

# Bureaucratic Departures After Civil Service Rollbacks

Benjamin Goehring\*

May 12, 2025

## Abstract

U.S. public employees have become easier to fire over the last three decades. Federal and state civil service rollbacks provide executives with opportunities to influence the composition of the government workforce. Using new personnel data from Florida's public sector, I test whether employee departures increased following a 2001 civil service reform that removed tenure protections for over 16,000 mid-level positions. While exits increased overall approximately 18 months after reform, I find no evidence that more influential employees in politically distal or fiscally constrained agencies were more likely to depart. However, affected employees were approximately five times more likely to depart from the state Department of Education—an agency central to Governor Jeb Bush's policy agenda—in the month before the governor gained control of the agency via a cabinet reorganization. Overall, my findings suggest that reform facilitated some strategic employee departures but had a largely limited impact on workforce turnover.

---

\*Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Political Science and Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan. Contact: bengoehr@umich.edu. I thank Richard Herring for helpful discussions about Florida budgeting, public records officers in the Florida Department of Management Services for assistance, and Jowei Chen for sharing data. Thank you to Kenny Lowande and Charles Shipan for comments. I am responsible for all errors.

Public employees' job security is increasingly precarious. The second Trump administration has dismissed scores of federal employees, many of whom ostensibly enjoyed safeguards against quick termination, and removed protections for tens of thousands of other federal bureaucrats (Wu et al. 2025; Trump 2025). Over the last three decades, a number of states, including Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Indiana, Missouri, Oklahoma, Mississippi, and Arizona, have also made it easier to fire public employees (Forman 2021; Stephenson 2012; Cournoyer 2012; Parson 2018). The details of the reforms vary by state, but they all share a common emphasis on reducing the burdens faced by managers looking to remove or discipline public employees.

In contrast to recent trends, scholars often view civil servants' job security as fundamental to modern public administration. Insulating government employees from political job cycles helps attract motivated employees who are willing to invest in developing crucial skills and expertise (Gibbs 2020; Gailmard and Patty 2007, 2012). Civil service protections have also been shown to improve program performance and service delivery (Aneja and Xu 2024; Lewis 2007; Oliveira et al. 2024, cf. Moreira and Peérez 2021). Despite these benefits, few empirical studies examine the consequences of civil service rollbacks. Researchers have examined the theoretical implications of civil service reform (Gibbs 2020; Ujhelyi 2014) and documented employees' attitudes toward removing tenure protections at the state level (Coggburn 2006; Goodman and French 2011; Bowman et al. 2003; Battaglio 2010; Nigro and Kellough 2000; Bowman and West 2006), but no studies have used observational data to examine the effects of transferring employees from protected to at-will status.

I investigate whether civil service rollbacks lead to increased departures from the public sector. Popular criticisms of recent reforms and formal theoretic accounts suggest that

lowering the costs of dismissing public employees can lead to more departures due to increased terminations. I test this claim and lay out and test multiple hypotheses regarding which types of employees are most likely to exit following the removal of civil service protections. Building on research concerning how the president influences federal personnel to increase control over policy, I argue that executives can take advantage of civil service roll-backs to increase their influence over the bureaucracy's composition. If so, departures will likely increase among previously-protected influential employees who have opposing policy preferences or work in agencies important to the administration's policy goals. I also contend that budgetary pressures can foster increased exits from the workforce. With protections out of the way, public employees can be more easily removed when fiscal constraints necessitate spending cuts.

I test these expectations using the case of civil service reform in Florida. In 2001, Governor Jeb Bush signed into law "Service First," a package of personnel policies affecting how the state hired, fired, and compensated employees. The legislation loosened hiring procedures, condensed numerous job titles into broader occupational categories, and expanded the definition of what constitutes "cause" for dismissal. Most notably, Service First also transferred over 16,000 managerial, supervisory, and confidential positions out of the state's protected Career Service into the at-will Selected Exempt Service (SES). Beginning in July 2001, affected employees could be removed from their positions for any otherwise legal reason without the right to appeal their termination.

I use personnel records, retrieved via public records requests, to examine how the removal of tenure protections under Service First affected employee departures. The data, which consist of monthly snapshots of nearly all Florida state employees from January 2000 through

February 2004, are a rich source of information, including employees' full names, agencies, job titles, salaries, race, sex, and counties of employment. I also impute employees' civil service statuses and unique identification codes that allow me to track individuals' entry into and exit from the workforce. In total, the data cover 171,354 unique employees and 5,383,961 employee-month observations across 32 Florida state agencies.

I first test whether employees who lost their civil service protections in July 2001 were overall more likely to depart than their still-protected peers. I find no evidence that affected employees were more likely to depart the workforce in the quarters immediately following reform. However, employees who lost their tenure protections in July 2001 were at increased risk of departing the workforce in a few quarters in late 2002 and 2003. Next, operationalizing my expectations regarding which types of employees are more likely to depart following the rollback of protections, I test whether departures increased among higher-earning employees employed in agencies either comprised of more registered Democrats or where the number of appropriated positions had been cut by the legislature. I do not find any evidence to suggest that employees in either of these segments of the workforce were more likely to depart following the rollback of protections.

Finally, I evaluate whether departures were more likely in agencies important to Governor Bush's policy goals. I take advantage of a 1998 constitutional referendum that gave the Florida Governor greater control over the Departments of State and Education in January 2003, roughly 18 months after the onset of Service First. Since reforming education policy was a cornerstone of Governor Bush's policy agenda—and there is no indication that the operations of the Department of State were particularly important to him—this is a useful setting for measuring whether at-will departures were more likely in a salient agency. I

show that in the month before Bush formally gained control of the agency, the predicted probability of an SES employee in the Department of Education departing the workforce was approximately five times higher than for both career employees in the Department of Education and other unprotected SES employees throughout the rest of the workforce. Via a placebo test, I show that there is no similar increased risk of departing for unprotected employees in the Department of State. Since the spike in departures from the Department of Education only occurred in one month, I argue that it was likely due to reorganization efforts right before the agency officially transitioned to being under the governor’s control rather than anticipatory voluntary exits.

Overall, my results suggest that Service First contributed to heightened departure rates within some segments of the Florida workforce. Namely, the salient Department of Education. However, the effects of removing tenure protections—at least in terms of departures—occurred largely along the margins of Florida’s public sector. These results point to the need for additional research into the degree of political conflict between bureaucrats and principals in one-party states as well as further studies of the impacts of civil service rollbacks on bureaucratic behavior and agency performance.

## **Tenure Protections**

Tenure protections are a mainstay of many modern bureaucracies. Federal bureaucrats gained tenure protections around the turn of the 20th Century. While the 1883 Pendleton Act was the bellwether for civil service reform, it did not enshrine many protections for employees once they secured a position in the new merit-based classified service. As a contemporary

Senate report summarized, the Pendleton Act

“does not touch the questions of tenure of office, or removals from office, except that removals shall not be made for refusing to pay political assessments or to perform partisan service. It leaves both where it finds them” (United States: Congress: Senate et al. 1882, p. ix).

As such, although positions classified in the new civil service needed to be filled according to merit, employees could still be removed due to political considerations. More thorough tenure protections did not emerge until 1897, when President McKinley ordered that classified employees could only be removed for “just cause” and had to be afforded the due process right to respond to their dismissal (*Annual Report of the United States Civil Service Commission* 1900, p. 13). These protections were expanded over time via a series of legislation and came to affect more employees as the classified service grew in size (Johnson and Libecap 1994).

