Is Partisanship Bad for the Congressional Oversight of the Bureaucracy?*

Luca Bellodi†

October 23, 2023

Abstract

Congressional oversight of the bureaucracy rests on the ability of members of Congress to objectively evaluate agency performance. However, when MCs share the same political party as the President, they may take a more lenient approach toward bureaucracies, for exposing negative information about the Executive branch can tarnish their party's image. With two studies on MCs' information acquisition and position-taking regarding bureaucracies, I show that partisanship triggers *selective oversight*. I analyse the transcripts of congressional hearings and show that MCs co-partisan with the President are less inquisitive towards bureaucratic witnesses, asking fewer questions. I then use a transformer-based language model and classify the sentiment of the universe of statements given by MCs about bureaucracy in Congress and show that the probability of giving a negative statement about bureaucracy drops for President co-partisans. A difference-in-differences analysis reveals that co-partisan MCs respond more favorably to scandals affecting bureaucracies. These findings are replicated in three other countries with different political systems and administrative traditions, suggesting that partisanship plays a significant role in oversight beyond the United States.

Word Count: 10,068

*For helpful comments, I am thankful to David Coen, Fabrizio Gilardi, Benjamin Lauderdale, Alice Moore, Tom O'Grady, Colin Provost, Ruxandra Serban, and seminar participants at the UCL PhD Workshop, Monash-Warwick-Zurich Text-as-Data Workshop, and the Politics & Institutions Seminar Series at Bocconi University. Usual disclaimers apply.

†Bocconi University, DONDENA Center.

A normative tenet of democratic government is that bureaucracies are accountable to elected politicians. To that end, political principals design institutions and procedures to limit agency loss (McCubbins, Noll, and Weingast 1987; McCubbins and Schwartz 1984). In the US separation of power system, Congress plays a crucial role in overseeing bureaucratic agencies, scrutinizing their activities and ensuring that bureaucracies are held in check. Oversight, however, does not come without costs, and politicians might lack the ability or willingness to acquire the information necessary to oversee bureaucracies and objectively evaluate their performance.

The thrust of principal-agent models applied to the interactions between elected politicians and bureaucracies is that principals' choices *vis-à-vis* a bureaucratic agent are always the product of a trade-off. A trade-off is faced by principals when deciding between credibly delegating discretion to the agent or ensuring responsiveness to the principal's directives (Epstein and O'Halloran 1999), or between the appointment of impartial agents who will provide expertise or political allies who will push policy in the direction favored by the principal (Lewis 2008). Oversight, which can be defined as a process of information acquisition and evaluation of agencies, is no exception, and principals' decision to exert oversight comes with benefits and costs.

On the one hand, oversight has policy benefits – if it can redress the actions of a drifting agent – and electoral benefits – for citizens favorably evaluate principals who take politically costly oversight initiatives (Miller and Ruder 2020). On the other hand, oversight is a resource-intensive activity and principals have to prioritize some agencies over others (McCubbins, Noll, and Weingast 1987). A big portion of the costs inherent to principals' decisions affecting the bureaucracy take the form of political constraints: legislators' deciding to cut budgets, alter the organisation of bureaucracies, or withdraw delegated authority are all choices that require political coordination and agenda-setting power (Moe 1984). One political constraint which is

understudied in the literature is principals' partisanship, namely their belonging to a political party. In this paper, I show that partisanship, and specifically MCs' partisan identity rather than their policy preferences, triggers *selective oversight* and hinders MCs' ability to effectively acquire information on bureaucracy and objectively evaluate their performance.

To preview the argument, consider the literature on partisanship and blame/credit attribution, which frequently finds that voters selectively attribute blame and credit to the government based on the party in power (for a review of the argument, see Ashworth and Bueno De Mesquita 2014). Faced with the same negative information about the performance of a Republican President, Republican voters are less likely to attribute blame to the President compared to Democratic voters. According to some accounts, the partisan-induced bias in blame and credit attribution poses a threat to electoral accountability, for it inhibits voters' ability to sanction and reward politicians based on factual information (Healy and Malhotra 2013; Little, Schnakenberg, and Turner 2022). If we allow partisan selectivity to factor into legislators' decisions to oversee bureaucracy, it becomes clear how partisanship has the potential to hinder the effectiveness of bureaucratic oversight, for legislators will monitor and evaluate agencies insofar as it does not undermine the image of their party.

This argument is general and rests on two assumptions. First, members of Congress care about their electoral consensus, and the image of their party is important for legislators' support among voters. Second, because the President is responsible for the Executive branch as a whole, a bureaucracy doing a poor job has negative implications for the electoral approval of the President and her party. When co-partisan with the President, MCs are more lenient toward bureaucracies, for uncovering negative information about bureaucracy would undermine the image of the party.

I test this argument with two studies: one on the effect of members of Congress' co-partisanship with the President on selective information-acquisition, and one on selective eval-

uation of bureaucracy. In the first study, I assemble a novel dataset on witnesses testifying in committee hearings for the period 1999-2021 and test whether President co-partisans are less likely to ask questions to bureaucratic witnesses. Legislators' willingness to acquire information from bureaucracy is the bedrock of oversight (Lupia and McCubbins 1994; Gailmard and Patty 2013). Models of congressional oversight assert that congressional committees "possess sufficient rewards and sanctions to create an incentive system for agencies" (Weingast and Moran 1983, 768). In fact, committees are the venues where oversight is most energetic (McGrath 2013). In particular, it is in committees where bureaucracies are asked to report on their performance. I match data on witnesses' appearances with the transcripts of speeches given by MCs in committees and find that MCs ask on average 6% fewer questions to bureaucratic witnesses compared to when they are out-partisans. Importantly, these effects are limited to bureaucratic witnesses, and no difference is detected based on MCs' partisanship for other types of witnesses, which are not directly or indirectly linked to their party.

In the second study, I introduce a new measure of the sentiment of partisan statements about 322 federal agencies applying a transformer-based sentiment classifier which was pretrained on a technical body of text with a comparable language to that used when talking about bureaucratic agencies. I exploit within-MC-by-agency variation in co-partisanship with the President and estimate the change in the probability of giving a negative statement about agencies resulting from switching from President out- to co-partisan status. I find that statements are approximately 1 percentage point less likely to be negative when there is MC-President partisan alignment, even when conditioning the estimate of co-partisanship on the ideological alignment between the MC and the agency. However, since selective evaluation along partisan lines could be confounded by other factors changing with changing presidencies, I strengthen the credibility of the test with a difference-in-differences design where I compare how MCs react to five major scandals involving bureaucratic agencies within separate administrations.

Study	Finding	Implication
Study 1: Information	President co-partisans are less likely to question bureaucratic witnesses in congressional hearings.	Partisan selectivity in acquiring information from bureaucracy.
Study 2: Evaluation	President co-partisans give fewer negative statements about bureaucracy.	Partisan selectivity in evaluating bureaucracy.
	President co-partisans react less negatively to scandals about bureaucracy.	

Table 1: Design, findings, and contibutions of the two studies.

Event-study estimates show that, faced with the same exogenous shocks about the reputation of agencies, co-partisans with the President are significantly less likely to talk about agencies in the two months after the scandal and less likely to give them a negative evaluation in their speeches.

I summarize the studies, findings, and implications in Table 1. Taken together, the findings from the two studies are not consistent with alternative explanations connecting MCs' partisan incentives with oversight behavior. Specifically, theories suggesting that President co-partisans would exert stronger oversight to either prevent agency mismanagement of programs (policy motives), or signal effort and competence to constituents (electoral motives) find little support in the data. While oversight deficits have been documented in the literature (Gailmard 2009; Schillemans 2011; Schillemans and Busuioc 2015), this is the first attempt at unveiling a "partisan" obstacle to congressional oversight of the bureaucracy which is not centered on differences in policy preferences between agencies and MCs, but rather on the implication of partisanship as a form of group identity. I find large support for several empirical implications of the argument. To mitigate concerns about the external validity of the role of legislators' partisanship for oversight, I replicate the second study on the selective evaluation of bureaucracy in three other English-speaking countries – Ireland, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom – with very different political systems and administrative traditions, and I find even larger effects of legislator-government co-partisanship on negative evaluation of bureaucracies. This compar-

ative test suggests that partisan selectivity in legislative oversight of the bureaucracy does not hinge on the particularly high levels of politicization of US federal agencies and can apply to other countries with advanced administrative systems.

Selective Oversight

There is a vast literature in political science characterizing partisanship as a political identity which is able to affect opinion and behavior (Bartels 2002; Mason 2015). While Republicans might view positively what is done by their co-partisan president, they would evaluate the same situation under a Democratic president more negatively just for the fact they are not from the same party-team (Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Kahan et al. 2017). Evidence for this form of partisan selectivity has been found in many countries and levels of government. For instance, recent work on partisan evaluation of former president Trump's management of the COVID-19 pandemic shows that as Democrats increasingly blamed Trump for the pandemic, Republicans assigned him little responsibility (Graham and Singh 2023). Outside the US, Bisgaard (2015) finds that in the UK, despite both Labour and Conservative supporters acknowledging the worsening of the economy, voters attributed blame in a highly partisan fashion. Labour supporters were hesitant to condemn the then-Labour government, whereas Conservatives had no doubt about the government's responsibility for the economic catastrophe following the 2008 financial crisis. Politicians are more sophisticated than voters, but I argue that they display a similar partisan behavior when overseeing bureaucracy.

In democratic government, bureaucracy administers and implements policy, but the responsibility for positive or negative outcomes rests with the elected government. Despite varying levels of autonomy, bureaucratic bodies respond to the political will of the executive, and an underperforming bureaucracy has detrimental consequences for the consensus of the incumbent party. Malhotra and Kuo (2008), for instance, study voters' responses to Hur-

ricane Katrina, showing that both Republicans and Democrats attributed most blame for the loss of life and property damage in New Orleans to political leaders – namely President Bush and Mayor Nagin – rather than to Federal Emergency Management Agency Director Michael Brown. Similarly, James and John (2007) and Boyne et al. (2009), show that the publication of low-performance information about local public services in UK local authorities decreases the incumbent's aggregate vote share at the election following publication. These ideas connect bureaucratic performance to the broader scholarship on retrospective voting, which shows that the incumbent party is rewarded for good economic performance and sanctioned for bad economic performance (Ferejohn 1986; Erikson 1989), and that this occurs across all levels of government (Benedictis-Kessner and Warshaw 2020). The performance of the bureaucracy can be interpreted as a narrower dimension of economic performance, which nonetheless triggers similar responses in voters' support for the incumbent.

