Final Exam for POLS 510

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POLS 510 – Presidency, Congress, and the Bureaucracy (D001 Fall 14)

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**1. Woodrow Wilson proposed the "politics/ administration dichotomy," where bureaucrats are non-political administrators, implementing the directives of elected officials. How well does this dichotomy describe the actual functioning of the federal government?**

When looking at the politics-administration dichotomy proposal put forth by Woodrow Wilson, it is important to look at how this system works today. The proposal Wilson put forth states that bureaucrats are administrators that are not involved in the political system but just implement the directives of the elected officials. It is important when looking at political science to see if this is actually the case or if bureaucrats are involved in the political process. In this short response it will be described how the politics-administration dichotomy is not how the federal government functions.

When looking at the politics-administration dichotomy it is important to understand what it truly means. Milakovich & Gordon (2013) pointed out that politics-administration dichotomy means it pretty much splits up the “politics and policy making from policy implementation and public administration (p. 39). Now by understanding this we can then look to see if bureaucrats are acting in a manner that is implementation of policies and public administration and not acting in a political sense. When looking at the federal government it is important to point out that bureaucrats cannot ignore the political environments that their government organizations are involved in which include the external political environment taking shape and the internal politics of the organization itself (Svara, 2008). When looking at bureaucrats they have to deal with their immediate supervisors but they also have to deal with other people and organizations as well. They have to deal with people that have been appointed, the court system, and even legislature members. However, that is not all that a bureaucrat has to deal with because they deal with the citizens/voters, media, interest groups, and even with other government organizations. With that being said one can conclude that bureaucrats do get involved in the political process in order to carry out their jobs.

A way to prove this is by looking at the IRS issue that came to light in 2013. What took place at the IRS was a division within the IRS was targeting conservative groups’ non-profit status. Sherfinski & Dinan (2013) noted that the IRS inspector general pointed out that even though “some liberal groups were given extra scrutiny by the tax agency; they were not subjected to the same invasive queries as tea party groups” (para. 1). During the time that this was taking place the President was a democrat. It is important to note that President Obama came out and said that he was not aware of the IRS practice. It is possible that the people that worked within the IRS wanted to stay in good graces with their superiors that could have potentially been put in place by President Obama. In other words, just by looking at the IRS one can see that the political process and running a government agency does overlap. With that being said the bureaucrats that work within the federal government have to know how to play the game in a manner that ensures that they keep their jobs. One can conclude that it is possible that these bureaucrats might make choices that would be seen as favorable towards to the people that have been voted into office that they report to.

When looking at the politics-administration dichotomy proposal Woodrow Wilson put forth, it is clear to see that this is not what is taking place in government agencies. The political process and the running of government agencies overlap. This is especially true when a president orders the bureaucracy to behave politically, such as over immigration.

**References**

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Sherfinski, David & Dinan, Stephen. (2013). IRS Auditor Reaffirms That Conservatives, Not Liberals, Were Targeted. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved January 19, 2015 from http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/jun/27/irs-auditor-reaffirms-conservatives- not-liberals-w/#ixzz3PJ2G7GXo

Svara, J. H. (2008). Beyond dichotomy: Dwight Waldo and the intertwined politics– administration relationship. *Public Administration Review, 68*(1), 46-52.

**2. Some critics argue that President Obama has exceeded his executive authority and is acting like a "dictator." Assess the legitimacy of this argument.**

Since the beginning of the United States there have been a total of forty-four Presidents. Throughout this time there have been many different character traits of the forty-four people that have been elected President. President Barack Obama is the current President of the United States and it has been claimed that he is acting like a dictator while he is carrying out the duties of the Presidency. It is important to understand that this is not the case and this short response will discuss why President Obama is acting within his powers and not that of a dictator.

When looking at the claim that President Obama is exceeding his executive authority it is important to understand why these claims have been brought forth. One reason why these claims have been brought forth is due to the fact that he seems to be issuing orders for government organizations to follow. For example, his calls for immigration, free community college, and other issues have people claiming that he is acting outside of his scope as the Commander in Chief of the United States. When looking at the argument that President Obama is acting as a dictator the claims have been made that he is acting outside the scope of Constitution.

In order to counter the argument that the President is acting outside his powers one needs to take a close look at the Constitution of the United States. When looking at the Constitution one needs to look at Article II to see the powers that the President has in regards to running the United States. Article II of the United States Constitution states that:

“The executive power shall be vested in a President of the United States…

The President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States…

[The President} Shall take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed” (U.S. Const. art. II, § 1-3).