Compared to the federal government, the U.S. states were relatively late to adopt merit-based protections for government employees. Although states like Massachusetts and New York implemented merit-based civil service systems in the 1880s, only seven other states had passed civil service laws by 1936 (Folke, Hirano, and Snyder 2011). In 1939, the federal government required that state employees working in agencies receiving federal block grants via the Social Security program enjoy merit-based protections. Despite this requirement, many states were still slow to implement broad-based civil service systems. Eighteen states did not implement a workforce-wide civil service system until after 1960, while Texas has never passed a broad civil service law for its public workforce (Walters 2002).

The introduction of merit-based hiring improved the quality of employees, reduced turnover,

and, in some cases, enhanced service delivery (Aneja and Xu 2024; Moreira and Pérez 2021). The associated rise of tenure protections also led to improvements in the public sector workforce. As Gailmard and Patty (2007, 2012) argue, job protections are key for developing a skilled bureaucracy. Even individuals who are interested in working for the government and shaping policy face a dilemma when considering public service. Government jobs often require learning the intricacies of archane rules, procedures, and policies that, while necessary for government work, are not especially useful in other fields. If bureaucrats know that they can be promptly removed for political reasons, they will be hesitant to invest in acquiring the know-how to do their jobs effectively. Protecting employees from hasty or politically-motivated dismissals reduces the risk of investing in the expertise necessary for skilled administration. With protections in place, bureaucrats interested in shaping public policy stick around and get better at their jobs, creating a skilled, albeit not neutral, workforce.

At the same time, however, tenure protections can prove frustrating to executives and managers dealing with the legal and logistical costs of punishing poorly performing employees. Civil service protections help incentivize skilled employees to join the workforce, but too much insulation can provide cover to unmotivated employees (Gibbs 2020). In the 1990s, a number of states began to target employees' protections, arguing that they stood in the way of quality administration. In Georgia, Governor Zell Miller told the legislature in 1996 that the state's merit system "offers no reward for good workers. It only provides cover for bad workers" (Walters 2002). Heeding the governor's call for reform, the state passed legislation mandating that, beginning in July 1996, all new hires in the Georgia state workforce would serve at-will. Affected employees could be fired for any otherwise legal reason without re-

course to due process or appeal. Florida followed suit five years later, removing protections for a wide-swath of mid-level managers and supervisors. Since then, a number of other states, largely under Republican control, have also made it easier to fire state employees (McGrath 2013). Indiana and Arizona increased the share of their public sectors serving at-will in 2011 and 2012, respectively (Stephenson 2012; Cournoyer 2012). Kansas followed suit in 2015 and recent legislation in Missouri and Oklahoma reduced protections for most state employees (Forman 2021; Parson 2018; Lorenz 2019). In a unique case, Mississippi has periodically revoked tenure protections for specific agencies following significant scandals or policy failures (*PEER Report 670* 2022; *PEER Report 651* 2020). Overall, a recent census noted that approximately 20 states have implemented significant reforms to their civil service systems since the 1990s (Glock and Mukherjee 2025).

Theoretical studies suggest some potential implications of recent reforms. Gibbs (2020) shows that civil service protections incentivize motivated bureaucrats to enter and remain in the workforce because they do not have to work as hard to differentiate themselves from their unmotivated peers. As managers gain more power to remove bureaucrats, unmotivated employees become easier to remove. Yet, removing tenure protections altogether pushes motivated employees to seek employment elsewhere, despite their interest in government work. Walking back protections can have political implications too, potentially affecting both bureaucrats' willingness to work against opposing principals' reelection and politicians' incentives to use the workforce for partisan goals (Forand 2019; Ujhelyi 2014).

Surveys of state employees and managers affected by civil service rollbacks provide a mixed picture of reform. Personnel officials have a generally positive view toward at-will employment, especially as it pertains to increasing the responsiveness of employees (Cog-



ggburn 2006; Goodman and French 2011; Kim and Kellough 2014), although others report decreased motivation and trust after reform (Battaglio and Condrey 2009; Battaglio 2010). Unsurprisingly, affected employees who lost tenure protections see fewer benefits (Bowman and West 2006; Nigro and Kellough 2000; Bowman et al. 2003). While relatively few employees report that at-will employment contributes to politically-motivated management, employees in multiple states note that removing tenure protections facilitate budget cuts and government downsizing initiatives (Bowman et al. 2003; Goodman and French 2011; Coggburn 2006).

Other literatures, although not dealing directly with the rollback of civil service protections, are also relevant. A number of studies from both the federal workforce and other countries suggests that policy disagreements can influence turnover among senior bureaucrats, even those who enjoy civil service protections (Kim and Hong 2019; Dahlström and Holmgren 2019; Boyne et al. 2010; Bolton, de Figueiredo, and Lewis 2021; Doherty, Lewis, and Limbocker 2019). Another body of work examines the strategic management of political appointees by executives. The job status of newly-minted at-will employees resembles that of political appointees. Both can be removed quite easily with few, if any, options for recourse. If at-will employees are treated as political appointees, then research suggests that they could be replaced in order to increase control over particular agencies and reward supporters (Lewis 2008, 2011; Hollibaugh, Horton, and Lewis 2014).

Existing studies provide helpful insights regarding the potential effects of removing civil service protections, but they also point to the need for additional research. For one, it is unclear the extent to which theories of turnover and politicization tested at the federal level apply to the states. Among other differences, state governments possess unique institutional

arrangements (Krause and Woods 2014), state agencies possess different policy portfolios than their federal counterparts, and one-party rule is common in the states. Furthermore, bureaucrats whose protections have been removed occupy a unique position. While they are no longer protected civil servants, newly-minted at-will employees often occupy positions that are further down agencies' organizational charts than political appointees. Surveys of state employees affected by the rollback of tenure protections provide some insights about the impacts of reforms, but it is difficult to derive clear effects due to the lack of pre-reform observations.

## **Theoretical Expectations**

Removing civil service protections makes it easier for managers to remove employees whom they want to fire (Gailmard and Patty 2007; Gibbs 2020). This does not necessarily mean that departures will increase. Strategic bureaucrats might instead alter their behavior to better fit supervisors' and executives' expectations. Likewise, executives might be hesitant to remove employees over concerns about decreasing program performance or worse service delivery. Yet, there are certain conditions under which departures are more likely. Building on existing research regarding how executives use personnel management to achieve their policy goals and surveys of state employees affected by reform, I lay out those conditions below and extract empirical implications.

## Policy Control

Much like presidents, governors build a case for reelection and burnish their legacies by following through on policy promises (Moe 1985). In part, implementing policy priorities requires working with the legislature to pass new statutes. State agencies, however, have taken on increasing policymaking responsibilities over the latter half of the 20th Century (Jenks and Wright 1993). State agencies are loci of policymaking capacity and expertise, especially in the numerous states with part-time civilian legislatures (Boushey and McGrath 2017). Consequently, if governors want to see their policies implemented, they need to be able to control state agencies.

Many governors possess a wide range of tools for controlling bureaucracies, including line-item vetoes, centralized rule review, and reorganizations (Grady and Simon 2002; Schwartz 2020; Holtz-Eakin 1988; Seifter 2017, 2018). The rollback of civil service protections provides an additional mechanism. With tenure protections removed, the legal and logistical costs associated with dismissing employees decrease. Newly-minted at-will employees are suddenly less insulated from political pressure. Executives have a much more free hand to pressure employees, push them to resign, or remove them outright. Of course, executives have to be strategic in who they choose to remove. Removing too many employees in the name of greater responsiveness can lead to the type of visible policy failures easily punished by voters (Lewis 2011).