President co-partisans – who care about their electoral consensus and their party's – are not happy about the reputation of the party being sullied by a bureaucracy doing a poor job. Faced with the potential threat of underperforming bureaucracies, government legislators can choose between two alternative strategies. They can tighten oversight in an attempt to prevent bureaucratic failure, or they can give up oversight and – irrespective of performance – portray bureaucracy in a positive light. These two strategies come with different payoffs. Preemptively increasing bureaucratic oversight is costly and can backfire if legislators unveil poor-performing bureaucracies. Coupled with criticisms from the opposition, it would resemble a self-declaration of failure. Furthermore, uncovering the poor job of bureaucracy would come to uncertain benefits, which would be conditional on successfully remedying poor performance. Conversely, lightening up oversight and disregarding negative information about bureaucracy has no immediate electoral costs, and *a priori* appreciation of bureaucracy would contribute to sustaining the good image of the government. This logic should apply to good performance

too. Even though negative information about bureaucracy has been found to have a larger effect on the incumbent's electoral consensus compared to positive information (James and John 2007; James and Moseley 2014), legislators will not miss the opportunity to highlight the good performance of bureaucracy when their party is in power. Just as they sweep negative information under the carpet, they also amplify the policy successes of bureaucracy.

Let us recall that a necessary condition for oversight to be sustained is legislators' ability to acquire information about bureaucracies (Busuioc 2009; Gailmard and Patty 2013). In fact, information acquisition was the main gist of early theories of bureaucratic oversight, ensured through constituents raising their voice (i.e., "fire-alarm" mechanism) or politicians' direct monitoring (i.e., "police patrol" mechanisms) (McCubbins and Schwartz 1984). Congress was ultimately responsible for establishing procedures that would create incentives for bureaucracies to disclose information in order to prevent that delegation of authority to bureaucratic bodies led to the abdication of power (Lupia and McCubbins 1994; Moe 2012). Even alternative accounts which move away from the canonical view of oversight aimed at reducing information asymmetries still focus on the information flow between account-giving agencies and account-holding principals (Schillemans and Busuioc 2015; Busuioc and Lodge 2017). The underlying assumption of oversight being conceived as an information-acquisition process is that politicians care about agency characteristics and behavior and do not want them to clash with their own preferences. However, if partisanship weakens MCs' incentives to find out what bureaucracies actually do, then President co-partisans have little interest in acquiring and assessing factual information on the performance of agencies. From this argument, I derive two testable hypotheses. The first is that President co-partisans are less inquisitive towards bureaucracy, and are less likely to acquire information about what bureaucracy does. Second, the distortions created by the incentives to protect their party's image make President co-partisans less likely evaluate bureaucracy negatively compared to when they are in the opposition.

A divisive element of theories of partisan selectivity in accountability behavior is the underlying mechanism. In fact, despite clear evidence for partisan selectivity, the literature is not unanimous on the interpretation of the nature of partisan responses, which could be sincere – and therefore affected by some form of cognitive bias (Bisgaard 2015, 2019) – expressive – reflecting the value of sustaining the good image of the party (Bullock et al. 2015 and references therein) – or rooted in performance beliefs – suggesting that supporters of the incumbent party believe their party performs better (Sirin and Villalobos 2011; Graham and Singh 2023). Even though recent scholarship identifies several challenges to observational studies claiming to tease out the mechanism (Fowler 2020; Little 2021), when we move the focus from voters to politicians, it seems more reasonable to consider legislators as highly strategic actors who will try to protect the image of their party to the detriment of bureaucratic oversight. It is reasonable to expect legislators' selective evaluation and information acquisition to be driven by the electoral gains that would derive from the party, President, and bureaucracy enjoying a good reputation among the public. The account I present here therefore builds on work that interprets partisan selectivity as an expressive response, while nonetheless acknowledging that it is not possible to provide conclusive evidence in support of this mechanism. The consequences of both cognitive and strategic forces are nonetheless equivalent. Partisanship triggers selective oversight: stronger for President out-partisans and weaker for co-partisans.

Congressional Speeches and Bureaucratic Agencies

To study members of Congress' selective oversight of the bureaucracy, I rely on several types of unstructured data that I describe in each study section. Two types of data will be common to all the empirical tests that follow: congressional speeches and a comprehensive sample of bureaucratic agencies, which I describe below.

Although oversight is a multi-faceted process which can be carried out in multiple ways

(Lowande 2018; Selin and Moore 2023), Congress is the traditional venue where oversight takes place. Congressional committees, in particular, are a primary oversight forum where bureaucrats and their organizations are scrutinized (e.g., McGrath 2013; Kriner and Schickler 2016; Ban et al. 2023), and where members of Congress are informed (Ban, Park, and You 2022). Committees are also the central institutions which ensure congressional control over bureaucracy (Weingast and Moran 1983; Moe 1984). On the other hand, it is on the floor where members of Congress evaluate the performance of agencies. Giving speeches is possibly the main job of members of Congress, which are frequently used to signal preferences and effort to constituents, to debate policy and bills, as well as to endorse or distance themselves from what federal agencies are doing (Mayhew 1974; Maltzman and Sigelman 1996; Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 1999).

The two studies I present follow the logical steps of oversight: first, members of Congress question bureaucrats in order to acquire information about the performance of agencies. Second – and based on the information acquired – they evaluate the performance of agencies and take actions to redress or reward drifting or underperforming agencies.

To map how members of Congress question and evaluate bureaucracy, I assemble a corpus of 1,5 and 7,3 million speeches given by members of Congress in floor and committee sessions, respectively. I scraped floor (1994-2022) and committee (2010-2020) speeches from the online version of the Congressional Record and I obtained transcripts of congressional committee sessions for the period 1980-2009 from ProQuest. After replacing the various ways in which agencies are mentioned with a standardized name, I subset all speeches mentioning at least one agency. To build a comprehensive list of agencies, I combine large existing datasets, including those produced by Bertelli et al. (2013), Chen and Johnson (2014), Selin (2015), and Richardson, Clinton, and Lewis (2018), with information on the type of agency directly obtained from the US government website (usa.gov/federal-agencies), for a total of 322 unique agencies. A

total of 224,749 floor speeches and 694,207 committee speeches mention the name of at least one agency, 14% and 9% of the total speeches. These two sources of data are at the core of both studies on selective information acquisition and selective evaluation.

Study 1: Selective Information Acquisition

To test the argument about selective information acquisition, I collect original data on the identity and affiliation of witnesses testifying before in Congressional hearings, which I match with the transcript of speeches given in the same hearing and compare how often members of Congress question bureaucratic witnesses when they are President co- or out-partisans.

Data: Questioning Bureaucratic Witnesses

First, I web-scraped original data on the identity of the witnesses appearing in House and Senate congressional committees through the govinfo.gov API. I collect data on witnesses and their affiliation for the universe of hearings from the 106th to the 116th Congress (1999-2021), for a total of 17,843 hearings and 88,564 witness appearances. Information for each witness includes name and surname, title, and affiliation. For instance, "John S. Tritak, Director, Critical Infrastructure Assurance Office, Bureau of Export Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce" appeared before the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs on October 4th, 2001.

I then classify witnesses based on whether they are affiliated with a bureaucratic agency or not. To do that, I build very flexible regular expressions that match the names, acronyms, and abbreviations of each one of the 322 bureaucratic agencies in my sample. Both EPA and Environmental Protection Agency will be replaced with a unique, standardized word. Bureaucratic witnesses represent the vast majority of witnesses, accounting for 75% of the total number of appearances. The top three agencies with respect to bureaucrat witnesses' affiliation are the

Department of Homeland Security (1,634 appearances), the Government Accountability Office (1,352), and the Department of Veterans Affairs (1,042). I then match each speech given by committee members in the same hearings where witnesses testify and count how often members of Congress question individual bureaucrats during each hearing when a bureaucratic witness testified before a committee.

I detect when a member of Congress questions a witness through three steps. First, I extract the surname of the witness appearing in any given hearing. Second, I split the speeches given by MCs during the same hearing into sentences. Third, I count how many sentences include at the same time the surname of the witness as well as a question mark at the end. The (weak) assumption of these measurement steps is that members of Congress address witnesses by their surname. I read several speeches to validate this assumption. Extracting the surname of witnesses is hard, because the order in which the name, title, role, and affiliation appear in the data varies, and there are no pre-trained language models that allow to extract the surname of individuals. Similarly, state-of-the-art supervised models for entity recognition like SpaCy often fail to detect surnames when classifying words as "person(s)". To overcome this challenge, I rely on large language models for text generation. In particular, I use the `gpt-3.5-turbo` model developed by OpenAI.[1] The model performs extremely well and is very efficient. For approximately 14 USD, I was able to extract the surname of witnesses form all 88,564 appearances. On a random sample of 100 witnesses, the model-generated output returns the correct surname 98% of the time.

1,071,782 speeches given by 964 unique MCs are given during hearings with witnesses, 66% of them are given when the list of witnesses features a bureaucrat. Eventually, this measure allows me to count the number of times members of Congress question bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic witnesses, conditional on a bureaucrat being invited to testify. I therefore subset

[1] I give the model the following prompt *I will show you the contact information of individuals. Please extract the surname or, if there are more than one individual, the surnames. In your answer, simply print the surname and nothing else. Here's the contact: [contact]*

the 711,525 speeches given when a bureaucrat appeared among the witnesses and compute the total number of questions by type of witness at the MC-hearing level, which will also be the unit of analysis for the statistical test. For instance, in 1999, Rep. James A. Gibbons (R-NV), in a hearing on "The impact of the expansion of the Minneapolis St. Paul International Airport on the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge" questioned Assistant Director for Refuges and Wildlife Mr. Dan Ashe from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service two times. The average number of questions asked by MCs to witnesses during hearings is rather small and equal to .34 and .39 for bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic witnesses, respectively. The maximum number of questions asked to bureaucratic witnesses during a hearing is 22 – by Rep. Debbie Mucarsel-Powell (D-FL) – whereas the maximum number of questions asked to non-bureaucrats is 50 – by Rep. Rick Hill (R-MT). On average, Republicans and Democrats ask the same number of questions to bureaucratic witnesses, however when MCs are President co-partisans they ask on average 7% fewer questions.

