Slide 1/2

As a recap about my project:

I am studying Schedule C appointments. In case you don’t remember, these are appointments of a confidential or policy-determining nature that do not require either the competitive hiring process nor advice and consent from the Senate.

In a preliminary analysis they were generally placed in agencies different from the president ideologically.

The appointments may be used to bypass Congress at times but may also be important for policy. They seem to be making policy choices from some anecdotes.

My original paper looked at these appointments from the perspective of presidential attention—that is how the president allocates policy attention across different agencies, particularly when Congress isn’t involved.

However, there are a several problems that need to be addressed.

1) It is unlikely that the president himself has much to do with these appointments. They are low-level enough that his appointees probably do the appointing. In particular, Schedule C appointees have to have a political appointee as their supervisor—for example, another Schedule C or a PAS appointee

2) It is also unlikely these appointments are all the same. Likely they provide a range of services, some more important than others. Upon examining the appointments, some are simply clerical workers and schedulers, some are policy advisors, and some are liaisons (e.g. speech writers).

3) We don’t know what they do. Relatedly, many are concerned these are just patronage jobs. On the other hand, Elizabeth Warren was appointed because she had suggested the creation of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, so Obama hired her to create it.

4) There’s no beginning of a theory for how this process works.

Let’s start with the simple theory part because some of the rest will come with it.

Slide 3:

Let’s say the president chooses A. A might be a cabinet secretary or agency administrator. Probably this position is Senate confirmed.

Now A has a choice. A can appoint B (or not). And A can perform some action, such as making a rule.

B can also perform some action or not. Now, we might be interested in a few things here. One is whether or not A picks B.

Another is whether B performs some action. And finally, if B does perform some action, we’re interested in the extent to which A’s actions and B’s actions are correlated.

If B is a patronage appointment, what do we expect?

Well, one concern about patronage, as John and I discussed Monday, is that they’re just not doing anything. That they’re drawing a government salary and not doing anything.

Patronage appointees can do things—e.g. Bill Casey had been Ronald Reagan’s campaign manager, wanted to be Secretary of State, had too poor of table manners and was insane, so he was made CIA director, playing a big role in Iran Contra. Really, though, if they’re doing things, do we care? Are they any different from other loyalists?

On the other hand, if B performs some action and those actions are correlated with A’s actions, we know that there is a team-work scenario going on (and more than just delegation). That the agency in which A and B serve are getting things done (or attempting to).

Slide 4:

Now, of course, we can extend this a bit. For example, we might have the same thing, but we might have multiple agency heads involved.

This could be conceived a few different ways. One is what we discussed about the president picking between Hillary and John Kerry.

On the other hand, this may merely be another employed agency head which could make the same types of decisions as A. This could be important for understanding why Schedule Cs end up in some agencies in greater amounts than others.

Slide 5:

Extending it again, we may have several Bs in an agency who all choose to perform some action or not. This could get at the point that some of these appointees serve different functions even though they are in the same class.

Slide 6:

Now, fortunately, in the Federal Register, we can observe A picking B. We can also observe A’s actions to some extent. We may or may not be able to observe B’s actions.

Questions:

-How to know whether or not B is doing something if we can’t observe it.

-How to buy whether or not A’s actions are correlated with B’s if we can’t observe them. One thought here might be that the number of Schedule Cs might be correlated with the number of actions an agency might take.

John suggested I give you a sense of the data I just started looking at.

I’m looking at xml documents from the Federal Register that I can scrape through using Python.

Data are organized by day, month, and year.

First, I’ll show you how I can glean the appointment data

Slide 7:

All Schedule C notices are titled “Excepted Service.” And are produced (we think) monthly. It lists the title, agency, and effective date of the appointment.

This is what it looks like when I scrape a day for the Excepted Service announcement. I happened to know there was an announcement on this day.

This is a bit messy, so here’s a cleaned up version…

Slide 8:

This is basically what it looks like on the web document.

I don’t know yet what these numbers mean.

Take notice of the titles.

Slide 9:

Okay, so that was how we could observe A picking B. Next we need to observe A’s actions.

Every day, agencies report adopted rules, proposed rules, and notices in the Federal Register. These are arranged by agency. For example, on this day—September 3, 2010, we can see an excerpt. It wasn’t listed there, but one of the appointees in the December 2009 batch I showed you was for the Farm Service Agency.

Here, in September of 2010, we see some actions of the Farm Service Agency. I’m showing you the web version first so the next slide isn’t too terribly confusing.

Slide 10:

Here’s the unedited version of the scraped XML. Here we see the exact same thing. Basically, I should be able to scrape for each agency’s actions every day and get the title of the rule or notice as well.

Slide 11:

Okay, so before I open it up for your ideas, here’s what I have or can get:

-Total # of All appointments

-Data on New Hires to the Agency, including numbers per agency and titles.

-Data on People who left or were fired from an Agency

-Data on rules, notices, etc. agencies are making

-Names associated with titles for those serving in election years only.

-An organizational chart of an agency showing where the Schedule C appointee is supposed to serve.

Final Slide:

Questions:

-How to know whether or not B is doing something if we can’t observe it.

-How to know whether or not B is “just” patronage.

-How to buy whether or not A’s actions are correlated with B’s if we can’t observe them.

-What could be interesting or fruitful from these FR data?