Influential employees with opposing policy preferences are a natural target for executives interested in balancing the costs of removing employees with the benefits of increased policy control. Although many of the highest positions in an agency are occupied by political

appointees, civil servants also occupy powerful positions with decisionmaking power over critical policy, budgetary, and regulatory decisions (Heclo 1977; Doherty, Lewis, and Limbocker 2019). Many of these employees were initially attracted to government work because of the opportunity to shape policy and thus often have their own views about what policy ought to look like (Gailmard and Patty 2007). Although oversight and professional norms limit the degree to which civil servants influence the ideological bent of policy, providing expert bureaucrats with discretion nevertheless opens the possibility of drift (e.g. Potter 2017). As a result, considerable anecdotal and quantitative evidence suggests that executives try to remove at least some senior civil servants with opposing views following their election (Kim and Hong 2019; Dahlström and Holmgren 2019; Boyne et al. 2010; Bolton, de Figueiredo, and Lewis 2021; Doherty, Lewis, and Limbocker 2019). It seems plausible that, following the rollback of civil service protections, opposing senior employees will also be more likely to depart as the executive tries to gain more control of important policymaking positions.

If civil service rollbacks are used to enhance control over policymaking, governors will likely also concentrate on increasing their influence over agencies important to their policy agenda. Focus is a limited resource for executives. Writing in reference to presidents, Heclo (1977, p. 12) notes that “presidential leadership is like a spotlight that can sweep across the range of executive activities but can concentrate on only a few at a time.” The same holds for governors, who have to be strategic about where to focus their attention. Governors who campaign on changing education and criminal justice policy are likely attuned to the actions of the education, corrections, and state police agencies. Limited time and energy mean that other agencies, such as the department that handles vocational and business licensing, will receive less attention, even if they possess important policymaking responsibilities.

Differences in attention should also be reflected in departure rates following civil service rollbacks. Agencies that are salient to the governor will likely experience increased departures as the governor ensures that the right people are well-positioned within the department to implement preferred policies. This will especially be true if the salient agency has had an adversarial relationship with the executive.

## Budgetary Control

While civil service rollbacks can facilitate increased policy control, they can also serve as a means to other ends. Unlike the federal government, most states must pass balanced budgets (*Budget Processes in the States* 2021). As a result, state governments are under particular pressure to keep annual spending below receipts. Compounding this pressure is the rising dominance of the Republican party at the state level. Running on a platform of reduced spending and smaller government, Republicans have been in control of both legislative houses and the governorship in at least 20 states since 2010.

Rolling back civil service protections provides a tool for governors and agency heads looking to reduce government spending. Since cause is not necessary for dismissal, at-will employees are an attractive target for reductions. This is especially true in many of the states where civil service protections have been revoked, as public sector unions are usually weak or nonexistent (McGrath 2013). Employees who have lost their civil service protections often point to cutting spending as a point of the reform. In Florida, 61% of employees affected by the 2001 civil service reforms noted that the aim of reform was to “downsize government” and 83% reported that they were viewed as “costs to be controlled” (Bowman et al. 2003).

Personnel officers in Mississippi and Texas also note that at-will employees are removed due to budget shortfalls, although dismissals often occur for other reasons too (Goodman and French 2011; Coggburn 2006).

If governors use the rollback of protections to reduce state budgets, we should expect to see more departures in agencies under greater budgetary pressure. The logic here is fairly straightforward. As an agency is appropriated fewer funds from the legislature, it will face greater incentive to cut spending in order to make up the shortfall. Lacking tenure protections, at-will employees will increasingly be targeted for removal. Agency heads will likely also focus reductions on high-earning positions as these bureaucrats are especially costly for the state.

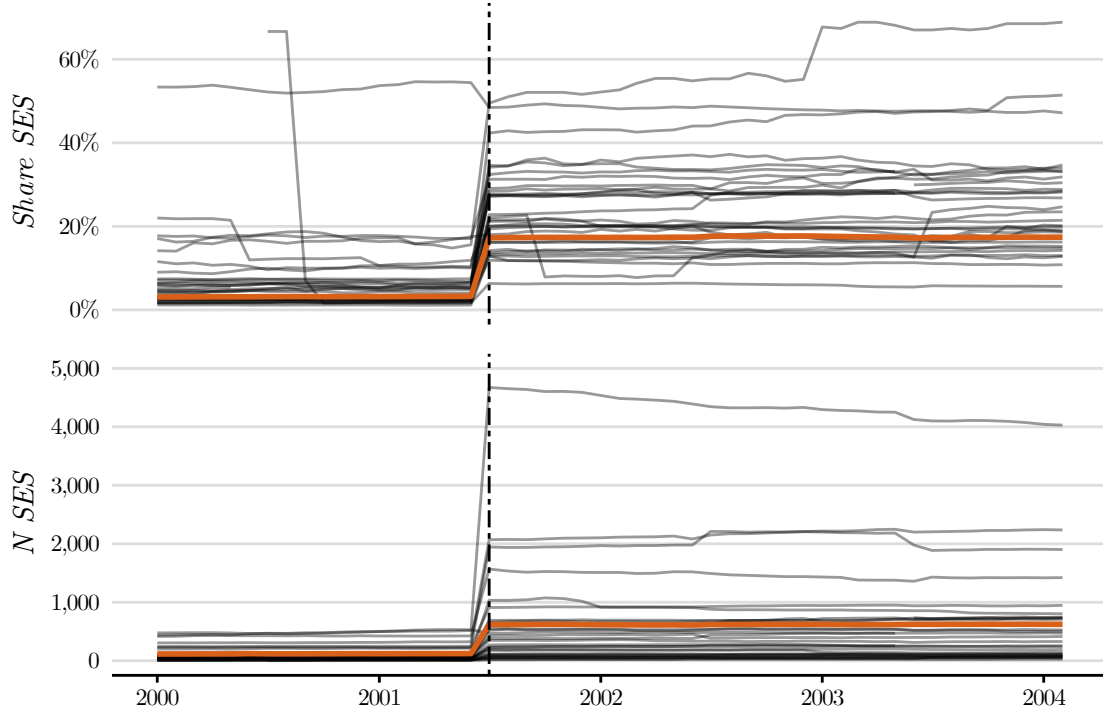
## **Service First**

I test the expectations outlined above using the case of civil service reform in Florida. In his 2001 State of the State address, Governor Jeb Bush called for the adoption of “Service First,” a major reform of Florida’s civil service system. Alluding to the private sector management principles that inspired the reforms, he told the legislature that “now it is time to reform our employment system so that, like the world-class service organizations that are driving Florida’s economy, state government can provide the effective and efficient service that its 16 million citizens rightfully expect.” The legislature heeded his call and promptly passed the reform package.

Service First took effect in July 2001 and instituted numerous changes to Florida’s civil service system. Streamlined hiring procedures reduced the amount of paperwork managers

had to compete to hire new candidates. The state’s 3,300 job classifications were collapsed to 145 occupational groups, allowing managers to grant salary raises without changing employees’ job titles. Seniority-based “bumping” during reductions in force was eliminated and “poor performance” was added as cause for disciplining or removing career employees (Bowman et al. 2003; *State of Florida Annual Workforce Report: January through December, 2001*, n.d.). Most notably, Service First also reclassified approximately 16,000 mid-level employees in confidential, managerial, and supervisory positions from the state’s Career Service to the at-will SES. Affected employees received additional paid time off and improved benefits but lost their tenure protections (West and Bowman 2004). Employees in supervisory, managerial, and confidential positions could now be dismissed from their roles for any otherwise legal reason, with no options for appeal. Given that the reforms targeted mid-level employees rather than rank-and-file state workers, employees were more likely to lose their protections if they had higher earnings, worked in or around Tallahassee, or had more years of experience working for the state (See Figures A.2 and A.3 in the Supplementary Information).

