academic and non-profit partners. The survey targeted appointed and career federal executives across the executive establishment.⁷ Fielded during the pandemic, we received 1,485 complete surveys out of 16,232 for a response rate of 9.1% (11.5% rate if include partial responses). This is comparable to most public opinion surveys.⁸

⁷ The Princeton Survey Research Center sent the 15-20 minute survey to executives in all non-advisory federal agencies headed by Senate confirmed appointees. The target population includes all political appointees, career members of the Senior Executive Service (SES), Senior Foreign Service (SFS) officers serving domestically, and comparable managers in agencies without the SES or SFS. The population also includes other high level career managers that administered programs or agencies (e.g., GS14, 15 with specific titles).

⁸Stephanie Marken, *Still Listening: The State of Telephone Surveys*, GALLUP METHODOLOGY BLOG, January 11, 2018 (<https://news.gallup.com/opinion/methodology/225143/listening-state-telephone-surveys.aspx>).

Measuring U.S. Senator Management Effort

We focused our survey questions on senators' management concern and effort for two reasons. First, focusing on the 100-member Senate rather than the 435-member House ensures that we obtain several respondent evaluations of each senator's effort, thus allowing us to exploit variation across senators and committees. Second, because senators, unlike House members, serve staggered terms, we can utilize variation senators' electoral cycles to evaluate whether senators' proximity to their next elections are associated with their investment in oversight activities.

We measure senator management concern and effort in two steps. First, we asked each respondent, "Of all the Senate committees, what committee's jurisdiction overlaps most with the work of [your agency]?" Respondents answered by selecting one of the Senate standing committees from a drop-down menu.⁹ Second, we use respondents' selections to randomly draw 5 senators serving on that committee and ask respondents:

"Thinking of the following senators, how much priority have they given to making sure [your agency] is an effectively managed, well-run organization?"¹⁰

Respondents expressed their perceptions of the time and effort senators exert to make sure their agencies are effectively managed and well-run by using a slider that allowed them to choose a continuous value from 1 ("No priority") to 5 ("High priority").¹¹

Respondents provided 1,943 senator ratings, with an average rating of 2.96 (Median 3.0; SD 1.26, Min 1, Max 5). In Figure 1, we present a summary of these senator-level ratings based on a Bayesian multirater item response model, which accounts for respondents' differential use of the

⁹ There is no fixed chamber list that connects agency to committee jurisdiction (Clinton et al. 2014). Congress itself has used surveys to connect agencies to the committees with jurisdiction.

¹⁰ Each respondent's self-selected workplace was inserted into the question where "[your agency]" is listed. For example, an executive in the Economic Research Service would receive the following text: "Thinking of the following senators, how much priority have they given to making sure the Economic Research Service is an effectively managed, well-run organization?" This helps solve what is referred to as the "levels" program in organizational research since respondents interpret what "my agency" means differently (e.g., Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, or San Francisco Field Office). See Thompson and Siciliano 2021.

¹¹ Respondents were also offered a "Don't Know" option.

response slider.¹² Among the highest rated senators are Senators Ben Cardin (D-MD), Patty Murray (D-WA), and Tom Carper (D-DE). Among the lowest rated are Senators Rand Paul (R-KY), Todd Young (R-IN), and Ted Cruz (R-TX).¹³

Senators from the Democratic party have higher average estimates than Republican senators ($p < 0.00$ in a two-sample t -test of the estimates' posterior means). Since the 1980s, there has been a growing rift between the parties over the administrative state, including arguments about its efficacy, wisdom, and constitutionality. One response among some conservatives is to advocate limiting the activities of the national government, if not by deconstruction, then neglect. Republicans may feel less compelled to make sure agencies work well if they do not believe that the agencies should exist in the first place. Republicans may also feel that there is less for them to do overseeing the executive with a Republican president at the helm. Democrats, by contrast, may feel compelled to focus on governance precisely because of their belief in the agencies and programs under their jurisdiction and because of the Trump Administration's approach to deconstruction.

