

Asserting presidential preferences in a regulatory review bureaucracy

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Abstract

Asserting presidential preferences in a regulatory review bureaucracy US presidents face many challenges in executing their duties as CEOs of a mammoth sprawling bureaucracy known as the nation's executive branch. Included among the many offices and bureaus in 2014 were 78 regulatory agencies with more than 276,000 employees who in recent years turned out annually some 80,000 Federal Register pages of rules and rule modifications. A successful president, e.g., one who can be reelected or help to pave the way for the party in the next election, must find ways to steer bureau activities in his preferred direction while delivering on regulatory promises made in the process of being elected. White House review of proposed regulations provides an opportunity for presidents to affect regulatory outcomes in ways that reward politically important interest groups. Our review of all empirical work on White House review as well as our own institutional and statistical findings yield strong support to the notion that the review process provides opportunities to make presidential preferences operational.

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