**Figure 1 – The Size of the SES Workforce Dramatically Increases in July 2001**  
Shows the share and number of full-time Florida state employees in the SES for each agency and month from January 2000 through July 2004. The black dashed line denotes the onset of Service First. The orange lines show the share of the statewide workforce that is in the SES in each month (top panel) and the mean number of SES employees in an agency for each month (bottom panel). Excludes employees in the state university system and Department of the Lottery.



Prior to reform, most employees in Florida’s executive branch fell into one of three personnel groups: the Career Service, the SES, or the Senior Management Service. The vast majority of employees served in the Career Service, while bureau heads and high-level political appointees were covered by the SES and Senior Management Service, respectively. As shown in Figure 1, which displays the number and share of full-time SES employees across 32 Florida state agencies, the SES was a relatively small part of the workforce before July 2001. Approximately 3% of the full-time state workforce was in the SES before Service First, with the average agency having about 120 SES employees. Beginning in July 2001, the



SES greatly expanded in size. The average agency now employed over 600 SES employees. Statewide, over 17% of the workforce—over 20,000 employees— served in the SES. Some agencies were particularly affected by the reform efforts due to the share of their workforce employed in mid-level positions. The share of the Department of Management Services serving in the SES, for instance, jumped from around 5% to 42% in July 2001, while the share of the Department of Corrections in the SES only increased by 5 percentage points.

## Data

I primarily rely on employee personnel data, collected via public records requests to the Florida Department of Management Services, to test how Service First affected departures. The data consist of monthly snapshots of employees in Florida’s State Personnel System from January 2000 through February 2004.<sup>1</sup> Nearly all employees of the Florida Executive Branch, with the exception of state university and lottery employees, are included in the snapshots. Overall, the data include 171,354 unique employees and 5,383,961 employee-month observations. The snapshots provide a rich description of public employees in Florida, containing, among other variables, employees’ full names, agency, sub-agency, county of employment, race, sex, initial hire date, full-time status, and annual salary.

The personnel files do not include two key variables: unique employee identification codes that follow employees over time and civil service status. I impute employee identifiers by grouping observations with similar observable characteristics across months. If a set of ob-

---

1. The structure of the personnel data changed in early 2004. Beginning around March 2004, the rates of missing values spike for variables like initial hire date, race, and middle initial. As such, it is extremely difficult to to assign unique employee identification codes past February 2004.

servations share the same first and last names, middle initials, race, sex, and initial hire dates, I deem it to be the same person. I assign employees to their respective civil service designation using Collective Bargaining Unit (CBU) codes, which are provided in the data. Florida’s Public Employees Relations Commission assigns a CBU code to a position based on the type of work performed (e.g., “Fire Service Unit” or “Supervisory Unit”).<sup>2</sup> Helpfully, these codes closely map to whether an employee belongs to the Career Service, SES, or SMS and I therefore use them to assign civil service status. In the Supplementary Information I show that the number of employees assigned to the Career Service and SES using CBU codes are similar to the number reported in annual workforce reports published by the Florida Department of Management Services (Table A.1).

Evaluating Service First requires identifying “switchers”—those employees who were transferred out of the Career Service into the SES in July 2001. Most employees who lost their protections served in the Managerial/Confidential and Supervisory CBUs until July 2001 when they were transferred to new CBUs in the SES.<sup>3</sup> However, some employees in the Supervisory and Managerial/Confidential CBUs remained in the Career Service after Service First. At the same time, some employees in other CBUs were transferred to the SES in July 2001.<sup>4</sup> Further complicating matters is that, although small, the SES existed before

---

2. State law does not permit all CBUs to collectively bargain. In particular, the Supervisory and Managerial/Confidential units who lost tenure protections were unable to bargain. See the full list of codes and their definitions (DMS, n.d.).

3. The state defines Supervisory employees as those who “spend the majority of their time communicating with, motivating, training and evaluating employees, and planning and directing employees’ work. Supervisory employees have the authority to hire, transfer, suspend, layoff, recall, promote, discharge, assign, reward or discipline subordinate employees or to effectively recommend such actions.” Managerial/Confidential employees “are involved in collective bargaining, personnel or budget administration...[or] act in a confidential capacity to assist or aid managerial employees” (DMS, n.d.).

4. A memo from the Florida Department of Management Services states that employees in the Managerial/Confidential and Supervisory CBUs were not transferred to the SES if they “are in the special risk retirement class, administrative law judges, hearing officers, or professional health care workers” (*Effect of Changes Due to Senate Bill 466*).

Service First, meaning that not all employees in the SES after July 2001 were switchers. Given these challenges, I initially define switchers as any employee in either the Supervisory or Managerial/Confidential CBU units before July 2001 or in the SES after July 2001. I then drop any employee who was in the SES both before and after Service First and employees who remained in the protected Supervisory or Managerial/Confidential CBUs after July 2001. The resulting treatment group of employees whose job protections were removed in July 2001 includes approximately 12,000 employees per quarter before Service First and over 14,000 employees per quarter following reform (See Figure A.5). The baseline departure rates across all quarters for the switcher treatment group and the control groups are .029 and .035, respectively.

## **Does Removing Protections Increase Overall Departures?**

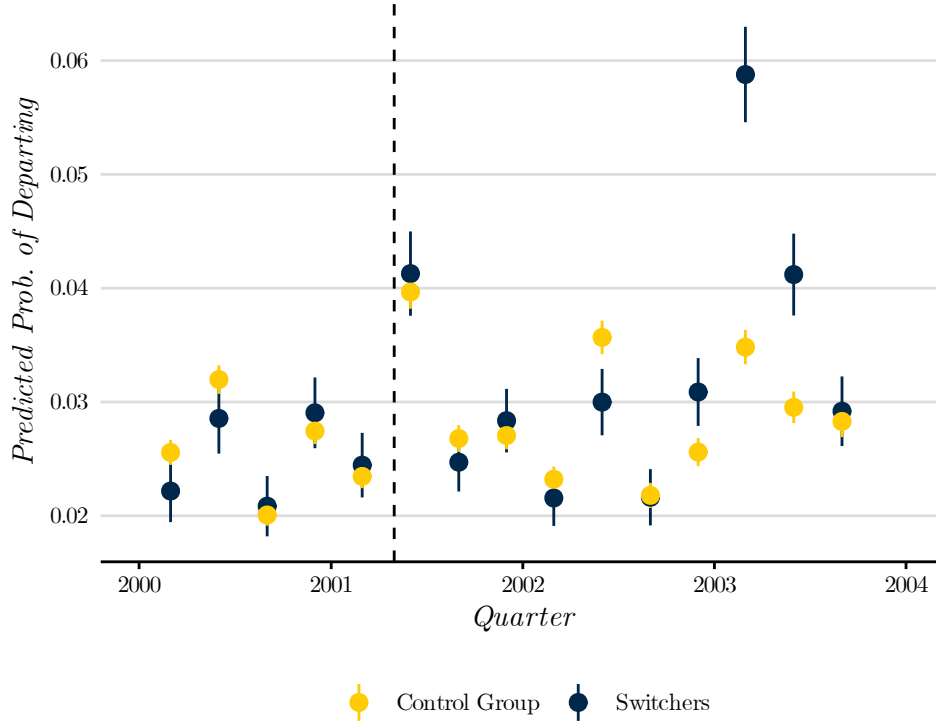
I first test whether employees who lost their civil service protections were more likely to leave the workforce than their peers who remained in the protected Career Service. The dependent variable is whether an employee departs the state workforce in a given quarter. Subsetting the data to quarters reduces month-to-month fluctuations in departures. I create the departure variable by finding the last quarter that an employee works for the state. The nature of the personnel data means that it is not possible to know why someone leaves, only that they depart the dataset. I test for increased departures among switchers using a logit model with quarterly fixed effects and binary controls for whether an employee is white, female, and works in Leon County (where the state capital Tallahassee is located) or an adjacent county. I also control for employees' annual salary, years of experience with the

state, and squared years of experience.