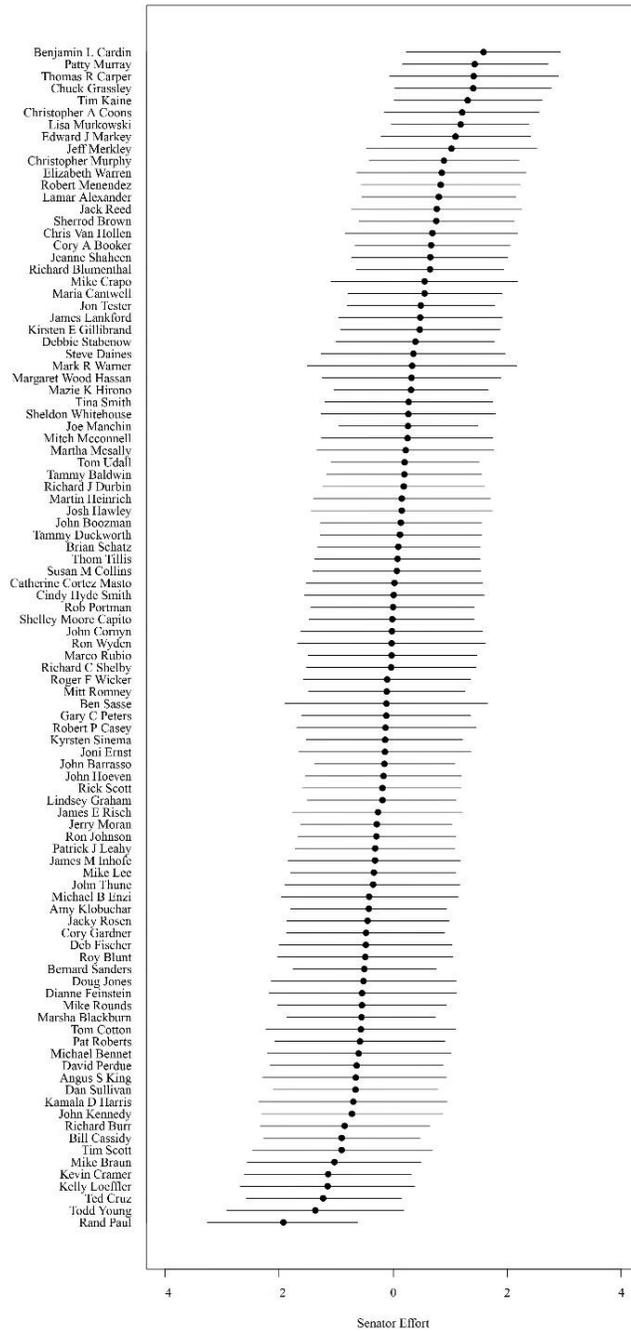
While there is a clear difference between the parties, there is significant variation within the parties. Among the Republican senators, Senators Grassley (R-IA), Murkowski (R-AK), and Alexander (R-TN) have the highest ratings. Each has significant experience in the Senate. Each chaired a committee in 2020. The Democratic senators with the lowest ratings include the two senators from California (Kamala Harris and Diane Feinstein) and Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO). During 2020, Senators Bennet and Harris were campaigning for the presidency. Senator Bennet is

¹² We estimate a two-parameter Bayesian item response theory model using the **R** package **brms**, which interfaces with the Stan programming language (Bürkner 2021). To account for how senators' service on different committees might induce variance in respondents' ratings, we included a multilevel structure whereby the "difficulty" parameter was estimated for each unique senator-committee dyad, and those dyads were further nested in senators and committees. The estimates we present are those associated with the senator-level parameters. Our model utilized 4 chains with 2000 iterations per chain (1000 for warm-up, 1000 for sampling). Diagnostics indicated convergence (i.e. all $\hat{R} < 1.10$) and no divergent transitions.

¹³ There are two senators for whom we have too few ratings, Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer (D-NY), who did not serve on any committees, and Pat Toomey (R-PA), who only served on two committees in 2020. Among the 98 senators, the number of ratings varied from 2 to 49 and the average number of ratings was 20 (SD 9.5).

up for reelection in 2022 and won his last race with 49.9% of the vote. Thus, Senators Bennet and Harris may have been more focused on electoral politics than oversight work.

Figure 1. Estimated Senator Priority on Ensuring Effective Agency Performance



Note: Points and lines represent posterior means and 95% credible intervals for respondents' perceptions of senators' priority on ensuring effective agency performance. Senator-level estimates are ordered from highest to lowest (i.e., higher scores indicate more priority on ensuring effective agency performance). See Footnote 13 for estimation details.

These estimates aggregate across a senator's activity on several committees and agencies. For example, in 2019-2020 Senator Alexander served on Appropriations, Energy and Natural Resources, Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (Chair), and Rules and Administration. The three larger committees oversaw dozens of agencies each. Given our interest in the investment of individual senators in specific agencies, we return our focus to the individual respondent ratings. This will allow us to parse out the activities of a senator like Senator Alexander regarding an agency like the Department of Education (relatively liberal) as compared to an agency like the Department of Energy (relatively conservative).

Explaining Variation in U.S. Senator Management Effort

As these descriptives suggest, there is substantial variation among senators. Above we hypothesized that more conservative members would allocate less time toward ensuring effective agency management than liberal members but that this effect would be moderated by the agency's ideology. Given the high correlation between party affiliation and ideology in the contemporary Congress and to make our analyses more easily interpretable, we measure senator ideology using an indicator for party affiliation (0=Democratic Party, 1= Republican Party; 51%, 49%).¹⁴

We measure agency ideology using estimates produced by Richardson et al. (2018). These estimates are based on a 2014 survey of federal executives where respondents were asked:

Some agencies have policy views due to law, practice, culture, or tradition that can be characterized across Democratic and Republican administrations as liberal or conservative. This can be an important feature of the environment of public management in these agencies (which is why we ask about it). If you are willing, we would benefit from your assessment of the policy leanings of the following agencies

¹⁴In alternative specifications, we measure senators' ideology using their estimated DW-Nominate scores (0.06; SD 0.45; Min -0.77, Max 0.92). Our model estimates when using senators' party affiliation (Table 1) are substantively similar to those obtained when using senators' DW-Nominate scores (not shown). There are two minor differences that do not alter the substantive conclusions. First, the main effect of agency ideology is positive and estimated more precisely. Second, the coefficient estimate on the log number of grants is estimated more precisely.

to characterize this aspect of their management environment. As with other questions, you are free not to answer.

