

Summary of “Presidential Influence in an Era of Congressional Dominance”

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Research Question

- How does the strength of a political institution influence the distribution of goods in the U.S.?

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 - Focuses on presidential power over time

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 - Argument: 19th century presidents wielded more power than previously anticipated
 - Power of patronage; building of administrative state; lack of oversight over expenditures

- Examines the expansion of the national post office from 1876-1896

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- In particular: did counties represented by copartisan MCs receive a disproportionate # of post offices?
 - Compares periods of unified vs. divided government to look for presidential influence
 - Key findings:
 - copartisans received more post offices
 - especially in times of divided government
 - especially in swing states

Takeaways

- Powers of particular institutions can influence distribution of goods
- These powers can change over time
- Political elites can influence the bureaucracy

Thanks!

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