Figure 2 shows the estimated predicted probabilities from the model. The blue and yellow points show the predicted probability of departing in a given quarter and associated 95% confidence intervals for, respectively, switchers and the control group of employees who remained in the Career Service. Before Service First—denoted by the dashed line—the probability of departing in a quarter mostly hovers between .02 and .03, on average, for both groups. There is little divergence in departure rates for the managers, supervisors, and confidential employees who will lose their tenure protections and employees in the rest of the Career Service. The probability of departing increases for both groups of employees in the first quarter following Service First, before returning to pre-reform levels. In the second quarter of 2002, the predicted probability of departing was actually higher for still-protected employees than those who lost their protections from Service First. However, beginning in late 2002 and continuing into 2003, switchers become increasingly likely to depart relative to employees in the Career Service. In the second quarter of 2003, switchers' probability of departing was nearly .06, on average, while still-protected employees in the Career Service departed with an average probability of .035.

Overall, there is little evidence of an immediate purging of previously protected employees following the rollback of protections in July 2001. Although departures increase in the first quarter following Service First, there is no apparent difference between the probability of departing for protected and unprotected employees. Nevertheless, divergences do emerge in future quarters. This suggests that overall results might be masking underlying trends in subgroups of employees and over-time changes in the influence of moderating variables.

**Figure 2 – Mixed Evidence that Employees Switched to SES Were More Likely to Depart** Shows the predicted probability of departing for employees switched to the SES and control employees who remained in the Career Service. The dashed line represents the onset of the Service First reforms. Predicted probabilities are estimated via a logit model for a white female working in the capital area with mean earnings and years of experience. Coefficients of the control variables are available in Table A.2. Results are similar using an alternative, more expansive definition of the treatment group (Figure A.1)



## Policy Control and Fiscal Constraints

Testing for increased departures in certain segments of the Florida workforce following Service First requires operationalizing employees' influence and opposition to Jeb Bush's administration, as well as budgetary pressures faced by agencies. I use annual salaries to measure employee influence. Service First removed tenure protections for mid-level supervisors and managers, but not all employees affected by reform had an equal influence on policymaking. In addition to operations and management consultants, senior management analysts, and program administrators, Service First removed protections for office support staff and sec-

retaries who worked with senior officials. The former group of bureaucrats have more of a direct impact on policy and likely also earn more as a result.

I measure political conflict between agencies and the governor using the share of Democrats in a state agency, which I calculate using individual-level voter registration records. The voter registration data comes from the vendor Polimetrix and notes the registered partisanship of all Florida voters as of May 2005. I match state of Florida employees to their associated voter files by finding records with the same first and last name, middle initial, race, sex, and hire date.<sup>5</sup> Aggregating the matched results to the agency level rather than using the individual-level results helps mitigate two challenges with the voter records. First, partisanship and ideology are distinct but correlated concepts. Second, the voter records are a few years out of date. In both cases, measuring political conflict at the agency level smooths out individual-level noise introduced by variation in the policy preferences of Democrats and over-time changes in registration. The resulting measure captures general trends in the preferences of agencies and the degree of disagreement with the Republican Bush administration.

Measuring the budgetary pressure faced by agencies also requires additional data. The Florida legislature passes the General Appropriations Act each year for the upcoming fiscal year, which begins July 1. The bill, which the governor can line-item veto, allocates specific dollar amounts and full-time positions for every program within the state government. I measure the budgetary pressure an agency is under by looking at year-to-year changes in the number of positions allocated to an agency. I collect the number of annually appropriated positions for each Florida agency from budget summaries published on the Florida Fiscal

---

5. Figure A.4 in the SI shows the share of employees in each agency that are registered Democratic.

Portal.<sup>6</sup> I then calculate the percent change in allocated positions from the prior fiscal year.

I use a series of logit models to test whether higher-earning employees were more likely to depart from more Democratic and fiscally-stressed agencies in the wake of Service First. The dependent variable is whether a quarter was a bureaucrat's last observed period of employment with the state. The main independent variable is the interaction between a binary time variable that is switched on if a quarter falls after July 2001 and, respectively, the logged number of Democrats and percent change in appropriated positions within the employee's agency. In order to isolate the role of employee influence, I estimate the model using both all SES employees and SES employees earning in the top quartile for the agency and period.<sup>7</sup> As a result, the interactions capture whether (higher-earning) employees in more Democratic or fiscally-constrained agencies were more likely to depart following the removal of tenure protections. The models include the same set of individual-level controls used in the model of overall departures in the prior section. Rather than including time fixed effects, however, these models account for time via a cubic time trend duration variable.<sup>8</sup> All standard errors are clustered by employee.

Table 1 displays the exponentiated results of the logit models on the odds-ratios scale. The first three models show that, following Service First, there is no evidence of a statistically significant increase in departures among all SES employees in more Democratic or fiscally-constrained agencies. Notably, the latter three models show that the same holds when focusing only on higher-earning employees. Employees earning in the top quartile within their

---

6. <http://floridafiscalportal.state.fl.us/>

7. The results remain unchanged using triple-interaction models that include Career Service employees who did not lose their tenure protections.

8. Since the number of Democrats and percent change in appropriated positions are both defined at the agency level, I exclude agency fixed effects to capture additional variation.

**Table 1 – Influential Employees in Politically Distal or Fiscally-Constrained Agencies No More Likely to Depart** Shows the results of logit models with standard errors clustered at the employee level. The “Post SF” variable includes quarters in the 3 years following Service First. Additional results with alternative definitions are available in the Supplementary Information in Tables A.3 and A.4. All models include individual-level controls for race, sex, salary, location, years of experience, and years of experience squared. Observed duration is modeled using a cubic trend.

	All SES			Higher-earning SES		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Post SF	0.95 [0.52; 1.71]	1.44* [1.18; 1.76]	0.87 [0.49; 1.55]	1.01 [0.29; 3.54]	1.65* [1.12; 2.44]	0.88 [0.27; 2.93]
Positions	0.97* [0.97; 0.98]	0.95* [0.92; 0.98]	0.95* [0.92; 0.98]	0.98* [0.97; 0.99]	0.94* [0.88; 1.00]	0.93* [0.88; 0.99]
ln(Dems)	2.05* [1.46; 2.88]	2.19* [1.57; 3.07]	2.09* [1.49; 2.94]	3.13* [1.48; 6.61]	3.51* [1.68; 7.31]	3.31* [1.57; 7.00]
ln(Employees)	0.44* [0.31; 0.63]	0.43* [0.30; 0.61]	0.43* [0.30; 0.61]	0.29* [0.14; 0.62]	0.27* [0.13; 0.58]	0.27* [0.13; 0.57]
Post SF * ln(Dems)	1.05 [0.98; 1.13]		1.06 [0.99; 1.14]	1.06 [0.92; 1.23]		1.08 [0.94; 1.24]
Post SF * Positions		1.02 [0.99; 1.06]	1.03 [1.00; 1.06]		1.05 [0.98; 1.12]	1.05 [0.99; 1.12]
Cubic Time Trend	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Individual Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
N	163,831	163,831	163,831	41,102	41,102	41,102

\* Null hypothesis value outside the confidence interval.



agency were no more likely to depart from more Democratic or fiscally-constrained agencies following Service First. Although the coefficients on the time and number of Democrats interaction are in the expected direction, the coefficients on the budgetary pressure interaction are actually pointed in the opposite direction. In the Supplementary Information I show that these results also hold when looking at only the first year or two years following Service First (Tables A.3 and A.4).