In your opinion, do the policy views of the following agencies tend to slant liberal, slant conservative, or neither consistently in both Democratic and Republican administrations? [Respondents were also provided a “Don’t know” option.]

Each respondent rated 5-8 agencies, usually agencies they identified at the start of the survey.¹⁵

Respondents were primed to think about agencies “across Democratic and Republican administrations” to extract long-term ideological leanings of different agencies based upon mission and workforce. Richardson and colleagues aggregated these ratings using a Bayesian multirater item response model to generate estimates for 165 agencies, the 15 executive departments, 95 major departments subcomponents, 7 agencies in the Executive Office of the President, and 48 independent agencies. We interact senators’ party affiliation with agency ideology. Our expectation is that liberal (conservative) senators will give more priority to liberal (conservative) agencies.

We also expect that senators may prioritize agencies involved in the distribution of particularistic benefits. Given the ability of some agencies to distribute federal largesse to the states of senators, we expect that respondents in these agencies should report more effort by senators to make sure they work well. To measure which agencies are more distributive, we collected data on federal project grants in the year prior to the survey (i.e., June 15, 2019 to June 14, 2020) from [usaspending.gov](https://www.usaspending.gov) (Median 1,075; Mean 9,234; SD 25,280; Min 0, Max 150,166).¹⁶ Given the skew in the data, we regress the respondent’s rating of the senator on the log of the respondent’s agency project grants in the year before the survey.

¹⁵ Each respondent in the survey is asked to identify three agencies they worked with. All respondents were provided these agencies to rate, plus the Office of Management and Budget and Office of Personnel Management. Respondents online were given 3 additional agencies, usually another agency in their own department if they worked in an executive department (Richardson et al. 2018, 305).

¹⁶ The federal government tracks four types of grant spending: formula, block, project, and cooperative agreement. We focus on project grants since these are the most discretionary. We have also estimated models using the log of the total number of grants in the year prior to the survey. The coefficient estimates are similarly signed but smaller and less precisely estimated. We could not reject the null that the total number of grants had no effect on senator attention. In the model with fixed effects for committee and department the coefficient estimate was 0.03 (SE 0.02; $p < 0.12$).

Since senators serve staggered six-year terms, with only one-third up for reelection in a given cycle, we include an indicator for election year for those up in 2020 (0,1; 27%). We also include the percentage of the vote the senator received in her last election (57.97; SD6.85; Min 46, Max 79) and interact the two, noting that safe senators who need not to worry about elections may have more time and effort to pursue other activities. We expect that senators up for reelection will allocate less time to the effective management of federal programs, particularly if they expect a close race.

Controls

There are a number of other committee, agency, senator, and respondent-level variables that may be correlated with the key independent variables and the respondent rating of individual senators. Different committees and agencies have different jurisdictions, histories, and cultures and this could influence respondent evaluations of senators (e.g., see Evans 2011, Fenno 1966, 1973). The committee with the highest average rating was Intelligence (4.2) and the committee with the lowest was Finance (2.6). Among the executive departments, respondents working in the Department of Labor gave senators the lowest average rating (2.4) and respondents working the Department of Commerce the highest (3.4).¹⁷ To account for potential committee and agency differences, we estimate models with committee and department-level fixed effects.¹⁸

Of course, the efficacy of senators depends upon more than their own choices. Some have a greater opportunity to become involved in agency activities because of seniority or position

¹⁷ Committee ratings are drawn from the committee-level parameters in our 2-parameter Bayesian multirater item response model (see Footnote 13).

¹⁸ We include an indicator for each executive department and the Executive Office of the President. These estimates are compared against a base category which is respondents working in an independent agency. We have also estimated models that control for estimates for workforce skills at the end of the Obama Administration (2014) and the end of the Trump Administration (2020) given the possibility that senators pay more attention to agencies with management problems (Richardson et al. 2018). We could not reject the null that senator priority is uncorrelated with the quality of the agency's workforce at the end of 2014 or 2020. The inclusion of the 2014 measure has no impact on other estimates. The inclusion of the 2020 measure reduces the size of the coefficient on the log of the number of grants and makes this measure less precise (coef 0.03; SE 0.02; $p < 0.16$) but also reduces the N by more than 100 cases.