Evidence on Selective Oversight

To test whether members of Congress' co-partisanship with the President triggers selective information acquisition on bureaucracy, I compare the number of questions asked to different types of witnesses (all, bureaucratic, and non-bureaucratic/other) by members of Congress when they are co- and out-partisan with the President. Because the outcome is a count variable, I estimate the following Poisson regression

$$log(\text{N. Questions}_{ijh}^{W_w}) = \gamma_j + \psi_h + \tau \text{Co-partisan}_{jh} + \zeta X' + \epsilon_{ijh} \tag{1}$$

where $\text{N. Questions}_{ijh}^{W_w}$ is the number of questions asked by MC j in hearing h to witness type $w = \{\text{All, Bureaucratic, Non-Bureaucratic}\}$, γ_j and ψ_h are individual and hearing fixed effects, and X' is a set of legislator-level time-varying covariates (namely majority/minority

leader status, committee chair, legislative effectiveness score, and seniority).[2] τ estimate the percentage change in the number of questions as a result of shifting from out- to co-partisanship with the President.

This design has several appealing features for estimating the effect of President co-partisanship on the selective questioning of witnesses. First, by comparing the effect of co-partisanship for bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic witnesses, I am implicitly performing a strong placebo test. In fact, selective information acquisition should apply only *vis-à-vis* organizations and individuals for which the executive is held responsible, hence there is no reason to expect a different number of questions for non-bureaucratic witnesses as a function of co-partisanship with the President. Second, hearing fixed effects allow to partial out the effect of hearing-level characteristics that can confound the relationship between co-partisanship and MCs' behavior in committee (e.g., the party of the committee chair, the partisan composition of committees, the committee itself as well as the topic discussed in the committee and the number and identity of witnesses testifying in the hearing). Finally, time-changing characteristics of members of Congress control for their different varying propensity to question witnesses based on their role in Congress and committees or their legislative experience.[3]

Table 2 reports the results. The effect of President co-partisanship is negative and precisely estimated for bureaucratic witnesses alone. When individual legislators switch from out- to co-partisan with the President, they ask on average 6% fewer questions to bureaucratic witnesses, leaving unchanged the frequency at which they acquire information from other types of witnesses.

[2]Legislator-level covariates obtained from Volden and Wiseman (2020)

[3]The results are robust to using logistic regression on a dichotomized outcome (see Table C.3 in the Appendix).

	log(N. Questions to Witnesses)					
	All		Bureaucrats		Other	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
President Co-partisan	-0.028	-0.028	-0.060**	-0.064**	0.004	0.002
	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.033)	(0.033)
Covariates		✓		✓		✓
Observations	54,775	54,770	48,274	48,269	33,571	33,569
MC FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hearing FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: Poisson estimates. SE clustered by MC. DV is a count variable equal to the number of questions asked by MCs to each type of witnesses in any given hearing. Covariates include legislative-effectiveness score, majority- and minority-leader status, seniority, and committee chair role.
Signif. codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1

Table 2: Co-partisanship and MCs' questioning of bureaucratic witnesses.

Study 2: Selective Evaluations

Members of Congress co-partisan with the President are less likely to express negative evaluations of bureaucracies, for such negative statements would damage the reputation of their party. In Study 2, I test for the presence of partisan selectivity in MCs' evaluation of bureaucracy, whereby – holding all else fixed – co-partisanship with the President decreases the probability of giving a negative statement about agencies. The *all else fixed* is a crucial part of the test. When co-partisanship status changes as a result of changing presidencies, new bureaucrats are appointed as agency heads, and agencies receive new, politically distinct directives. To account for time-changing characteristics at the agency-level I present two strategies. The first one relies fully on measurement and consists of conditioning the estimate of co-partisanship on a time-changing measure of ideological distance between the MC and the agency. The second one leverages exogenous shocks to the reputation of agencies *within* specific presidencies to estimate the partisan discount of MCs' reaction to scandals affecting five federal agencies.

Data: Statements about Bureaucracy

To test the selective-evaluation argument I split all the speeches given in both floor and committee sessions into sentences, and keep the sentences mentioning the name of a bureaucratic agency. I then use a pre-trained language model to classify the sentiment of the sentence. Pre-trained models benefit from domain-specific training and yield better performance when compared to dictionary-based approaches relying heavily on the correct specification of the list of words. Because bureaucracies are highly technical bodies, I use the FinBERT model used by Huang, Wang, and Yang (2023) to classify the sentiment of financial communication text and train on a large financial communication corpus. FinBERT is a three-label classifier which takes as input a string of text (i.e., a sentence) and returns two outputs: one of the three sentiment labels (negative, neutral, positive) as well as the probability that the text belongs to the label. In Table 3, I report three examples of sentences for each of the sentiment labels.

Member	**Year**	**Sentence**	**Label**
Himes, James (D-CT)	2020	And thank you for your extraordinary efforts and the efforts of the Federal Reserve to contribute to the emergency rescue that we have all witnessed.	Positive
Lofgren, Zoe (D-CA)	2010	The Bureau of Customs and Border Protection went from 4.9 billion in fiscal 2004 to 10.1 billion in fiscal year 2010.	Neutral
Aderhold, Robert (R-AL)	2002	In fact, the Department of Education has a very bad record over the last several years when it comes to waste, fraud and abuse.	Negative

Table 3: Examples of sentences assigned to each of the three sentiment labels.

The final dataset consists of 2,055,827 sentences, given by 2,084 MCs, mentioning 316 bureaucratic agencies. 10.6% of sentences are assigned a negative sentiment label by the classifier. There is no substantively meaningful difference between the share of negative sentences given by Democrats and Republicans. Interestingly, the data does not lend support to commonly held accounts portraying Republicans as holding stronger anti-bureaucracy sentiment.

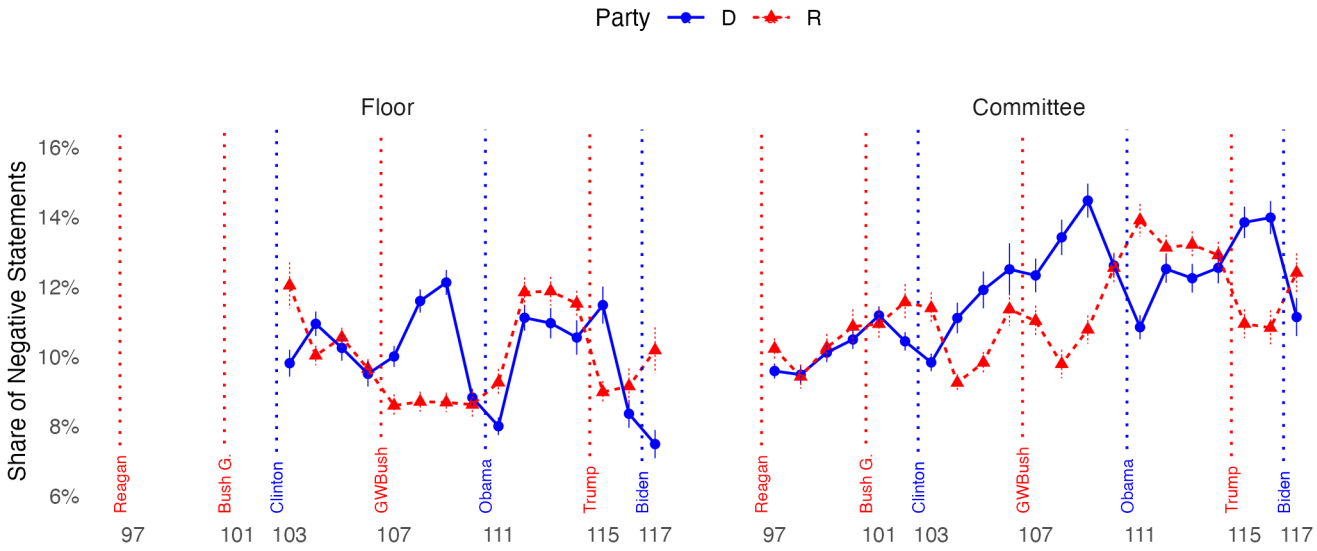

Figure 1: Positivity of parties' statements averaged across all agencies over time and across presidencies. Red for the Republican and Labour, blue for the Democratic party, light-blue for the Conservative party.

As shown in Figure 1, sentiment towards bureaucracy follows government cycles. For Republicans, a co-partisan President is associated with a drop in the share of negative statements about bureaucracy by 2 p.p., whereas the differences in minimal for co-partisan and out-partisan Democrats, with the average share of negative statements decreasing by only 0.5 p.p. (differences statistically significant at 95% level).

To ensure that the sentiment of statements resulting from co-partisanship with the President is not driven by other agency-level characteristics, I gather data on agency ideology to account for a plausible source of omitted variable bias. In fact, when there is a Republican president, Republicans' statements about bureaucracy might be less negative because there are more bureaucrats appointed by a President of the same party.

To measure agency ideology, I use two time-varying measures of ideology produced by Chen and Johnson (2014) and Bertelli and Grose (2011). Chen and Johnson (2014) estimate agency ideal points by matching the donations of individual bureaucrats to the ideal point of the beneficiary, measured with the DW-NOMINATE score of MCs receiving the donations. The dataset covers 79 federal agencies across five presidencies, from the first Clinton Presidency to

the first Obama Presidency. This dataset has been widely used in political science to study the political control of the bureaucracy (Lowande 2018), strategic appointments (Moore 2018), career paths of bureaucrats (Bolton, Figueiredo, and Lewis 2019), and rule-making (Ellig and Conover 2014; Potter 2019). Bertelli and Grose (2011) use information publicly revealed by cabinet-level secretaries to estimate departments' ideal points via a Bayesian item response model. Finally, I build a measure of ideological distance between the agency and the MC by taking the absolute value of the difference between agency ideal points and DW-NOMINATE scores of MCs[4] for the Chen and Johnson (2014) measure and the ideal points of MCs and cabinets for the estimates in Bertelli and Grose (2011).

Evidence on Selective Evaluation

By just looking at Figure 1, there are clear partisan differences in how MCs evaluate bureaucracy. The figure plots the share of negative statements across all agencies for the Democratic and Republican parties across various presidencies, marked by the dotted vertical lines. On average, when there is a Democratic President, statements given by the Democratic party are less negative compared to when there is a Republican President, and *vice versa* for the Republican party's statements. The gap between Republicans and Democrats' evaluation of bureaucracy is largest during the middle of the G.W. Bush presidencies and during the Trump and Biden presidencies. Interestingly, there was little difference in how the two parties evaluated agencies before the Clinton administration, which is in line with the increasing level of partisan polarization in Congress.