Now by looking at this section of the Constitution one can see that the President is given some pretty important powers. It is also important to point out that in this section there are implied powers that are given to the President in the section that states “shall take care that the Laws be faithfully executed” (U.S. Const. art. II, § 1-3). The President has to be able to issue executive actions such as executive orders, Presidential memorandums, and other items in order to successfully run the government of the United States. It is also important to note that the President can’t just issue one of these items to create a new law he wants passed. If a President does indeed issue one of the executive actions to create something that is not wanted or lawful there are steps that can be taken to not enforce one of these actions. One of the actions that can be taken to not have to enforce one of the actions carried out by the President is for the court systems to rule that it is unconstitutional (Nelson, 2014). The other thing that can be done is for Congress to revoke, modify or not fund one of the orders or actions that the President has called for (Chu & Garvey, 2014).

In other words, it is important to understand that President Obama is not acting outside of his authority because the Constitution of the United States gives the President the implied power to run the federal government. However, if the President does act outside of his authority then there are steps that can be taken by Congress and the Court systems to revoke or modify one of the actions that President Obama has issued.

There have been forty-four Presidents of the United States. The current President is Barack Obama and the claims that have been made that he is acting as a dictator are not founded. One just has to take a close look at the Constitution of the United States to see that he is acting within his implied powers that are given to him from this important document.

**References**

Chu, Vivian, & Garvey, Todd. (2014). Executive Orders: Issuance, Modification, and Revocation. Congressional Research Service. Retrieved January 8, 2014 from https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RS20846.pdf

Nelson, Michael, editor. (2014). *The Presidency and the Political System*. 10th ed. Los Angeles, CA: CQ Press.

United States Constitution. Article II, § 1-3.

**3. Evaluate the efforts of President Reagan, President Carter, and President Clinton to reform and/or reduce the size of the federal bureaucracy.**

When looking at Presidents of the United States we can see some similarities between the Presidents. When looking at President Reagan, President Carter, and President Clinton we can see that all three of them tried to reform or reduce the size of the federal government. By looking at their efforts we can evaluate them to see if they were good at reform or reducing the size of the federal bureaucracy.

The first President that will be evaluated is President Reagan. When President Reagan took office in his first inaugural he stated that “government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem” (Nelson, 2014, 23). With that being said President Reagan wanted to reduce the size of the federal government (Nelson, 2014). When looking at his successes in office one can look to see that he signed laws that provided a large amount of cuts to government spending which has been estimated to be about 4.7% and cut the tax rates (Samples, 2010). Although, these were done in President Reagan's presidency it is important to look to see how he did in regards to actually reducing the federal government. During his presidency he was able to eliminate one program that had been created in 1974 that was authorized by “the Comprehensive Employment Training Act” (Samples, 2010, para. 8). Since there was one program that was eliminated one could say that President Reagan was successful in reducing the size of government. However, one needs to look further to see if he did indeed reduce the size of government as he stated that he wanted to do in his first inauguration. There was spending increases in the Department of Education, Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid (Samples, 2010). In other words, even though President Reagan cut one program the amount of spending increased in other areas during his entire Presidency. This means that his calls for reduction in government were not successful.

Another President that can be looked at when looking at reforming the federal bureaucracy is President Carter. President Carter really wanted to put into place a program that would change that the federal government operated. President Carter compromised on some areas in order to get what he wanted into play which was “The Civil Service Reform Act” (Nelson, 2014, p. 389). In this act it made it where the personnel system of the federal government went to an agency that was oversaw by someone that the President put into place (Nelson, 2014). By doing this it allowed the Presidency to gain a lot of power and made it in a manner where it totally reformed the way that the federal agencies were run. By looking at this it is important to note that President Carter was successful in reforming the government. It is also interesting to see that he compromised on one area in order to get this act passed and into effect.

The last President that is going to be looked at is President Clinton. President Clinton was able to reduce the size of the federal government. With that being said one can look at two ways to evaluate the way the President Clinton did this. President Clinton was able to have a deficit reduction during his presidency (Pika & Maltese, 2014). President Clinton was able to reduce the amount of federal workers by about 380,000 and bring the total number of people that were employed by the federal government to 2,703,000 (Pika & Maltese, 2014). By looking at these two areas we can see that President Clinton was successful in his attempt to reduce the size of the federal government.

There have been many different Presidents in the history of the United States. By looking at their actions we can see and evaluate their actions in regards to reforming and or reducing the size of the federal government.

**References**

Nelson , Michael, ed. (2014). *The Presidency and the Political System*. 10th ed. Los Angeles, CA: CG Press.

Pika, Joseph., & Maltese, John. (2014). *The Politics of the Presidency*. 8th ed. Los Angeles, CA: CQ Press.

Samples, John. (2010). Limiting Government, 1980 – 2010. *CATO Institute*. Retrieved January 20, 2014 from <http://www.cato.org/policy-report/marchapril-2010/limiting-government->

1980-2010

Rather than fill out 3 separate rubrics with similar comments, I used one aggregate rubric for all three essays. Any essay specific comments are written with their respective essays. The number of sources was considered for each essay, not all three combined. The quality of each response is quite similar. The topics are discussed as required, with some examples and sources to back them. There are some writing errors and awkwardly worded sentences, but no major issues.