(McGrath 2013). We include the number of congresses a senator has served (Mean 6.2; SD 4.3; Min 1, Max 23)¹⁹ and whether the senator chairs one of the standing committees (0,1; 22%). We expect that greater seniority and higher committee positions will lead to more priority on effective management in the agencies the senator oversees.

Our dependent variable is an individual perception of senator effort. Appointed and career federal executives are evaluating the senators most directly connected with the work that they do. While not all of these executives will come in contact with senators or their staffs, they will have a sense of their attention and support, however noisy that perception. While the associated random error would only make our estimates less precise, bias could emerge in our estimates if respondents' reported perceptions are colored by their position or partisanship. For instance, Democratic respondents could evaluate Democratic senators more favorably than GOP senators. Fortunately, we know which respondents are political appointees (0,1; 12%) and which respondents self-identify as Democrats (0,1; 40%) or Republicans (0,1; 16%). Our expectation is that appointees and Republicans will be more bullish about the support provided by the Senate, given the Republican majority. We also include interactions of respondent partisanship with senator partisanship to help account for this perceptual bias.²⁰ Our expectation is that Democratic and Republican respondents will rate Democratic and Republican senators differently.

¹⁹ We have also estimated models including indicators for senators that are serving their first term and those retiring. The results are similar. The coefficient estimate for first term senators is negative, indicating that such senators spend less effort on oversight. This coefficient, however, is not estimated precisely (coef -0.13; SE 0.12; $p < 0.29$). The coefficient estimate for the indicator for retiring senators is close to 0, -0.002 (SE 0.16).

²⁰ In supplemental models we also estimate models only with Republican or Democratic respondents. These models are similar across the board except in perceptions of ideology and the estimates in the Republican model are less precise ($N=186$). In models with only Republican respondents, GOP senators are estimated to be more likely to invest effort in support the respondent agency but even more so if the agency itself was conservative (coef 0.27; $p < 0.092$). We include the full estimates in Appendix C.

Methods

We estimate models of individual ratings by regressing these ratings on the measures described above with ordinary least squares.²¹ Table 1 reports robust standard errors clustered on respondent.²² We have also estimated Bayesian multilevel linear models with varying intercepts for respondents, departments, senator-committee dyads, senators, and committees. In the multilevel models, the coefficient estimates of many of our covariates of interest are similar but smaller in magnitude. They remain statistically distinguishable at the 95% level. We include these estimates in Appendix B and reference them in the text where most relevant.

Table 1. OLS Models of Senator Effort at Ensuring Effective Agency Performance, 2020

	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
<i>Key Variables</i>								
GOP Senator (0,1)	-0.49	0.11**	-0.34	0.13**	-0.34	0.12**	-0.34	0.12**
Agency Ideology (L, C)	-0.04	0.06	-0.01	0.07	0.07	0.11	0.06	0.12
GOP Sen*Agency Ideology	0.25	0.07**	0.31	0.07**	0.34	0.07**	0.33	0.07**
Ln(# of Project Grants)			0.03	0.01*	0.03	0.02	0.04	0.02**
Election Year (0,1)	0.86	0.62	1.12	0.73	0.69	0.71	0.77	0.69
Vote Share Last Election	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01
Election*Vote Share	-0.02	0.01	-0.02	0.01	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01
<i>Senator Controls</i>								
Seniority	0.02	0.01**	0.03	0.01**	0.02	0.01**	0.02	0.01**
Committee Chair (0,1)	0.41	0.09**	0.46	0.10**	0.48	0.10**	0.46	0.10**
<i>Respondent Controls</i>								
Political Appointee (0,1)	0.07	0.12	0.04	0.19	0.11	0.20	0.07	0.19
Democrat (0,1)	0.21	0.12*	0.21	0.14	0.25	0.15*	0.22	0.15
Republican (0,1)	0.38	0.16**	0.33	0.18*	0.35	0.18*	0.27	0.18
Dem*GOP Senator	-0.59	0.14**	-0.63	0.17**	-0.63	0.16**	-0.64	0.16**
Rep*Democratic Senator	-0.95	0.20**	-1.00	0.23**	-1.05	0.23**	-1.05	0.24**

²¹ We could also estimate models on the senator ratings, but this would not allow us to connect senators to individual agencies since every senator serves on multiple committees and most agencies are overseen by multiple committees. The dependent variable is continuous but does have notable spikes at 1 and 5, suggesting that there might be censoring (i.e., a respondent might rate a senator lower than 1 or higher than 5 if they had that option). We include Tobit models as a robustness check in Appendix Table A.

²² We have also estimated models with robust standard errors clustered on workplace and estimated via bootstrapping. The results from these supplemental models are substantively similar. In the models with standard errors clustered on workplace (not shown), the coefficient estimate on the log of the number of grants is estimated slightly less precisely in all models (coef 0.04, SE 0.02; p<0.051). In the models with bootstrapped standard errors, the coefficient estimate on the log of the number of grants is estimated more precisely (coef 0.04; SE 0.01; p<0.001).