In order to estimate the effect of partisanship on the probability of MC j to give a negative statement about agency a, I exploit within-MC-by-agency variation in the sentiment of

[4]Data from voteview.com

statements and estimate the following linear probability model

$$\text{Negative Statement}_{ijat} = \gamma_{ja} + \delta_t + \alpha\text{Co-partisan}_{jt} + \mu|x_{MC[j]} - x_{A[ap]}| + \zeta X' + \epsilon_{ijat} \quad (2)$$

where $\text{Negative Statement}_{ijat}$ is a dummy equal to 1 when the sentiment label assigned by the classifier is negative and 0 otherwise, γ_{ja} and δ_t are MC-by-agency and year fixed effects, respectively. $\zeta X'$ is the set of covariates included in Equation (1) with the addition of a dummy variable to account for whether the statement was given on the floor or in committees. α is the effect of President co-partisanship on the probability of a negative statement.

In the US, because of high levels of turnover in agency staff as a result of a new presidency, the effect of President co-partisanship might be confounded by a change in agency ideological and partisan leaning. Republican presidents might appoint conservative bureaucrats and the negativity of Democrats' statements about the agency might decrease for reasons unrelated to their out-partisan status. To rule out the risk of confounding posed by time-changing agency ideology, I include $|x_{MC[j]} - x_{A[ap]}|$ in the model, which is the dynamic measure of MC-agency ideological distance, computed as the absolute value between the ideal point of MC j (fixed over time) and the ideal point of agency a in presidency p. Because μ partials out the confounding effect of MC-agency ideological distance only under the assumption of no-measurement error, I also use a specification with agency-by-year fixed effects to account for yearly-changes in agency attributes (e.g., agency ideology, salience, and policy change). I cluster standard errors at the MC level. The specification in Equation (2) is extremely conservative, for it leverages changes in sentiment within MC-agency pair, and hence accounts for MC-agency-specific heterogeneity.

In Table 4, I report the results. Who leads the executive matters for what MCs say about bureaucracy. President co-partisanship has a small though precisely estimated effect on the probability of giving a negative statement about bureaucracy. Holding fixed everything constant at the MC-agency level as well as after conditioning on time-varying legislator characteristics

	Pr(Negative Sentiment = 1)					
	Partisanship				Ideology	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
President Co-partisan	-0.009***	-0.008***	-0.010***	-0.008***		
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.001)		
$\lvert x_{MC} - x_A \rvert$ (Chen and Johnson)		0.001			0.006	
		(0.005)			(0.004)	
$\lvert x_{MC} - x_A \rvert$ (Bertelli et al.)			-0.005			0.002
			(0.005)			(0.005)
Covariates		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R^2	0.017	0.022	0.014	0.078	0.022	0.014
Observations	2,055,548	753,093	156,176	2,004,557	753,093	156,176
MC FE	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Agency FE	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Year FE	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
MC-Agency FE				✓		
Agency-Year FE				✓		

Notes: OLS estimates. SE clustered by MC. DV is a dummy measure for negative sentiment in sentence. Signif. codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1

Table 4: Co-partisanship and negative evaluation of bureaucracies.

as well as time-varying ideological distance between the agency and MCs, switching from out- to co-partisan status leads to a decrease in the probability of negative statement equal to approximately 1 p.p. Although the coefficient is small, the effect size is as large as 10% compared to the sample mean. Importantly, as shown in Columns (5) and (6), MC-agency ideological distance does not predict negative statements about bureaucracy, thus confirming existing findings in literature suggesting that oversight is not primarily driven by ideological differences between MCs and agencies (Lowande 2018). Selective evaluation is triggered by MCs' incentives to protect the overall image of their party rather than by agency-specific policy considerations.

Scandals in the U.S. Federal Bureaucracy

Because α is identified by comparing over-time changes in partisan statements when a new President is elected, bias would arise if changes in government co-occurred with changes in the characteristics of the legislators and how they interact with bureaucratic agencies not captured by the legislator-level covariates, or with changes in agency characteristics with heterogeneous

effects by party. In this section, I strengthen causal identification by looking at how MCs react to *identical* information, namely scandals in the US federal bureaucracy. Absent selective evaluation, I should fail to detect a difference in how President co- and out-partisans respond to scandals. To ensure that members of Congress react to identical information, I rely on exogenous shocks to the reputation and performance of bureaucratic agencies resulting from major scandals and compare the reaction of co-partisan and opposition-party MCs. I focus on major scandals involving five federal bureaucracies in the United States: the response of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, the falsified appointment case of the Department of Veterans Affairs (and the Veteran Health Administration) in April 2014, the Internal Revenue Service's undue scrutiny on conservative groups seeking tax-exempt status in May 2014, the whistle-blowing FBI case before September 11th, and the derogatory contents posted on the "I'm 10-15" secret Facebook group by Customs and Border Protection officers in July 2019. These scandals cover three presidencies and both parties (the second G.W. Bush and the second Obama administration as well as the Trump presidency) and are therefore not limited to one specific direction of co-partisanship (either Democratic or Republican). Qualitative information on the scandals is reported in Section B of the Online Appendix.[5]

I estimate the effect of MC-President co-partisanship on both attention and negative evaluation of the agency affected by the scandal, measured as the probability to give a statement and the share of negative statements about the agency affected by the scandal during the 10 months before and after the scandal. Because silence is itself a strategic choice of members of Congress, I build a dyadic dataset where each MC who gave a speech in Congress during the 10 months before and after each scandal is paired with the agency affected by the scandal. I then count the number of statements given by MC_j mentioning agency_a in month_t as well as the share of statements with a negative sentiment. When MCs do not mention the agency_a in

[5]In Figure B.1 in the Appendix I show the increase in the number of statements about agencies in the aftermath by party.

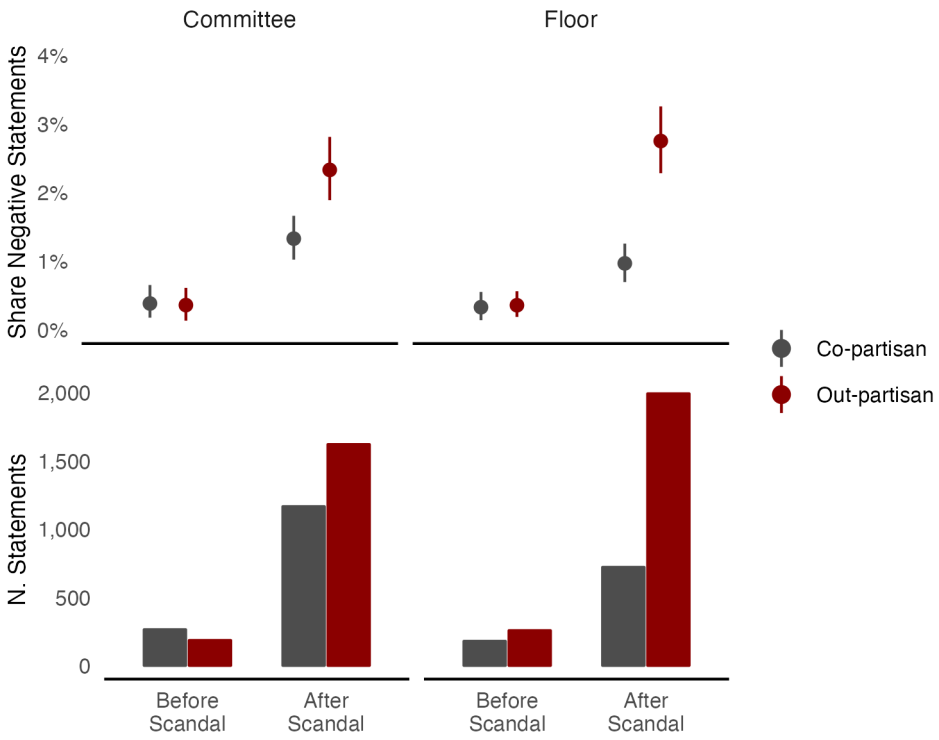

Figure 2: Share of negative statements and number of statements mentioning agencies affected by the scandal given by MCs in the 2 months before and after the scandal.

month$_t$ I assign 0 to both the attention and negative evaluation variables. The dataset consists of 46,088 MC-agency-month observations.

Figure 2 already displays a marked differential response to scandals from President co-partisans and out-partisans, both in committee and floor speeches. Right before and after the scandal, and precisely from 60 days before and after, President co-partisans refrain from commenting and giving a negative statement about the agencies, although no clear difference can be detected in the two months before the scandal.

To identify the effect of co-partisanship with the President, I use an event-study design, where I estimate changes in attention and negative evaluation about any given agency for President co-partisans before and after the scandal. In particular, I estimate the following equation

$$y_{ijamt} = \gamma_j + \phi_a + \alpha_m + \delta_t \sum_{k=-10}^{k=9} \beta_k \text{Co-partisan}_{jt} + \zeta X' + \epsilon_{ijat} \tag{3}$$

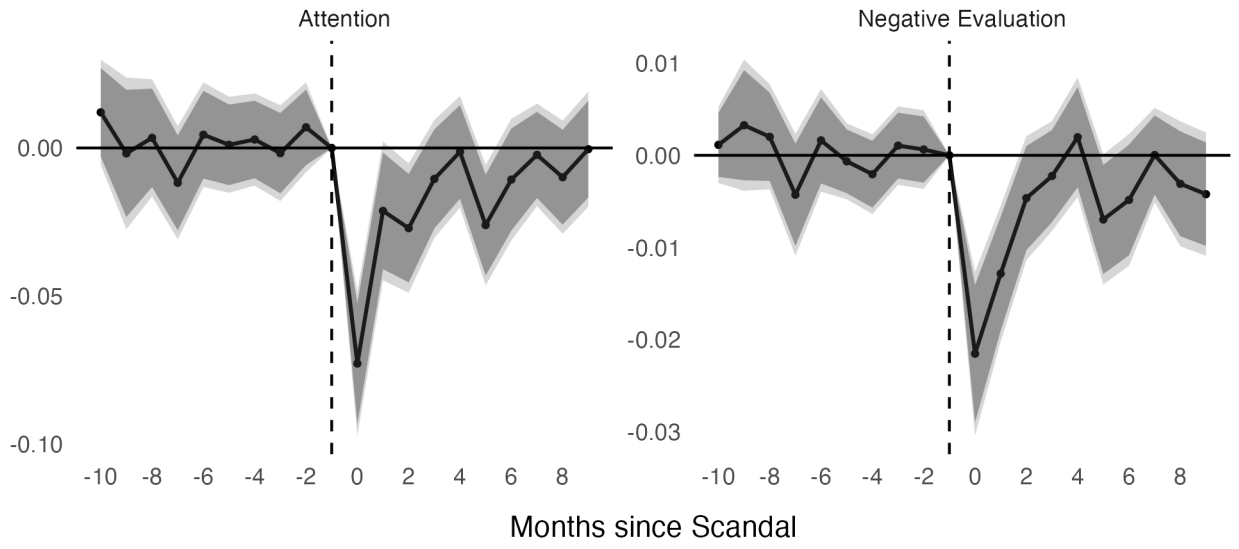

Figure 3: Event-study plot for both Attention and Negative Evaluation

where y_{ijat} is either a dummy measure equal to 1 when the number of statements given by MC j in month m in year t about agency a, γ_j is at least 1, and 0 otherwise and the share of negative statements mentioning agency a for the same combination of MC-month-agency. ϕ_a, α_m, and δ_t are MC, agency, month-from-scandal, and year of scandal fixed effects, $\zeta X'$ a vector of time-varying speech-level (whether given in floor or committee sessions) and MC-level covariates (same as in Equation (2))). β identifies the dynamic effect of MC-President co-partisanship on the attention and negative evaluation resulting from the scandal. Standard errors are clustered at the dyad (MC-agency) level. The appealing feature of this design is that it allows to identify how co-partisanship shapes legislators' *subjective* reaction to *objective* information (i.e., a clear federal-level scandal) without resorting to hypothetical scenarios.

