There Are More Republicans in Federal Government Than You Might Think

Four in 10 feds identify with the GOP, poll shows.

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Given the proclivity of Republican politicians to deride the federal government and the bureaucrats that fill its ranks, it stands to reason Democrats would be more likely to seek out Uncle Sam for employment.

And that is true. But only barely.

In a recent survey conducted by Government Business Council, the research arm of Government Executive Media Group, 44 percent of respondents identified as Democrats or Democratic-leaning independents, while 40 percent identified as Republicans or Republican-leaning independents. The remaining respondents were undecided or did not identify with either party, though a plurality of them said they were “conservatives.”

Party Affiliation of Feds | Create infographics

Top-level management is more likely to lean to the left, with 49 percent of GS-15 and Senior Executive Service employees identifying or leaning Democrat and 40 percent Republican. Respondents serving as GS-14s and below saw a 44/38 split toward Democrats.

Federal employees appear to be as partisan as the rest of the nation; just 5 percent of GOP feds approve of their ultimate boss -- President Obama -- while 91 percent disapprove. About 8 in 10 Democratic respondents gave Obama’s performance positive reviews, while 11 percent disapproved.

Democratic feds seem more willing to consider Republican presidential candidates, giving Ohio Gov. John Kasich and former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush higher favorability scores than their party’s own Martin O’Malley and Jim Webb. Meanwhile, just 4 percent of Republican respondents viewed Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton favorably.

Republicans in the federal workforce are more likely to view national security as the most important issue when choosing a presidential candidate, while Democrats are more likely to consider federal workforce issues. Democratic feds listed economic policy, federal workforce issues and health care as their top three issues, while Republicans listed national security, economic policy and immigration.

Among feds from both parties who listed federal workforce issues as very important or essential, Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., earned the highest net favorability marks. Ohio Gov. John Kasich was the only Republican candidate to receive above water favorability scores among the same group, though a large portion had not heard enough about the governor to form an opinion.

Republican frontrunner Donald Trump was viewed very unfavorably by the group overall, but 24 percent of Republicans who prioritize federal workforce issues said they would vote for him if the primary were held today. His lead among that group was even larger than among Republican feds.

The poll had 973 federal workers participating, with a 3 percent margin of error. It was conducted from Aug. 7 through Aug. 12.