Constant	3.07	0.30**	3.00	0.36**	3.01	0.38**	3.90	0.59**
Committee Fixed Effects	N		N		N		Y	
Dept-Level Fixed Effects	N		N		Y		Y	
N	1,771		1,283		1,283		1,283	
F (13, 14, 30, 43)	16.17**		11.91**		8.46**		6.96**	
R ²	0.12		0.13		0.16		0.19	

Note: *Significant at the 0.05; significant at the 0.10 level in two-tailed tests. Model estimates from OLS regressions of federal executive responses to survey question: “Thinking of the following senators, how much priority have they given to making sure [your agency] is an effectively managed, well-run organization?” [1-No priority to 5-High priority]. Standard errors clustered on respondent reported.

Results

In Table 1, we present parameter estimates from a series of linear models regressing federal executives’ ratings of senators’ prioritization of making sure their agencies are efficiently managed and well-run on the covariates described above. Model 1 excludes the measure of agency grant activity because the federal government does not report this information for government corporations (e.g., Federal Reserve, Tennessee Valley Authority) and some smaller units in large departments, meaning that respondents from those agencies are omitted when this measure is included. Model 2 adds this grants measure, Model 3 adds department-level fixed effects, and Model 4 further adds committee-level fixed effects. The models fit the data reasonably well. All improve substantially on a constant-only model and coefficient estimates are consistent across specifications ($p < 0.00$). Substantively, federal executives report that GOP senators exert less effort to make sure their agencies are performing effectively (H1), although this difference diminishes for agencies generally considered conservative (H2). Perceptions of senator involvement do vary by the partisanship of the federal executive taking the survey, but respondents of all stripes report greater GOP senator involvement when agencies are more conservative (see Appendix Table C). Federal executives also report greater involvement in their agencies when their agencies give out large numbers of grants (H3). However, we cannot reject the null hypothesis that senator involvement does not change during election years (H4). If anything, model estimates indicate that senators exert

more time and effort when they are up for reelection, though this effect dissipates in our multilevel specifications (see Appendix Table B). We walk through our results concerning each of these hypotheses in turn.

One of our most robust findings is the relationship between partisan affiliation and how much a senator prioritizes agency management. The coefficient on GOP senator is negative and large, indicating that GOP senators put a lower priority on making sure that agencies are effectively managed, well-run organizations (i.e., the main effect). This party difference disappears, however, when the respondent works in an agency we would classify as conservative such as defense or intelligence agencies (i.e., interaction term). In models without interactions, GOP senators are estimated to be rated about 0.54 less on a scale from 1 to 5 (95% CI: -0.76 to -0.31). The positive coefficient on the precisely estimated interaction term suggests this effect is mitigated for more conservative agencies (i.e., higher values of ideology). Just looking at point estimates, a 1-point increase in ideology (on a scale varying from -1.94 to 1.93) is estimated to increase GOP senator support by about 0.25 to 0.35. However, it is important to note that given the wide confidence bands around these estimated effects, this interactive effect is statistically distinguishable only at extreme ends of the agency ideology scale (Golder et al. 2012). Thus, while there is a gap in the reported priority GOP senators put into liberal agencies, and that this gap disappears for more conservative agencies, this trend is only meaningfully distinct at extreme ends of the agency ideology scale.²³ These results suggest that while Democratic senators place a consistent level of time and effort into prioritizing agency performance, GOP senators' willingness to do so is conditioned on the agencies' ideological reputation.

²³ Figure 2's x-axis omits the extreme ends of the agency ideology scale (-1.94 to -1.50 and 1.50 to 1.93), and distinguishable differences only appear at the extreme left end of the scale.

Some caution should be applied in interpreting these results since partisanship colors perceptions of the behavior of different senators. Perceptions about Democratic and Republican senators varies depending upon whether the federal executive herself is a Democrat or a Republican. Democratic federal executives rate Republican senators lower and Republican executives rate Democratic senators lower. Indeed, if we separate out Republican respondents from Democratic respondents, Republicans rate GOP senators as investing *more* effort than Democrat senators on average (Appendix Table C). Among respondents that were Democrats or independents (or refused to provide information about party ID), GOP senators are rated as giving significantly less priority to effective agency performance. Among all three groups, however, the results indicate that GOP senators place a greater priority on agency performance when the agency is conservative, exerting less effort when the agency is perceived as moderate or liberal.

Apart from partisanship, respondents working in agencies that give out large numbers of discretionary grants report greater senator involvement than respondents working in agencies that do not. The coefficient estimate on the log of the number of project grants is consistently positive and is estimated relatively precisely. Substantively, a ten percent increase in the number of grants in the year before the survey is estimated to increase senator involvement by 0.2 to 0.4 on a scale from 1 to 5. So, for example an agency like the Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA) gave 1 grant in the year prior to the 2020 survey. The Agricultural Research Service, by contrast gave out 82 grants. The respondents in these agencies rated the priority of senators overseeing them at 3.79 and 3.97, respectively.

