

It may be that wealthy Americans are better informed than others about America's problems and more realistic about public policy, Page, Bartels, and Seawright allow. Their survey undermines a number of stereotypical assumptions about the rich.

Two-thirds of the one percenters said they were willing to pay more taxes in order to reduce the deficit, while only a third of the general public did. Nearly three-quarters of the rich agreed that it might be good for the federal government to run a deficit during a recession. Less than a third of the general public embraced this mainstream economic view—even though large majorities favored big increases in spending on federal programs.

Yet the one percenters' knowledge is "one-sided," the authors contend. The wealthy likely don't know many people who need Medicaid or have been laid off from a job. The people they *do* know, however, is one of the factors that give them outsized influence over government policies. ■

HECK OF A JOB, APPOINTEE!

THE SOURCE: "The Consequences of Presidential Patronage for Federal Agency Performance" by Nick Gallo and David E. Lewis, in *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, April 2012.

FOR 10 YEARS, MICHAEL BROWN WORKED for the International Arabian Horse

Association, monitoring horse show judges. In 2001, he was appointed general counsel of the Federal Emergency Management Agency by FEMA administrator Joe Allbaugh, a close friend. Two years later, Brown became head of the agency, reaching the apex of a career trajectory as sudden as it was improbable. Then, in 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. FEMA performed abysmally.

E-mails Brown sent during the hurricane revealed a man who wasn't interested in disaster management and relief. "I'm trapped . . . please rescue me," he wrote to a friend. He e-mailed his deputy director of public affairs, asking, "Can I quit now?"

For all the attention Brown's case received, the systemic costs of the spoils system aren't commonly considered. According to David Lewis, a professor of law and political science at Vanderbilt University, and Nick Gallo, his research assistant, agencies run by presidential supporters and party apparatchiks perform quantifiably worse than agencies run by career professionals.

In their study published in the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Gallo and Lewis use the George W. Bush administration's Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART)—which

scores agencies' effectiveness on a scale of one to 100—to “compare the performance of federal programs administered by appointees from the campaign or party against programs run by . . . career executives” or other appointees from the Senior Executive Service, the elite corps of federal administrators.

After evaluating almost 1,000 federal programs and more than 350 managers—some of whom oversaw multiple programs—Gallo and Lewis found that programs run by political appointees suffered across the board. If you had worked for the presidential campaign or national party, your program probably earned PART scores nine to 13 points lower than those of programs run by nonpolitical appointees. (The average score for all programs was 67.) The results also indicated that running a federal program generally requires specific knowledge of government work. Managers with previous agency experience tended to earn better scores even when measured against political appointees with experience in business or the non-profit sector.

Political patronage and favoritism crop up in every government across the world, and political appointees, of course, have their defenders. “An important com-

ponent of agency leadership is *political work*,” Gallo and Lewis acknowledge. Appointees' political experience, ties to the president, and familiarity with the news media and key stakeholders can be considerable assets. Appointees also tend to have more education and a longer history in private or nonprofit management than their counterparts in the civil service.

But Gallo and Lewis point out that “the United States has significantly more political appointments than other developed democracies The White House is involved in the selection of 3,000–4,000 persons to policy or confidential positions.”

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Furthermore, the reign of often under-qualified outside hires has a demoralizing effect on ambitious career professionals, depriving them of incentives to excel. Sometimes the effects are worse. When Allbaugh, a former campaign manager for Bush, ran FEMA from 2001 to 2003, “a large number of experienced

career professionals left,” taking institutional memory and critical skills with them.

Gallo and Lewis don't think political appointments should be abolished (not that there's any chance of that). Instead,

they favor a better balance between the two worlds. “Working in teams, appointees and careerists can take advantage of the different skills they bring to management and work productively together.” ■