Figure 3 shows the results.[6] Grey shaded areas around the point estimates represent 90 and 95% confidence intervals. For both outcomes, there is a large negative effect in the 30 days following the scandal (month 0), with the effect persisting during the following 30-60 days. As evidenced by the pre-scandal period, President co-partisans were not on a different trend before the scandal.

When looking at the month of the scandal, President co-partisans are 12 p.p. less likely to

[6]Regression table reported in the Appendix (see Table B.2).

mention the name of the agency affected by the scandal and the share of negative statements is 3 p.p. lower compared to out-partisans. These effects remain negative and statistically significant from 0 at standard confidence level up until 90 days from the scandal for the measure of attention, and 60 days from the scandal for the negative evaluation measure. These findings suggest that, even when facing the same unambiguously negative information about bureaucracy, MCs selectively evaluate bureaucracies: more positive if co-partisan with the President, more negative if out-partisan. This is a conservative test of the selective-evaluation argument, for it exposes MCs to clearly negative information about the bureaucracy. In fact, selective evaluation of bureaucracies might be more pronounced when the valence of the information leaves space for ambiguity.

Discussion

Politicians' ability to effectively oversee bureaucracies is a central topic in political science and a cornerstone of bureaucratic legitimacy. While scholars have shown how legislators design institutions to hold agencies to account, little attention has been paid to the role of members of Congress' image-protection incentives triggered by partisanship and the implications for effective oversight. In this paper, I show that partisanship triggers selective oversight. I proposed that when legislators oversee bureaucracy, they do so selectively, acquiring less information and giving better evaluations when co-partisan with the President. Moving from information acquisition to evaluation, this paper brings partisan identity inside theories of bureaucratic oversight. Furthermore, I make several empirical contributions. I combine original data on witnesses' identity and Congressional speeches with natural language processing techniques and provide credible inference with two empirical studies. The data shows a good level of support for the expectations.

Since legislators co-partisan with the President care about the reputation of their party,

and an underperforming bureaucracy has negative consequences for the governing party's electoral support, President co-partisans have an incentive to portray bureaucracy less negatively compared to when they are in the opposition. Moreover, if positive statements are a political strategy to sustain the image of the government party irrespective of bureaucracies' actual performance, government legislators are less likely to acquire information when holding agencies to account. I strengthen the *all else equal* assumption of the argument with the difference-in-differences analysis of federal scandals, which yields consistent results with a selective evaluation argument.

Taken together, these findings lend strong evidence against the alternative strategy discussed in the theoretical section presented above. In fact, if MCs – motivated by the electoral costs of an underperforming bureaucracy – tightened their oversight activity to prevent bureaucratic failures, we should not observe a partisan discount on MCs' oversight behavior. However, the lower frequency of questions to bureaucratic witnesses alongside the less negative evaluation of bureaucracies suggests that co-partisanship with the President reduces MCs' incentives to oversee bureaucracy.

A note on the generalizability of the results is in order. In the way the politicians-bureaucracy relationship unfolds, the United States seems a unique, atypical case. Partisan polarization is mounting, federal agencies are highly politicized, and top bureaucrats are presidential appointees, hence tightly connected to the presidency. Other countries might lack such a strong identification between the chief executive and administrative agencies. To give empirical evidence to the external validity of the argument and the findings, I replicate Study 2 in three other English-speaking countries, namely New Zealand, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. I collect parliamentary speeches, assemble comprehensive lists of agencies, and perform the same measurement and classification steps described for the United States.[7] The key features of these countries, as well as summary statistics of the data utilized, are displayed in

[7]Data sources are reported in Section *Data Sources for Comparative Analyses* in the Appendix.

	US	UK	NZ	IR
Political System				
Form of government	Presidential	Parliamentary	Parliamentary	Parliamentary
Unitary/Decentralized	Decentralized	Decentralized	Unitary	Unitary
Party system	Two-party	Two-party	Multy-party	Multi-party
Electoral rule	Majoritarian	Majoritarian	Proportionate	Proportionate
Top bureaucrats' appointment	Presidential	Merit-based	Merit-based	Merit-based
Data				
N. Floor Speeches	1,737,385	2,517,324	925,766	2,778,961
N. Agencies	322	351	113	99
Time coverage	1994-2022	1979-2019	1987-2019	1975-2013
N. Sentences Mentioning Agencies	833,308	301,269	114,820	302,197
% Negative Sentences	9.9	11.6	10.5	4.6

Table 5: Descriptive statistics of number of floor speeches, sentences, and agencies for the four comparative cases.

Table 5.[8] Far from being a representative sample of countries, there is nonetheless significant variation across all key features of each country's political system. Each of the four countries are advanced democracies although they vary with respect to electoral institutions, party systems, forms of government, and appointment of top bureaucrats. Importantly, the merit-based systems of Ireland, New Zealand, and the UK make them a good case to test whether selective oversight occurs in less politicized administrative systems too.

I estimate a linear probability model for each country separately where the probability of giving a negative statement about a bureaucratic agency is regressed on a dummy measure for legislator-government/President co-partisanship. I also estimate legislator-by-agency as well as agency-by-year fixed effects. The results are reported in Figure 4.[9] Perhaps surprisingly, I find larger effects of co-partisanship outside the US. The US bureaucracy is commonly described as a highly politicized "branch" of government. Yet, being co-partisan with the government/President matters for the evaluation of bureaucracy even in countries where bureaucracies are not as politicized as in the US. The average predicted reduction in the probability of giving a negative statement decreases by 4-6 p.p in the three comparative cases.

[8]Data on form of government, unitary-decentralized, and electoral rule from Bormann and Golder (2022), other data author's elaboration.

[9]Full regression table in the Appendix (see Table D.4).

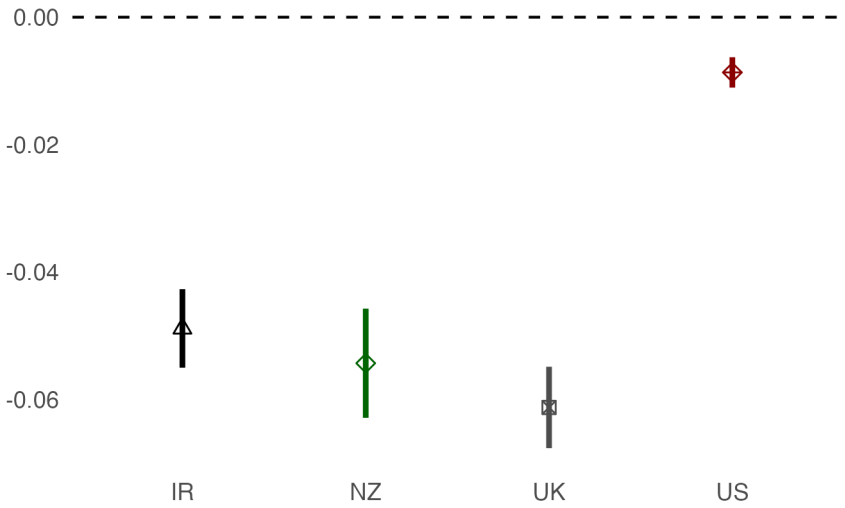

Figure 4: LPM estimates of the effect of co-partisanship with the Government/President on the probability of giving a negative statement about bureaucracy across four different countries. Specification including legislatory-by-agency and agency-by-year fixed effects. SE clustered by legislator.

Finally, the large effects of co-partisanship in systems with proportionate electoral rules, and therefore the absence of a direct electoral link between legislators and constituents, suggest that selective evaluation does not depend on individual legislator's individual re-election enterprise, but rather on legislators' willingness to protect the reputation of their own party, their political group.

References

Ashworth, Scott, and Ethan Bueno De Mesquita. 2014. "Is Voter Competence Good for Voters?: Information, Rationality, and Democratic Performance." *American Political Science Review* 108: 565–87. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055414000264.

Ban, Pamela, Ju Yeon Park, and Hye Young You. 2022. "How Are Politicians Informed? Witnesses and Information Provision in Congress." *American Political Science Review*, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0003055422000405.

Ban, Pamela, Ju Yeon, Park ‡ Hye, and Young You. 2023. "Bureaucrats in Congress: Strategic Information Sharing in Policymaking." https://www.dropbox.com/s/28idwmhic06bht9/bureaucrats.pdf?dl=0.

Bartels, M. 2002. "Beyond the Running Tally: Partisan Bias in Political Perceptions." *Political Behavior* 24: 117–50. https://doi.org/10.1038/ajg.2011.482.

Benedictis-Kessner, Justin De, and Christopher Warshaw. 2020. "Accountability for the Local Economy at All Levels of Government in United States Elections." *American Political Science Review*, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055420000027.

Bertelli, Anthony M., and Christian R. Grose. 2011. "The Lengthened Shadow of Another Institution? Ideal Point Estimates for the Executive Branch and Congress." *American Journal of Political Science* 55: 767–81. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2011.00527.x.

Bertelli, Anthony M., Dyana P Mason, Jennifer M Connolly, and David A Gastwirth. 2013. "Measuring Agency Attributes with Attitudes Across Time : A Method and Examples Using Large-Scale Federal Surveys." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 25: 513–44. https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mut040.