Our final expectation was that senators up for reelection would exert less effort to make sure that agencies were effectively managed. We expected that electoral pressures would lead members to spend more time raising money and engaging in public activities that could be more directly connected to state interests. This would lead less time for the hard work of making sure agencies are

operating effectively. This is not what we observe. We cannot reject the null that senators up for reelection behaved as other senators, even when accounting for their margin of victory in their previous election. If anything, the estimates suggest that senators up for reelection allocated *more* effort to making sure agencies work effectively during an election year. The estimates, though not statistically distinguishable, also suggest that elections matter less for senators from safe states.

There are several possible explanations for this electoral result. Notably, we observe neither the denominator in the data nor the change in pressures for other kinds of activities during the election year. We do not know how much work the senator and staff are doing in an election year versus other years. It is possible that senators increase their overall effort during election years and our respondents observe an “all hands on deck” mentality during the election season. The distribution of activities may change but be obscured by an overall increase in activity. Our measure of effort only measures the amount of activity perceived by executives, not the percentage of a legislator’s time. It is also possible that party demands *decrease* for legislators up for reelection. This would allow senators to spend more time on other activities, including agency oversight.²⁴

Beyond the hypothesized effects, the reported levels of senator time and effort are consistent with conventional wisdom. Longer serving senators and senators in key committee positions are estimated to give more priority to the effective management of various agencies, this seniority effect is not consistent in some of our alternative specifications (see Appendix Tables A-C). For each Congress a senator has served, they are estimated to rate 0.02 higher in terms of attention to management concerns. Seniority varies from 1 to 23 congresses with a standard deviation of 4 congresses. A senator one standard deviation above the mean in seniority is estimated to be rated

²⁴ Though not precisely estimated, the coefficient on the election indicator is larger when the respondent’s agency is an agency that gives out large numbers of grants. It is possible that the increased attention to federal agencies during election years is related to efforts to influence distribution. More plausibly, legislators are doing more to show key interests that they are working on their behalf during the election year. This involves more direct action to facilitate programs and distribution and stave off bad news during an election year.

0.16 higher in terms of time and effort than a senator one standard deviation below the mean, even when controlling for position as committee chair. Committee chairs are estimated to place a higher priority on management across the data, about 0.4 on the 1 to 5 scale.

Discussion

Our focus on individual senators' oversight priorities has revealed important insights. It has confirmed that more conservative members place a lower priority on making sure administrative agencies are effectively managed, even during a period when Republicans are in the majority and there is a Republican president. This effect, however, is mitigated for agencies perceived as conservative. The results indicate that conservatives place more effort in supporting conservative agencies than liberal agencies.

This has important implications for our understanding of American politics and administration. In an era of political polarization, the steady committee-based attention to the health of federal programs and agencies is harder to sustain. Agreement within committees frays. Some agencies are caught in the middle of political bickering while others sit on the sidelines. The degree of the problem depends upon our beliefs about the composition of committees. In a recent article, progressives noted that the only way they were going to rein in the Department of Defense and its spending was to get on Armed Services.²⁵ This implies that progressives within the Democratic Party were asking for and being given places on committees with jurisdiction over programs they supported and not Armed Services. If it is true more generally that members self-select onto committees overseeing programs and agencies they support, then the effect of political polarization

²⁵ Jacqueline Feldscher, "Liberals 'Need to Get On the Defense Committees,' If They Want Change," *Defense One*, December 14, 2021 (<https://www.defenseone.com/policy/2021/12/liberals-need-get-defense-committees-if-they-want-change/359758/>).

may be dampened. This highlights the stakes of the debates over the composition of congressional committees (e.g., Fenno 1973; Groseclose 1994; Krehbiel 1991; Weingast and Marshall 1988).

The results also suggest that there are increasingly two types of agencies, those that are ideological and/or distributive and those that are not.²⁶ For the first type of agency, their fortunes swing back and forth depending upon which party controls Congress, but some members always care about their health and programs. For the second type of agency, their moderate or non-distributive character makes them a particular priority of members from both parties. If this second class of agencies does few things that do not provide immediate electoral benefit such as land planes, produce important data, or prevent not-yet seen threats, they may be dangerously neglected relative to more controversial and politically salient agencies (Healy and Malhotra 2009; Lewis 2019).