My final hypothesis claims that departures increase following the rollback of protections in agencies that are more important to the governor. I focus on a specific salient case. In 1998, Florida voters passed a constitutional amendment increasing the governor's power over the Executive Branch. The amendment restructured the relatively large Florida Cabinet, reducing its size from six to three members. In addition to folding the state Comptroller and Treasurer into a single position, the amendment removed the Secretary of State and Commissioner of Education from the Cabinet. Rather than being led by an elected official, the Department of State would now be led by an official appointed by the Governor. The Commissioner of Education would be appointed by a new State Board of Education. Members of the Board would be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The amendment, which came into effect at the beginning of Jeb Bush's second term in January 2003, effectively increased his control over both agencies.

In contrast to the Department of State—which handles elections, corporate charters, and state cultural resources—the Department of Education was key to Bush's policy agenda. Education policy was a central issue of his successful 1998 campaign for governor. Touting his experience co-founding Florida's first public charter school, he advocated for increased testing, transparent school rankings, and providing vouchers to parents of students in poorly-

performing schools (Johnston 1998). He also added the state’s educational commissioner Frank Brogan to his ticket as candidate for lieutenant governor. As governor, he signed into law significant education reform in 1999 that incorporated many of the policy changes he advocated for during the campaign.

Bush also had an adversarial relationship with the Florida state employees tasked with implementing education policy. Although he moderated his position by the time he was inaugurated, he had called for abolishing the Florida Department of Education during his first unsuccessful 1994 campaign for governor (Navarro 1998). Looking back on his time as governor while running for president, Bush summed up the resistance he encountered from bureaucrats in the Department of Education and their allies:

“These reforms weren’t always popular. We were fought every step of the way by status quo education bureaucrats. We spent huge amounts of time filling out paperwork for federal bureaucrats. And the teachers unions hated what we were doing. In my re-election campaign in 2002, they didn’t just bankroll my opponent; they mortgaged their building to do it. But they lost, and the kids won.” (Bush 2015)

The Service First reforms 18 months earlier provided Bush an opportunity to remove opposing Department of Education employees during the agency’s 2003 reorganization. The number of SES employees in the Department of Education increased by 173% in July 2001. Approximately 42% of the agency served at-will in the SES following the rollback of tenure protections. I test whether these unprotected employees were more likely to depart following Bush gaining additional control of the agency in January 2003. Using a logit model, I regress

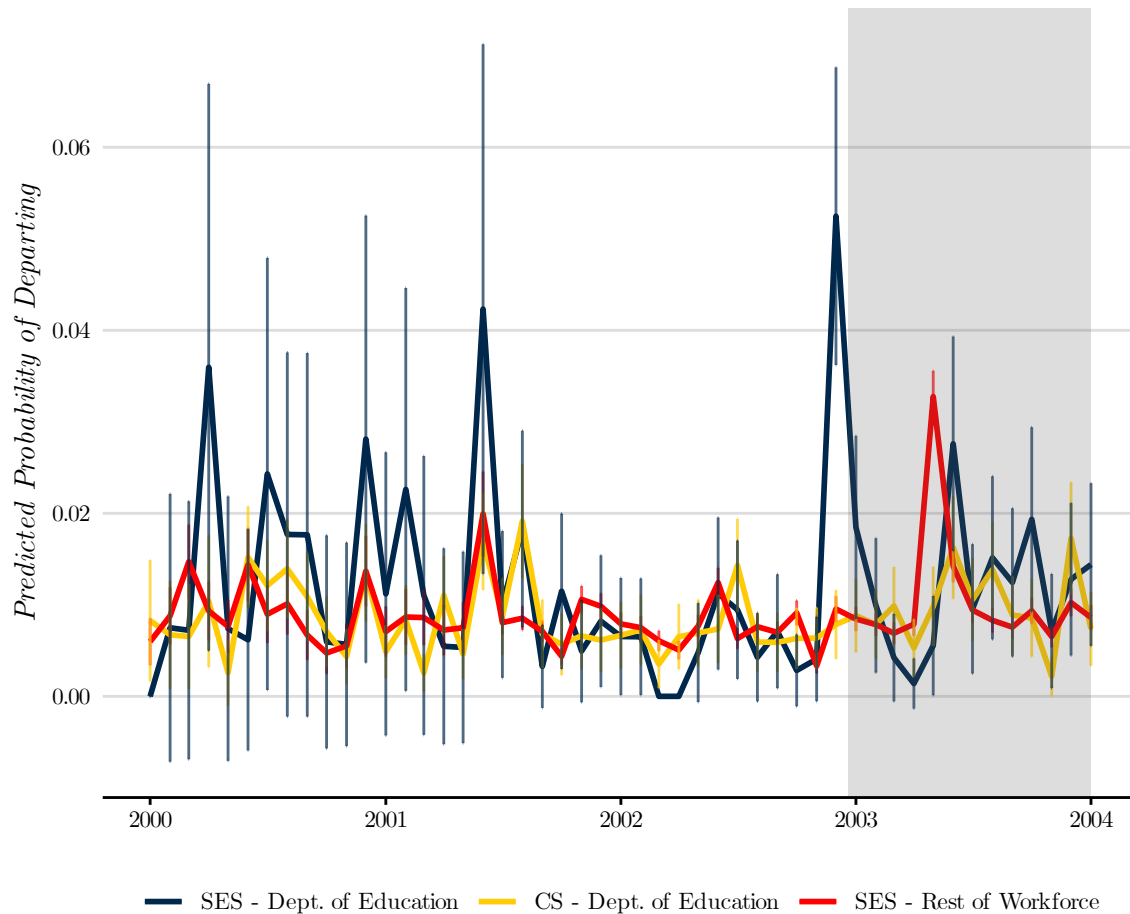
whether an employee departed in a given month against the interaction between a monthly time fixed effect and a categorical variable indicating whether an employee works in: 1) the SES in the Department of Education; 2) the Career Service in the Department of Education; or 3) the SES in the rest of the state workforce. The interaction between time and this three-way indicator allows me to test whether unprotected employees in the SES were more likely to depart the Department of Education during reorganization, relative to both other SES employees and other employees in the Department of Education. In addition to the main independent variables, the model includes individual-level controls for race, sex, years of experience, squared years of experience, annual salary, and whether the employee works in Leon County or an adjacent county.

Figure 3 shows the results of the model in the form of predicted probabilities of departing with 95% confidence intervals. The predicted values are calculated for a white female employee working in the capital area with mean earnings, years of experience, and squared years of experience. The blue line shows the predicted probability of departing in a given month for SES employees in the Department of Education. The yellow and red lines show, respectively, the predicted departure probabilities for Career Service employees in the Department of Education and SES employees throughout the rest of Florida's public sector. The shading indicates the official beginning of the cabinet reorganization policy in January 2003.

Overall, the results show a large, statistically significant spike in the probability of Department of Education SES employees departing in December 2002, the month before the agency's reorganization. In that month, the probability of Department of Education Career Service and other SES employees leaving hovered around .01, while SES employees in the

Department of Education departed with an average probability of .05. Notably, elevated departure rates only lasted for this one month. In the Supplementary Information, I show that the Department of State (which was less salient to Governor Bush) did not experience a similar increase in employee departures, despite also being reorganized to fall more under his control (Figure A.6).

**Figure 3 – Unprotected Employees in Department of Education More Likely to Depart Month Before Reorganization** Shows the predicted probabilities of departing and associated 95% confidence intervals for SES and Career Service employees, respectively, in the Department of Education and SES employees in the rest of the workforce. Predicted probabilities are calculated for a white female employee working in or around the state capital with mean earnings, years of experience, and squared years of experience. Shading indicates the onset of the cabinet reorganization that gave the governor greater control of the agency.