Bisgaard, Martin. 2015. "Bias Will Find a Way: Economic Perceptions, Attributions of Blame, and Partisan-Motivated Reasoning During Crisis." *Journal of Politics* 77: 849–60. https://doi.org/10.1086/681591.

———. 2019. "How Getting the Facts Right Can Fuel Partisan-Motivated Reasoning." *American Journal of Political Science* 63: 824–39. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12432.

Blumenau, Jack. 2021. "House of Commons Parliamentary Debates, 1979-2019." UK Data Service.

Bolton, Alexander, John M. de Figueiredo, and David E. Lewis. 2019. "Elections, Ideology, and Turnover in the u.s. Federal Government." *NBER Working Paper Series*. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004.

Bormann, Nils-Christian, and Matt Golder. 2022. "Democratic Electoral Systems Around the World, 1946–2020." *Electoral Studies* 78: 102487. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2022.102487.

Boyne, George A., Oliver James, Peter John, and Nicolai Petrovsky. 2009. "Democracy and Government Performance: Holding Incumbents Accountable in English Local Governments." *Journal of Politics* 71: 1273–84. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381609990089.

Bullock, John G., Alan S. Gerber, Seth J. Hill, and Gregory Huber. 2015. "Partisan Bias in Factual Beliefs about Politics." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 10: 519–78. https://doi.org/10.1561/100.00014074.

Busuioc, E. Madalina. 2009. "Autonomy , Accountability and Control the Case of European Agencies." *European Law Journal* 15: 599–615.

Busuioc, E. Madalina, and Martin Lodge. 2017. "Reputation and Accountability Relationships: Managing Accountability Expectations Through Reputation." *Public Administration Review* 77: 91–100. https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12612.

Chen, Jowei, and Tim Johnson. 2014. "Federal Employee Unionization and Presidential Control of the Bureaucracy: Estimating and Explaining Ideological Change in Executive Agencies." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 27: 151–74. https://doi.org/10.1177/0951629813518126.

Ellig, Jerry, and Christopher J. Conover. 2014. "Presidential Priorities, Congressional Control, and the Quality of Regulatory Analysis: An Application to Healthcare and Homeland Security." *Public Choice* 161: 305–20. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11127-014-0201-3.

Epstein, David, and Sharyn O'Halloran. 1999. *Delegating Powers: A Transaction Cost Politics Approach to Policy Making Under Separate Powers*. Cambridge University Press.

Erikson, Robert S. 1989. "Economic Conditions and the Presidential Vote." *American Political Science Review* 83: 567–73.

Ferejohn, John. 1986. "Incumbent Performance and Electoral Control." *Public Choice* 50: 5–25. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00124924.

Fowler, Anthony. 2020. "Partisan Intoxication or Policy Voting?" *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 15: 141–79. https://doi.org/10.1561/100.00018027a.

Gailmard, Sean. 2009. "Multiple Principals and Oversight of Bureaucratic Policy-Making." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 21: 161–86. https://doi.org/10.1177/0951629808100762.

Gailmard, Sean, and John Patty. 2013. *Learning While Governing: Expertise and Accountability in the Executive Branch*. University of Chicago Press.

Graham, Matthew H., and Shikhar Singh. 2023. "An Outbreak of Selective Attribution: Partisanship and Blame in the COVID-19 Pandemic." *American Political Science Review*, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055423000047.

Healy, Andrew, and Neil Malhotra. 2013. "Retrospective Voting Reconsidered." *Annual Review of Political Science* 16: 285–306. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-032211-212920.

Herzog, Alexander, and Slava Mikhaylov. 2017. "Database of Parliamentary Speeches in Ireland, 1919-2013." https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/6MZN76.

Huang, Allen H., Hui Wang, and Yi Yang. 2023. "FinBERT: A Large Language Model for Extracting Information from Financial Text." *Contemporary Accounting Research* 40 (2): 806–41. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/1911-3846.12832.

Iyengar, Shanto, and Sean J. Westwood. 2015. "Fear and Loathing Across Party Lines: New Evidence on Group Polarization." *American Journal of Political Science* 59: 690–707. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12152.

James, Oliver, and Peter John. 2007. "Public Management at the Ballot Box: Performance Information and Electoral Support for Incumbent English Local Governments." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 17: 567–80. https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mul020.

James, Oliver, and Alice Moseley. 2014. "Does Performance Information about Public Services Affect Citizens' Perceptions, Satisfaction, and Voice Behaviour? Field Experiments with Absolute and Relative Performance Information." *Public Administration* 92: 493–511. https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12066.

Kahan, Dan M., Ellen Peters, Erica Canterell Dawson, and Paul Slovic. 2017. "Motivated Numeracy and Enlightened Self-Government." *Behavioural Public Policy* 1: 54–86. https://doi.org/10.1017/bpp.2016.2.

Kriner, Douglas L., and Eric Schickler. 2016. *Investigating the Presidency: Congressional Checks on Presidential Power*. Princeton University Press.

Lewis, David E. 2008. *The Politics of Presidential Appointments: Political Control and Bureaucratic Performance*. Princeton University Press.

Little, Andrew. 2021. "Directional Motives and Different Priors Are Observationally Equivalent." http://andrewtlittle.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/little_motives_priors.pdf.

Little, Andrew, Keith E. Schnakenberg, and Ian R. Turner. 2022. "Motivated Reasoning and Democratic Accountability." *American Political Science Review* 116 (2): 751–67. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055421001209.

Lowande, Kenneth. 2018. "Who Polices the Administrative State?" *American Political Science Review* 112: 874–90. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055418000497.

Lupia, Arthur, and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1994. "Designing Bureaucratic Accountability." *Law and Contemporary Problems* 57: 91–126. https://doi.org/10.2307/1191988.

Malhotra, Neil, and Alexander G. Kuo. 2008. "Attributing Blame: The Public's Response to Hurricane Katrina." *Journal of Politics* 70: 120–35. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381607080097.

Maltzman, Forrest, and Lee Sigelman. 1996. "The Politics of Talk: Unconstrained Floor Time in the u.s. House of Representatives." *The Journal of Politics* 58 (3): 819–30. https://doi.org/10.2307/2960448.

Mason, Lilliana. 2015. ""I Disrespectfully Agree": The Differential Effects of Partisan Sorting on Social and Issue Polarization." *American Journal of Political Science* 59: 128–45. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12089.

Mayhew, David. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection.* Yale University Press.

McCubbins, M, Roger G Noll, and Barry R Weingast. 1987. "Administrative Procedures as Instruments of Political Control." *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization* 3: 243–77.

McCubbins, M, and T Schwartz. 1984. "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols Versus Fire Alarms." *American Journal of Political Science* 28: 165–79.

McGrath, Robert J. 2013. "Congressional Oversight Hearings and Policy Control." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 38 (3): 349–76. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/lsq.12018.

Miller, Susan M., and Alexander I. Ruder. 2020. "Holding Agencies Accountable: Exploring the Effect of Oversight on Citizens' Approval of Members of Congress." *Journal of Public Policy* 40: 672–93. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0143814X19000151.

Moe, Terry M. 1984. "The New Economics of Organization." *American Journal of Political Science* 28: 739–77.

———. 2012. "Delegation, Control, and the Study of Public Bureaucracy." *The Forum* 10. https://doi.org/10.1515/1540-8884.1508.

Moore, Emily H. 2018. "Polarization, Excepted Appointments, and the Administrative Presidency." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 48: 72–92. https://doi.org/10.1111/psq.12417.

Potter, Rachel Augustine. 2019. *Bending the Rules. Pocedural Politicking in the Bureaucracy.* University of Chicago Press.

Przeworski, A., S. Stokes, and B. Manin. 1999. *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation.* Edited by A. Przeworski, S. Stokes, and B. Manin. Cambridge Studies in the Theory of Democracy. Cambridge University Press.

Rauh, Christian, and Jan Schwalbach. 2020. "The ParlSpeech V2 data set: Full-text corpora of 6.3 million parliamentary speeches in the key legislative chambers of nine representative democracies." https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/L4OAKN.

Richardson, Mark D., Joshua D. Clinton, and David E. Lewis. 2018. "Elite Perceptions of Agency Ideology and Workforce Skill." *Journal of Politics* 80: 303–8. https://doi.org/10.1086/694846.

Roberts, Patrick S. 2006. "FEMA and the Prospects for Reputation-Based Autonomy." *Studies in American Political Development* 20: 57–87. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0898588X06000010.

Schillemans, Thomas. 2011. "Does Horizontal Accountability Work? Evaluating Potential Remedies for the Accountability Deficit of Agencies." *Administration and Society* 43: 387–416. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399711412931.

Schillemans, Thomas, and E. Madalina Busuioc. 2015. "Predicting Public Sector Accountability: From Agency Drift to Forum Drift." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 25: 191–215. https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muu024.

Selin, Jennifer L. 2015. "What Makes an Agency Independent?" *American Journal of Political Science* 59: 971–87. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12161.

Selin, Jennifer L., and Grace Moore. 2023. "Keeping Tabs on the Executive." *Presidential*

Studies Quarterly 53 (2): 186–208. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/psq.12829.

Sirin, Cigdem V., and José D. Villalobos. 2011. "Where Does the Buck Stop? Applying Attribution Theory to Examine Public Appraisals of the President." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 41: 334–57. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5705.2011.03857.x.

TIGTA. 2013. "Inappropriate Criteria Were Used to Identify Tax-Exempt Applications for Review." https://www.treasury.gov/tigta/auditreports/2013reports/201310053fr.pdf.

Volden, Craig, and Alan Wiseman. 2020. "Centre for Effective Lawmaking." https://thelawmakers.org/data-download.

Weingast, Barry R, and Mark J Moran. 1983. "Bureaucratic Discretion or Congressional Control? Regulatory Policymaking by the Federal Trade Commission Author." *Journal of Political Economy* 91: 765–800.

Online Appendix

Contents

A Sample of Agencies

Table A.1: Sample of US agencies.