One potential critique of this analysis is that effort is a not a reliable measure of senator priority. Indeed, if Congress has designed structure and process effectively, members may need to do very little active oversight (McCubbins and Schwartz 1984; McCubbins et al. 1987, 1989; see, however, Aberbach 1990). Is it possible that the observed effort tells us more about specific agencies that have drifted from their original enacted purpose rather than the propensities of individual legislators? Are these just cases where groups have pulled fire alarms to alert senators to problems? We do not think so for two reasons. First, effective oversight involves more than avoiding visible failure. Successful management requires planning in advance to make sure agencies have sufficient personnel, well-designed authorizations, and necessary resources and political support. Second, earlier models of oversight overstate the level of agreement among members about what agencies are doing and the need for additional resources. Models of congressional dominance

²⁶ Moderate and non-ideological mean different things. Some agencies make important public policy decisions but they tend to produce moderate outcomes. Other agencies may be staffed by all Democrats or Republicans but the choices they make have little policy content such as producing data, managing contracts, or printing government documents. These agencies are non-ideological. A third set of agencies may produce important public policy decisions but their policies do not line up neatly along ideological or partisan lines. Agencies dealing with antitrust, small business, and patents would be examples of such agencies.

focus on actions by *groups* such as committees or coalitions. These models emerged in an era of strong committees and cross-party coalitions. In the modern Congress assumptions about groups caring collectively about agency performance or earlier policy deals are harder to sustain. One of the notable findings in this paper is that legislators behave differently toward different agencies due to *individual* ideological differences with agencies. Some members simply care more about supporting some agencies than others regardless of what initial policy deal was made.

Conclusion

In 2020, Senator Alexander was replaced by fellow Republican Bill Hagerty. Hagerty previously had a career in both private equity and politics. He was a former official in the George H.W. Bush White House and Tennessee economic development official. He worked for the 2012 Romney campaign to prepare for a Romney transition. He served as Ambassador to Japan during the Trump Administration. During his short time in the Senate, Hagerty announced that he planned to object to the 2021 Electoral College vote, although he relented after the attack on the Capitol. He voted against the establishment of a commission to investigate the attack and has expressed support for the former president. Yet, Hagerty's previous moderate Republican credentials are at variance with these actions. It remains to be seen whether Hagerty will govern in the tradition of Lamar Alexander before him or like Marsha Blackburn (R-TN), the other senator from TN that has made little impression on agency officials.

While it is difficult to predict what kind of senator Hagerty will be, the patterns which describe his colleagues lead to several predictions. First, he is likely to put less priority on the effective management of federal programs and agencies than his Democratic colleagues, except perhaps for agencies with conservative tendencies. Second, Hagerty is likely to be attentive to agencies with the potential of distributing distributive benefits to Tennessee such as transportation,

economic development, or health dollars. Finally, Hagerty is likely to be less active than his colleagues that have been in the Senate for longer tenures and that chair key committees.

Hagerty's replacement of Alexander raises the more general question of what the future holds for the Senate in its involvement with the healthy functioning of the administrative state. These results suggest that if Republicans retake control of Congress in 2022, Congress itself will expend less effort ensuring the effective management of the executive. The 2022 election also signals more generational change as two of the longest serving senators, Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Richard Shelby (R-AL), are retiring. Less senior senators in the current Senate place less priority on the effective management of the executive. If their replacements are more ideological than their replacements, we would expect more partisanship in oversight.

These outcomes matter for American politics and policy. Federal agencies help Americans prepare for and respond to disasters, protect federal lands, and ensure open and efficient markets. They provide equal access to education, voting, and society. They protect Americans from domestic and foreign threats. Congress plays a key role in their success or failure. This is particularly the case as recent presidents have become more ambivalent about their role as chief executive (Bernhard et al. 2018). Only Congress can authorize programs and fund them. Legislators play a key role in providing political support and oversight and they help agencies integrate the different views of diverse stakeholders into agency planning and activities. The priority legislators place on ensuring the effective performance of federal agencies has broad consequences for the voters that support these programs and elected representatives to put them into place.

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Appendix Table A. Tobit Models of Senator Effort at Ensuring Effective Agency Performance, 2020

	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
<i>Key Variables</i>								
GOP Senator (0,1)	-0.57	0.11**	-0.40	0.14**	-0.40	0.13**	-0.39	0.13**
Agency Ideology (L, C)	-0.04	0.05	-0.00	0.06	0.09	0.09	0.08	0.08
GOP Sen*Agency Ideology	0.29	0.08**	0.36	0.08**	0.39	0.08**	0.39	0.08**
Ln(# of Project Grants)			0.03	0.01**	0.03	0.01**	0.05	0.01**
Election Year (0,1)	1.07	0.67	1.32	0.80*	0.85	0.80	0.93	0.79
Vote Share Last Election	-0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	-0.00	0.01	-0.00	0.01
Election*Vote Share	-0.02	0.01	-0.02	0.01*	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01
<i>Senator Controls</i>								
Seniority	0.02	0.01**	0.03	0.01**	0.03	0.01**	0.03	0.01**
Committee Chair (0,1)	0.49	0.11**	0.54	0.13**	0.57	0.13**	0.54	0.13**
<i>Respondent Controls</i>								
Political Appointee (0,1)	0.08	0.11	0.03	0.14	0.14	0.15	0.08	0.15
Democrat (0,1)	0.23	0.10**	0.24	0.12**	0.28	0.12**	0.25	0.12**
Republican (0,1)	0.45	0.14**	0.40	0.17**	0.42	0.17**	0.32	0.17**
Dem*GOP Senator	-0.66	0.15**	-0.71	0.17**	-0.72	0.17**	-0.72	0.17**
Rep*Democratic Senator	-1.11	0.20**	-1.16	0.24**	-1.22	0.23**	-1.22	0.23**
Constant	3.06	0.33**	2.97	0.38**	2.95	0.39**	3.47	0.46**
Committee Fixed Effects	N		N		N		Y	
Dept-Level Fixed Effects	N		N		Y		Y	
N	1,771		1,283		1,283		1,283	
LR (13, 14, 30, 43)	210.9**		164.9**		218.5**		6.96**	
Left-censored	174		112		112		112	
Right-censored	111		101		101		101	
Pseudo-R ²	0.04		0.04		0.05		0.06	