There are different reasons why departures among SES employees in the Department of Education spiked in December 2002. On the one hand, it could be that SES employees opted to leave the agency rather than work closely with an adversarial administration. However, there are issues with this interpretation. The reorganization of the Department of Education was not a shock to employees. It was approved by voters four years earlier. Despite this, there is no indication that departures rose in other months than December 2003 as employees anticipated the upcoming reorganization. It could be that employees were waiting to see the results of the 2002 gubernatorial election that pitted Bush against the Democratic candidate Bill McBride. However, if employees were waiting to see if Bush won re-election before opting out of the agency, it seems likely that protected employees in the Career Service would also have been more likely to leave. There is no evidence that this occurred.

Although the new State Board of Education did not formally gain control of education policy in the state until January 2003, in practice Bush appointees began reorganization efforts well before then. The 1998 constitutional referendum left a number of specifics about how education policy should be managed under the new system up to the legislature and governor. Consequently, in June 2001, Bush signed into law a significant reorganization of the state's education system, appointing new members of the Board of Education, the transitional Secretary of Education, and eliminating a number of higher education boards (Dunkelberger 2001). The legislation tasked the Board and transitional Secretary to work alongside the current (and final) elected Education Commissioner to restructure the Department of Education. The bill called for a reorganization that would "eliminate duplication across divisions" and "include a review and assessment of all bureaus, offices, divisions, and functions of the department" (Sebesta 2001). It is difficult to pinpoint when the impacts of

these changes to the Department were felt by staff. However, they likely resulted in increased dismissals from the agency, perhaps leading to the spike in departures seen in December 2002.

## Discussion

The expansion of the SES in Florida put many public sector employees in a precarious position. Previously insulated by the protections afforded by the Career Service, affected employees could now be removed for reasons other than cause. The evidence presented here, however, suggests that limited departures resulted from Service First. Despite becoming easier to remove from their jobs, newly-minted employees were not at increased risk of departing until roughly 18 months after Service First. Some of this increase stemmed from increased departures in the Department of Education during its 2003 reorganization, but the lack of evidence for other types of strategic dismissals suggests that this bump might also be due to other unobserved factors introduced in the intervening period.

These findings have implications for the study of both bureaucratic and state politics. First, governors and other state agency heads do not necessarily treat newly-minted at-will employees as political appointees. Just because an employee becomes at-will does not mean that they will be replaced. Second, partisan conflict between bureaucrats and elected principals is lower at the state than federal level. Partisan and ideological disagreement is a frequent source for explaining the behavior of federal bureaucrats and their principals. At least in Florida, this result does not replicate at the state level. The lack of evidence for increased departures in more Democratic agencies following the rollback of civil service protections points to the need for further study of what structures conflicts within state

bureaucracies. Finally, my findings also point to the effects of rolling back civil service protections. While I do not find any evidence of widescale purges of state employees following the removal of tenure protections, I do show, via the case study of the reorganization of the Florida Department of Education, that removing tenure protections can provide executives with opportunities to remove employees in strategically important positions. Especially in environments with more political conflict, this could lead to concerning levels of public sector turnover.

There are limitations to this study that should be addressed in future research. For one, leaving the public sector is a rare event. There are other, less extreme ways that rolling back civil service protections can influence bureaucrats. For example, employees may adjust their behavior following the rollback of civil service protections to better align with principals' expectations. In addition, Service First is a single case of civil service rollbacks. Other states and the current Trump administration have also experimented with removing tenure protections. Additional research should examine how different institutional and political arrangements affect departures in the wake of civil service rollbacks.

Finally, my findings also suggest a need for more research into bureaucracies under single-party rule, an increasingly common phenomena in the United States. Most theories of bureaucratic organization and behavior are crafted with an eye to the federal system where political conflict is constant and intense. Future work should investigate why outpartisans opt to work for single-party governments and how executives exercise control when their parties likely will be in power over a long time horizon.

## References

- A Review of the Exemption of the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services from Mississippi State Personnel Board Oversight*. 2022. 670. Joint Legislative Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER), June 14, 2022.
- Aneja, Abhay, and Guo Xu. 2024. “Strengthening State Capacity: Civil Service Reform and Public Sector Performance during the Gilded Age.” *American Economic Review* 114, no. 8 (August): 2352–87. ISSN: 1944-7981.
- Annual Report of the United States Civil Service Commission*. 1900. 17. Washington D.C.: United States Civil Service Commission.
- Battaglio, Paul R., Jr, and Stephen E. Condrey. 2009. “Reforming Public Management: Analyzing the Impact of Public Service Reform on Organizational and Managerial Trust.” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 19, no. 4 (October 1, 2009): 689–707. ISSN: 1053-1858.
- Battaglio, R. Paul. 2010. “Public Service Reform and Motivation: Evidence From an Employment At-Will Environment.” *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 30, no. 3 (September 1, 2010): 341–363. ISSN: 0734-371X.
- Bolton, Alexander, John M de Figueiredo, and David E Lewis. 2021. “Elections, Ideology, and Turnover in the US Federal Government.” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 31, no. 2 (April 1, 2021): 451–466. ISSN: 1053-1858.
- Boushey, Graeme T., and Robert J. McGrath. 2017. “Experts, Amateurs, and Bureaucratic Influence in the American States.” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 27 (1): 85–103.
- Bowman, James S., Marc G. Gertz, Sally C. Gertz, and Russell L. Williams. 2003. “Civil Service Reform in Florida State Government: Employee Attitudes 1 Year Later.” *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 23, no. 4 (December 1, 2003): 286–304. ISSN: 0734-371X.
- Bowman, James S., and Jonathan P. West. 2006. “Ending Civil Service Protections in Florida Government: Experiences in State Agencies.” *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 26, no. 2 (June 1, 2006): 139–157. ISSN: 0734-371X.
- Boyne, George A., Oliver James, Peter John, and Nicolai Petrovsky. 2010. “Does Political Change Affect Senior Management Turnover? An Empirical Analysis of Top-Tier Local Authorities in England.” *Public Administration* 88 (1): 136–153. ISSN: 1467-9299.
- Budget Processes in the States*. 2021. National Association of State Budget Officers, Spring.
- Bush, Jeb. 2015. *Jeb Bush Campaign Press Release - My Passion for Education Reform*. The American Presidency Project, September 1, 2015.
- Cogburn, Jerrell D. 2006. “At-Will Employment in Government: Insights From the State of Texas.” *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 26, no. 2 (June 1, 2006): 158–177. ISSN: 0734-371X.