Agency Name	Agency Type
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	Boards Commissions And Committee
American Battle Monuments Commission	Boards Commissions And Committee
Appalachian Regional Commission	Boards Commissions And Committee
Board of Directors of the Hope for Homeowners Program	Boards Commissions And Committee
Delta Regional Authority	Boards Commissions And Committee
Employees Compensation Appeals Board	Boards Commissions And Committee
Interstate Commerce Commission	Boards Commissions And Committee
Mississippi River Commission	Boards Commissions And Committee
National Council on Disability	Boards Commissions And Committee
National Security Education Board	Boards Commissions And Committee
Panama Canal Commission	Boards Commissions And Committee
Postal Rate Commission	Boards Commissions And Committee
Social Security Advisory Board	Boards Commissions And Committee
Trade Deficit Review Commission	Boards Commissions And Committee
Department of Agriculture	Executive Department
Department of Commerce	Executive Department
Department of Defense	Executive Department
Department of Defense Education Activity	Executive Department
Department of Education	Executive Department
Department of Energy	Executive Department
Department of Health and Human Services	Executive Department
Department of Homeland Security	Executive Department
Department of Housing and Urban Development	Executive Department
Department of Justice	Executive Department
Department of Labor	Executive Department
Department of State	Executive Department
Department of the Army	Executive Department
Department of the Interior	Executive Department
Department of the Navy	Executive Department
Department of the Treasury	Executive Department
Department of Transportation	Executive Department
Department of Veterans Affairs	Executive Department
Council of Economic Advisers	Executive Office Of The President
Council on Environmental Quality	Executive Office Of The President
Office of Management and Budget	Executive Office Of The President
Office of National Drug Control Policy	Executive Office Of The President
Office of the United States Trade Representative	Executive Office Of The President
Administration for Children and Families	Executive Sub-Agencies
Administration for Community Living	Executive Sub-Agencies
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality	Executive Sub-Agencies
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry	Executive Sub-Agencies
Agricultural Marketing Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
Agricultural Research Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
Air Force	Executive Sub-Agencies

Table A.1: Sample of US agencies. *(continued)*

Agency Name	**Agency Type**
Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau	Executive Sub-Agencies
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
Arms Control and International Security	Executive Sub-Agencies
Benefits Review Board	Executive Sub-Agencies
Board of Veterans Appeals	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bonneville Power Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Border and Transportation Security Directorate	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bureau of Consular Affairs	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bureau of Diplomatic Security	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bureau of Economic Analysis	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bureau of Economics	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bureau of Engraving and Printing	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bureau of Indian Affairs	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bureau of Indian Education	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bureau of Industry and Security	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bureau of International Labor Affairs	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bureau of Labor Statistics	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bureau of Land Management	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bureau of Political-Military Affairs	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bureau of Prisons	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bureau of Reclamation	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bureau of the Census	Executive Sub-Agencies
Bureau of the Public Debt	Executive Sub-Agencies
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	Executive Sub-Agencies
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services	Executive Sub-Agencies
Citizen and Immigration Services	Executive Sub-Agencies
Civil Rights Division	Executive Sub-Agencies
Coast Guard	Executive Sub-Agencies
Community Development Financial Institutions Fund	Executive Sub-Agencies
Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency	Executive Sub-Agencies
Customs and Border Protection	Executive Sub-Agencies
Defense Acquisition Regulations System	Executive Sub-Agencies
Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency	Executive Sub-Agencies
Defense Commissary Agency	Executive Sub-Agencies
Defense Contract Audit Agency	Executive Sub-Agencies
Defense Contract Management Agency	Executive Sub-Agencies
Defense Finance and Accounting Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
Defense Health Agency	Executive Sub-Agencies
Defense Information Systems Agency	Executive Sub-Agencies
Defense Intelligence Agency	Executive Sub-Agencies

Table A.1: Sample of US agencies. *(continued)*

Agency Name	**Agency Type**
Defense Logistics Agency	Executive Sub-Agencies
Defense Media Activity	Executive Sub-Agencies
Defense Security Cooperation Agency	Executive Sub-Agencies
Defense Security Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
Defense Technical Information Center	Executive Sub-Agencies
Defense Technology Security Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Defense Threat Reduction Agency	Executive Sub-Agencies
Directorate of Defense Trade Controls	Executive Sub-Agencies
Domestic Nuclear Detection Office	Executive Sub-Agencies
Drug Enforcement Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Economic Development Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment	Executive Sub-Agencies
Economic Research Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
Election Assistance Commission	Executive Sub-Agencies
Employee Benefits Security Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Employment and Training Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Employment Standards Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Energy Information Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Executive Office for Immigration Review	Executive Sub-Agencies
Farm Service Agency	Executive Sub-Agencies
Federal Aviation Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Federal Bureau of Investigation	Executive Sub-Agencies
Federal Emergency Management Agency	Executive Sub-Agencies
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	Executive Sub-Agencies
Federal Highway Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Federal Housing Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Federal Law Enforcement Training Center	Executive Sub-Agencies
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Federal Railroad Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Federal Student Aid	Executive Sub-Agencies
Federal Transit Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Financial Crimes Enforcement Network	Executive Sub-Agencies
Financial Management Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
Financial Stability Oversight Council	Executive Sub-Agencies
Fish and Wildlife Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
Food and Drug Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Food and Nutrition Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
Food Safety and Inspection Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
Foreign Agricultural Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
Foreign Claims Settlement Commission	Executive Sub-Agencies
Forest Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
Geological Survey	Executive Sub-Agencies
Grain Inspection, Packers, and Stockyards Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Health Resources and Services Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Immigration and Customs Enforcement	Executive Sub-Agencies
Indian Health Service	Executive Sub-Agencies

Table A.1: Sample of US agencies. *(continued)*

Agency Name	**Agency Type**
Institute of Education Sciences	Executive Sub-Agencies
Internal Revenue Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
International Boundary and Water Commission	Executive Sub-Agencies
International Trade Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Maritime Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Marshals Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
Mine Safety and Health Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Minority Business Development Agency	Executive Sub-Agencies
Missile Defense Agency	Executive Sub-Agencies
National Agricultural Statistics Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
National Cemetery Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency	Executive Sub-Agencies
National Guard Bureau	Executive Sub-Agencies
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
National Indian Gaming Commission	Executive Sub-Agencies
National Institute of Food and Agriculture	Executive Sub-Agencies
National Institute of Standards and Technology	Executive Sub-Agencies
National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research	Executive Sub-Agencies
National Institutes of Health	Executive Sub-Agencies
National Nuclear Security Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
National Park Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
National Reconnaissance Office	Executive Sub-Agencies
National Security Agency	Executive Sub-Agencies
National Technical Information Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
National Telecommunications and Information Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Natural Resources Conservation Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
Occupational Safety and Health Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Acquisition Policy	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Economic Adjustment	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Energy Policy and New Uses	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Environmental Management	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Federal Procurement Policy	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Fiscal Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Foreign Assets Control	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Fossil Energy	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Health, Safety, and Security	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Justice Programs	Executive Sub-Agencies

Table A.1: Sample of US agencies. *(continued)*

Agency Name	**Agency Type**
Office of Labor-Management Standards	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Legal Counsel	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Minority Economic Impact	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Nuclear Energy	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Postsecondary Education	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Rural Development	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Safe and Healthy Students	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Science	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Science and Technology	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Special Trustee for American Indians	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Surety Guarantees	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation and Enforcement	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of the Comptroller of the Currency	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of the Federal Coordinator for Alaska Natural Gas Transportation Projects	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of the Secretary of Defense	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Thrift Supervision	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Vocational and Adult Education	Executive Sub-Agencies
Office of Workers' Compensation Programs	Executive Sub-Agencies
Parole Commission	Executive Sub-Agencies
Patent and Trademark Office	Executive Sub-Agencies
Pentagon	Executive Sub-Agencies
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Public and Indian Housing	Executive Sub-Agencies
Public Health Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
Rehabilitation Services Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Research and Innovative Technology Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Risk Management Agency	Executive Sub-Agencies
Rural Housing Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
Rural Utilities Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation	Executive Sub-Agencies
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Transportation Security Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Tricare Management Activity	Executive Sub-Agencies
Veterans Benefits Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Veterans Employment and Training Service	Executive Sub-Agencies
Veterans Health Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Wage and Hour Division	Executive Sub-Agencies
Washington Headquarters Services	Executive Sub-Agencies
Western Area Power Administration	Executive Sub-Agencies
Women's Bureau	Executive Sub-Agencies
Administrative Conference of the United States	Independent Agencies

Table A.1: Sample of US agencies. *(continued)*

Agency Name	**Agency Type**
Agency for International Development	Independent Agencies
AMTRAK	Independent Agencies
Broadcasting Board of Governors	Independent Agencies
Bureau of Competition	Independent Agencies
Central Intelligence Agency	Independent Agencies
Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board	Independent Agencies
Commission on Civil Rights	Independent Agencies
Commodities Futures Trading Commission	Independent Agencies
Consumer Financial Protection Bureau	Independent Agencies
Consumer Product Safety Commission	Independent Agencies
Corporation for National and Community Service	Independent Agencies
Corporation for National Community Service	Independent Agencies
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board	Independent Agencies
Environmental Protection Agency	Independent Agencies
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	Independent Agencies
Export-Import Bank of the United States	Independent Agencies
Farm Credit Administration	Independent Agencies
Federal Communications Commission	Independent Agencies
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	Independent Agencies
Federal Election Commission	Independent Agencies
Federal Housing Finance Agency	Independent Agencies
Federal Labor Relations Authority	Independent Agencies
Federal Maritime Commission	Independent Agencies
Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service	Independent Agencies
Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission	Independent Agencies
Federal Reserve	Independent Agencies
Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board	Independent Agencies
Federal Trade Commission	Independent Agencies
General Services Administration	Independent Agencies
Housing Finance Agency	Independent Agencies
Independent Payment Advisory Board	Independent Agencies
Inter-American Foundation	Independent Agencies
International Trade Commission	Independent Agencies
Merit Systems Protection Board	Independent Agencies
Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority	Independent Agencies
Millennium Challenge Corporation	Independent Agencies
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	Independent Agencies
National Archives and Records Administration	Independent Agencies
National Capital Planning Commission	Independent Agencies
National Credit Union Administration	Independent Agencies
National Labor Relations Board	Independent Agencies
National Mediation Board	Independent Agencies
National Science Foundation	Independent Agencies
National Transportation Safety Board	Independent Agencies
Nuclear Regulatory Commission	Independent Agencies
Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission	Independent Agencies

Table A.1: Sample of US agencies. *(continued)*

Agency Name	**Agency Type**
Office of Government Ethics	Independent Agencies
Office of Personnel Management	Independent Agencies
Office of Special Counsel	Independent Agencies
Office of the Director of National Intelligence	Independent Agencies
Overseas Private Investment Corporation	Independent Agencies
Peace Corps	Independent Agencies
Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation	Independent Agencies
Postal Regulatory Commission	Independent Agencies
Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board	Independent Agencies
Public Buildings Service	Independent Agencies
Railroad Retirement Board	Independent Agencies
Securities and Exchange Commission	Independent Agencies
Selective Service System	Independent Agencies
Small Business Administration	Independent Agencies
Social Security Administration	Independent Agencies
Surface Transportation Board	Independent Agencies
Tennessee Valley Authority	Independent Agencies
Trade and Development Agency	Independent Agencies
US Postal Service	Independent Agencies
Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights	N.A.
Commodity Credit Corporation	N.A.
Corporation for Public Broadcasting	N.A.
Defense Human Resources Activity	N.A.
Defense Legal Services Agency	N.A.
Economics and Statistics Administration	N.A.
Energy R&D Administration	N.A.
European and Eurasian Affairs	N.A.
Executive Office for United States Attorneys	N.A.
Federal Agricultural Mortgage Corporation	N.A.
Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation	N.A.
Federal National Mortgage Association	N.A.
Federal Prison Industries	N.A.
Field Policy and Management	N.A.
Government Accountability Office	N.A.
Government National Mortgage Association	N.A.
Government Printing Office	N.A.
Justice Management Division	N.A.
Library of Congress	N.A.
Missing Personnel Office	N.A.
National Consumer Cooperative Bank	N.A.
National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities	N.A.
National Infrastructure Protection Center	N.A.
National Institute of Building Sciences	N.A.
Public International Organization	N.A.
Rural Business and Cooperative Development Service	N.A.
Securities Investor Protection Corporation	N.A.