Note: *Significant at the 0.05; significant at the 0.10 level in two-tailed tests. Model estimates from Tobit models of federal executive responses to survey question: "Thinking of the following senators, how much priority have they given to making sure [your agency] is an effectively managed, well-run organization?" [1-No priority to 5-High priority]. Standard errors clustered on respondent reported.

Appendix Table B. Multilevel Models of Senator Effort at Ensuring Effective Agency Performance, 2020

	(1)		(2)	
	B	SE	B	SE
<i>Key Variables</i>				
GOP Senator (0,1)	-0.38	0.10*	-0.29	0.11*
Agency Ideology (L, C)	-0.04	0.07	-0.01	0.07
GOP Sen*Agency Ideology	0.28	0.05*	0.32	0.06*
Ln(# of Project Grants)			0.03	0.01*
Election Year (0,1)	0.34	0.65	0.70	0.75
Vote Share Last Election	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01
Election*Vote Share	0.00	0.01	-0.01	0.01
<i>Senator Controls</i>				
Seniority	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01
Committee Chair (0,1)	0.29	0.11*	0.31	0.13*
<i>Respondent Controls</i>				
Political Appointee (0,1)	0.08	0.14	0.09	0.18
Democrat (0,1)	0.18	0.10	0.16	0.12
Republican (0,1)	0.36	0.14*	0.31	0.17
Dem*GOP Senator	-0.51	0.10*	-0.51	0.11*
Rep*Democratic Senator	-0.80	0.13*	-0.81	0.15*
Constant	2.87	0.35*	2.80	0.40*
Respondents (N, σ)	(599, 0.83)		(438, 0.83)	
Departments (N, σ)	(0.17, 0.24)		(17, 0.20)	
Senator/Committee Dyads (N, σ)	(299, 0.22)		(277, 0.20)	
Senators (N, σ)	(96, 0.22)		(96, 0.23)	
Committees (N, σ)	(16, 0.08)		(15, 0.09)	
Total N	1771		1283	
Residual σ	0.75		0.76	

Note: *95% credible intervals do not include zero. Model estimates from multilevel linear regression models of federal executive responses to survey question: “Thinking of the following senators, how much priority have they given to making sure [your agency] is an effectively managed, well-run organization?” [1-No priority to 5-High priority]. Observations at the respondent-senator/committee dyad-level; each observation nested within a respondent, who is then nested within a department, as well as within a senator-committee dyad, which is then nested within a senator and a committee. Models estimated using `stan_lmer` from the `rstanarm` package in **R** (4 chains per model with 2000 iterations per chain; 1000 iterations for warm-up, 1000 iterations for sampling). All models report no divergent transitions and $\hat{R} < 1.10$ for all parameters.

Appendix Table C. OLS Models of Senator Effort at Ensuring Effective Agency Performance by Respondent Partisanship, 2020

	Democratic Respondents		Neither Democrat nor Republican		Republican	
Key Variables						
GOP Senator (0,1)	-0.93	0.16**	-0.33	0.15**	0.67	0.27**
Agency Ideology (L, C)	0.00	0.10	0.01	0.10	-0.13	0.14
Republican*Agency Ideology	0.48	0.12**	0.23	0.11**	0.27	0.16*
Ln(# of Project Grants)	0.03	0.02*	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.04
Election Year (0,1)	0.63	1.23	1.55	1.10	1.18	1.54
Vote Share Last Election	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01
Election*Vote Share	-0.01	0.02	-0.03	0.02	-0.02	0.03
Controls						
Seniority	0.03	0.01*	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.02
Committee Chair (0,1)	0.57	0.15**	0.39	0.17**	0.33	0.26
Appointee (0,1)	0.34	0.40	0.10	0.30	-0.13	0.28
Constant	3.10	0.51**	3.09	0.56**	2.11	0.93**
N	543		554		186	
F (10, 10, 10)	14.77**		1.97**		3.75**	
R ²	0.22		0.05		0.15	

Note: *Significant at the 0.05; significant at the 0.10 level in two-tailed tests. Model estimates from OLS regressions of federal executive responses to survey question: “Thinking of the following senators, how much priority have they given to making sure [your agency] is an effectively managed, well-run organization?” [1-No priority to 5-High priority]. Standard errors clustered on respondent reported.