Table A.1: Sample of US agencies. *(continued)*

Agency Name	**Agency Type**
Test Resource Management Center	N.A.
US Information Agency	N.A.
US Soldiers' and Airmen's Home	N.A.
Institute of Peace	Quasi-Official Agencies
Legal Services Corporation	Quasi-Official Agencies
Smithsonian Institution	Quasi-Official Agencies
State Justice Institute	Quasi-Official Agencies

B Scandals Involving Federal Agencies

I focus on three major scandals affecting US bureaucracy that uncontroversially undermined the reputation of agencies.

- **Federal Emergency Management Administration**: FEMA "was criticized for poor preparation and a slow response to Hurricane Katrina" (Roberts 2006, 57) and its response the Hurricane Katrina on 23 August 2005 is still acknowledged as "another grand failure for FEMA"[10].
- **Internal Revenue Services**: A report published by the US Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration on 14 May 2013 found that the Internal Revenue Service targeted conservative groups applying for tax-exempt status (TIGTA 2013).
- **Department of Veterans Affairs**: Finally, "the Department of Veterans Affairs in 2014 was embroiled in a scandal over massive wait times in its health-care system". In some hospitals, the staff falsified appointment records to appear to meet the 14-day target. Some patients died while they were on the waiting list.[11]
- **Federal Bureau of Investigation**: The FBI was accused of missed signals before the Sept. 11 terror attacks as resulted from the agency's director and an FBI whistle-blower testifying before a Senate committee.[12]
- **Customs and Border Protection**: The media found out about a secret Facebook group with more than 9,000 members where CPB agents joked about migrants' death and posted sexist memes. Members of a secret Facebook group for current and former Border Patrol agents joked about the deaths of migrants, discussed throwing burritos at Latino members of Congress visiting a detention facility in Texas on Monday and posted a vulgar illustration depicting Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez engaged in oral sex with a detained migrant, according to screenshots of their postings.[13]

[10] See https://timeline.com/fema-hurricane-andrew-snapshots-7a764f017614?gi=523eefba5d42

[11] See https://vox.com/2014/9/26/18080592/va-scandal-explained

[12] See https://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=91584&page=1

[13] See https://www.propublica.org/article/secret-border-patrol-facebook-group-agents-joke-about-migrant-deaths-post-sexist-memes

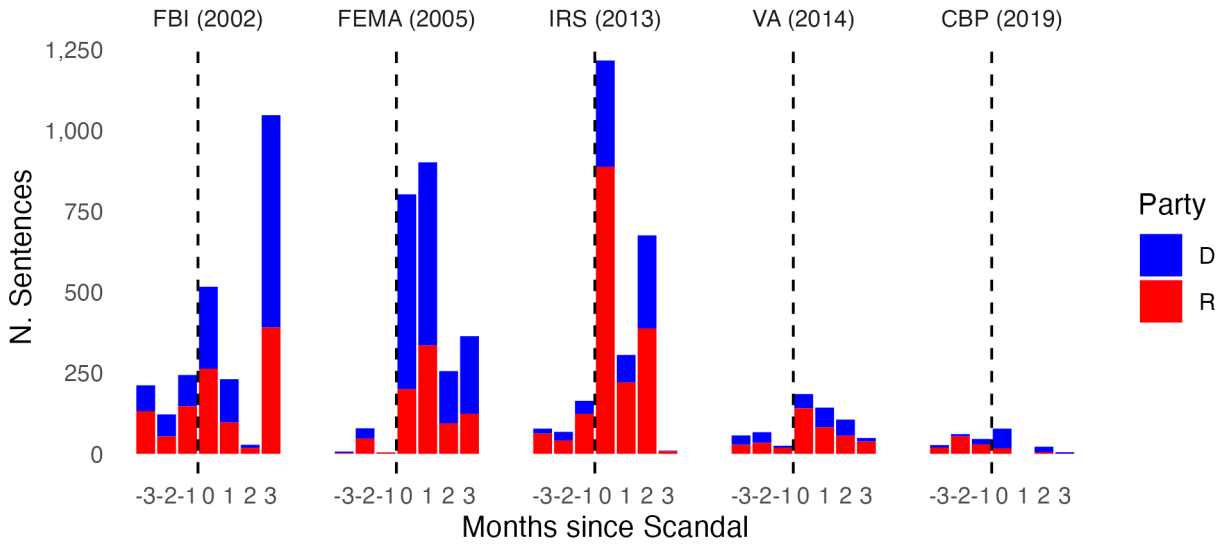

Figure B.1: Number of statements before and after scandal for each agencies by party.

	Pr(Statement about agency = 1) (1)	Share of Negative Statements (2)
President Co-partisan × Month since scandal = -10	0.012	0.001
	(0.009)	(0.002)
President Co-partisan × Month since scandal = -9	-0.002	0.003
	(0.012)	(0.004)
President Co-partisan × Month since scandal = -8	0.003	0.002
	(0.010)	(0.003)
President Co-partisan × Month since scandal = -7	-0.012	-0.004
	(0.009)	(0.003)
President Co-partisan × Month since scandal = -6	0.004	0.002
	(0.009)	(0.003)
President Co-partisan × Month since scandal = -5	0.001	-0.001
	(0.008)	(0.002)
President Co-partisan × Month since scandal = -4	0.003	-0.002
	(0.008)	(0.002)
President Co-partisan × Month since scandal = -3	-0.002	0.001
	(0.008)	(0.002)
President Co-partisan × Month since scandal = -2	0.007	0.001
	(0.008)	(0.002)
President Co-partisan × Month since scandal = 0	-0.073***	-0.022***
	(0.012)	(0.004)
President Co-partisan × Month since scandal = 1	-0.021*	-0.013***
	(0.012)	(0.004)
President Co-partisan × Month since scandal = 2	-0.027**	-0.005
	(0.011)	(0.004)
President Co-partisan × Month since scandal = 3	-0.010	-0.002
	(0.010)	(0.003)
President Co-partisan × Month since scandal = 4	-0.001	0.002
	(0.009)	(0.003)
President Co-partisan × Month since scandal = 5	-0.026**	-0.007*
	(0.011)	(0.004)
President Co-partisan × Month since scandal = 6	-0.011	-0.005
	(0.010)	(0.004)
President Co-partisan × Month since scandal = 7	-0.002	0.000
	(0.009)	(0.003)
President Co-partisan × Month since scandal = 8	-0.010	-0.003
	(0.010)	(0.004)
President Co-partisan × Month since scandal = 9	0.000	-0.004
	(0.010)	(0.003)
Covariates	✓	✓
R^2	0.173	0.084
Observations	58,073	58,073
MC-Agency FE	✓	✓
Month since scandal FE	✓	✓
Year FE	✓	✓

Notes: Event-study estimates (OLS). SE clustered by MC. Outcome of Column (1) is a dummy measure equal to 1 if the MC mentions the agency affected by scandal and 0 otherwise in any given month. Outcome of Column (2) is the share of negative statements about the agency affected by the scandal. 0 is used for MC-month-agency observations with no mentions, hence the estimates capture the effect of co-partisanship with the President at the extensive margin.
Signif. codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1

Table B.2: Event-study estimates.

C Robustness Tests

	Pr(N. of Questions to Witnesses ≥ 1)					
	All		Bureaucrats		Other	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
President Co-partisan	-0.015	-0.026	-0.056	-0.069*	0.028	0.020
	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.037)	(0.036)	(0.039)	(0.040)
Covariates		✓		✓		✓
Observations	53,644	53,639	47,768	47,763	33,076	33,074
MC FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hearing FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: Logit estimates. SE clustered by MC. DV is a dummy variable equal to 1 if the speeches in MC-hearing pairs contain at least one question to type of witnesses included in the table header. Covariates include legislative-effectiveness score, majority- and minority-leader status, and committee chair.
Signif. codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1

Table C.3: Co-partisanship and questioning bureaucratic witnesses.

D Data Sources for Comparative Analyses

List of agencies were assembled directly from government websites.

- United Kingdom: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations
- Ireland: https://www.gov.ie/en/service/list-of-government-departments/
- New Zealand: https://www.govt.nz/organisations/

Speeches accessed through:

- United Kindgom: *House of Commons Parliamentary Debates, 1979-2019* (Blumenau 2021)
- Ireland: *Database of Parliamentary Speeches in Ireland, 1919-2013* (Herzog and Mikhaylov 2017)
- New Zealand: *The ParlSpeech V2 data set: Full-text corpora of 6.3 million parliamentary speeches in the key legislative chambers of nine representative democracies* (Rauh and Schwalbach 2020)

	Pr(Negative Sentiment = 1)			
	IR	NZ	UK	US
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Legislator-Government/President Co-partisan	-0.049***	-0.054***	-0.061***	-0.009***
	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.001)
R^2	0.104	0.137	0.171	0.115
Observations	301,750	113,388	301,263	833,167
Legislator-Agency FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Agency-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: OLS estimates. SE clustered by legislator. DV is a dummy measure for negative sentiment in sentence. Signif. codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1

Table D.4: Co-partisanship and negative evaluation of bureaucracies in comparative perspective.