- Cournoyer, Caroline. 2012. "Civil Service Reform: Lessons from Georgia and Indiana." *Governing*, June 8, 2012.
- Dahlström, Carl, and Mikael Holmgren. 2019. "The Political Dynamics of Bureaucratic Turnover." *British Journal of Political Science* 49, no. 3 (July): 823–836. ISSN: 0007-1234, 1469-2112.
- DMS, Florida. n.d. "Definition of Terms Used in the Schedule of Salary Ranges / Broadband Classification and Compensation Program / Classification and Compensation / For State Personnel System HR Practitioners / State Human Resource Management / Workforce Operations - Florida Department of Management Services." Accessed May 12, 2025.
- Doherty, Kathleen M., David E. Lewis, and Scott Limbocker. 2019. "Executive Control and Turnover in the Senior Executive Service." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 29, no. 2 (April 2, 2019): 159–174. ISSN: 1053-1858.
- Dunkelberger, Lloyd. 2001. "Bush Signs Overhaul of Education System." *Sarasota Herald Tribune: B SECTION* (Sarasota, Fla., United States), June 7, 2001, BS1. ISSN: 26414503.
- Effect of Changes Due to Senate Bill 466*. Florida Department of Management Services.
- Folke, Olle, Shigeo Hirano, and James M. Snyder. 2011. "Patronage and Elections in U.S. States." *American Political Science Review* 105 (3): 567–585. ISSN: 1537-5943, 0003-0554.
- Forand, Jean Guillaume. 2019. "Civil Service and the Growth of Government." *Journal of Public Economics* 177 (September 1, 2019): 104045. ISSN: 0047-2727.
- Forman, Carmen. 2021. "'A Major Milestone': Stitt Ushers in Sweeping Civil Service Reforms for State Employees." *The Oklahoman* (Oklahoma City), April 27, 2021.
- Gailmard, Sean, and John W. Patty. 2007. "Slackers and Zealots: Civil Service, Policy Discretion, and Bureaucratic Expertise." *American Journal of Political Science* 51 (4): 873–889. ISSN: 0092-5853. JSTOR: 4620105.
- . 2012. *Learning While Governing: Expertise and Accountability in the Executive Branch*. Illustrated edition. University of Chicago Press, December 1, 2012.
- Gibbs, Daniel. 2020. "Civil Service Reform, Self-Selection, and Bureaucratic Performance." *Economics & Politics* 32 (2): 279–304. ISSN: 1468-0343.
- Glock, Judge, and Renu Mukherjee. 2025. *Radical Civil Service Reform Is Not Radical: Lessons for the Federal Government from the States*. Manhattan Institute, March 4, 2025.
- Goodman, Doug, and P. Edward French. 2011. "Assessing the Temporary Use of At-will Employment for Reorganization and Workforce Reduction in Mississippi State Government." *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 31, no. 3 (September 1, 2011): 270–290. ISSN: 0734-371X.

- Grady, Dennis O., and Kathleen M. Simon. 2002. "Political Restraints and Bureaucratic Discretion: The Case of State Government Rule Making." *Politics and Policy* 30, no. 4 (December 1, 2002): 646–679.
- Heclo, Hugh. 1977. *A Government of Strangers: Executive Politics in Washington*. First Edition. Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution, January 1, 1977.
- Hollibaugh, Gary E., Gabriel Horton, and David E. Lewis. 2014. "Presidents and Patronage." *American Journal of Political Science* 58 (4): 1024–1042. ISSN: 0092-5853. JSTOR: 24363541.
- Holtz-Eakin, Douglas. 1988. "The Line Item Veto and Public Sector Budgets: Evidence from the States." *Journal of Public Economics* 36, no. 3 (August 1, 1988): 269–292. ISSN: 0047-2727.
- Issue Brief: Effect of Agencies Being Exempted from Mississippi State Personnel Board's Purview*. 2020. 651. Jackson, Mississippi: Joint Legislative Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER), December 16, 2020.
- Jenks, Stephen S., and Deil S. Wright. 1993. "An Agency-Level Approach to Change in the Administrative Functions of American State Governments." *State & Local Government Review* 25 (2): 78–86. ISSN: 0160-323X. JSTOR: 4355059.
- Johnson, Ronald N., and Gary D. Libecap. 1994. "Patronage to Merit and Control of the Federal Government Labor Force." *Explorations in Economic History* 31, no. 1 (January 1, 1994): 91–119. ISSN: 0014-4983.
- Johnston, Robert C. 1998. "Running on Education: One Candidate's Story." *Education Week: Education*, October 21, 1998, 2:00 p.m. ISSN: 0277-4232.
- Kim, Bong Hwan, and Sounman Hong. 2019. "Political Change and Turnovers: How Do Political Principals Consider Organizational, Individual, and Performance Information?" *Public Choice* 181, no. 3 (December 1, 2019): 291–308. ISSN: 1573-7101.
- Kim, Jungin, and J. Edward Kellough. 2014. "At-Will Employment in the States: Examining the Perceptions of Agency Personnel Directors." *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 34, no. 3 (September 1, 2014): 218–236. ISSN: 0734-371X.
- Krause, George A., and Neal D. Woods. 2014. "State Bureaucracy: Policy Delegation, Comparative Institutional Capacity, and Administrative Politics in the American States." In *The Oxford Handbook of State and Local Government*, edited by Donald P. Haider-Markel, 363–394. Oxford University Press, April 1, 2014.
- Lewis, David E. 2007. "Testing Pendleton's Premise: Do Political Appointees Make Worse Bureaucrats?" *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 4 (November): 1073–1088. ISSN: 0022-3816.
- . 2008. *The Politics of Presidential Appointments: Political Control and Bureaucratic Performance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, April 21, 2008.

- Lewis, David E. 2011. "Presidential Appointments and Personnel." *Annual Review of Political Science* 14 (1): 47–66.
- Lorenz, Jonna. 2019. "State Workers Now Mainly Unclassified." *The Topeka Capital-Journal*, January 30, 2019.
- McGrath, Robert J. 2013. "The Rise and Fall of Radical Civil Service Reform in the U.S. States." *Public Administration Review* 73 (4): 638–649. ISSN: 0033-3352. JSTOR: 42003088.
- Moe, Terry. 1985. "The Politicized Presidency." In *The New Direction in American Politics*, edited by John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson, 235–271. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution.
- Moreira, Diana, and Santiago Pérez. 2021. *Civil Service Exams and Organizational Performance: Evidence from the Pendleton Act*. w28665. National Bureau of Economic Research, April 12, 2021.
- Navarro, Mireya. 1998. "Chastened by Loss, Jeb Bush Looks Unbeatable in Florida: Bush Looks Unstoppable in Florida." *New York Times* (New York), May 12, 1998.
- Nigro, Lloyd G., and J. Edward Kellough. 2000. "Civil Service Reform in Georgia: Going to the Edge?" *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 20, no. 4 (October 1, 2000): 41–54. ISSN: 0734-371X.
- Oliveira, Eloy, Gordon Abner, Shinwoo Lee, Kohei Suzuki, Hyunkang Hur, and James L. Perry. 2024. "What Does the Evidence Tell Us about Merit Principles and Government Performance?" *Public Administration* 102 (2): 668–690. ISSN: 1467-9299.
- Parson, Michael L. 2018. "Merit Reform Legislation to Change How State of Missouri Recruits, Recognizes Its Employees — Governor Michael L. Parson," August 28, 2018. Accessed November 29, 2023.
- Potter, Rachel Augustine. 2017. "Slow-Rolling, Fast-Tracking, and the Pace of Bureaucratic Decisions in Rulemaking." *The Journal of Politics* 79 (3): 841–855.
- Schwartz, Jason A. 2020. *52 Experiments with Regulatory Review: The Political and Economic Inputs into State Rulemaking*. 6. New York, New York: New York University School of Law Institute for Policy Integrity, November 16, 2020.
- Seifter, Miriam. 2017. "GUBERNATORIAL ADMINISTRATION." *Harvard Law Review* 131, no. 2 (December 1, 2017): 483–539. ISSN: 0017811X.
- . 2018. "Understanding State Agency Independence." *Michigan Law Review* (August 8, 2018).
- State of Florida Annual Workforce Report: January through December, 2001*. n.d. Tallahassee: Department of Management Services, Division of Human Resource Management.
- Stephenson, Hank. 2012. "Most State Employees to Leave Merit System, Become at-Will Workers." *Inside Tucson Business*, May 11, 2012. Accessed November 29, 2023.

- Ujhelyi, Gergely. 2014. “Civil Service Reform.” *Journal of Public Economics* 118 (October 1, 2014): 15–25. ISSN: 0047-2727.
- United States: Congress: Senate, United States: Congress.: Senate.: Committee on Civil Service and Retrenchment., George Hunt Pendleton, and United States.: Congress.: Senate.: 1882. *In the Senate of the United States. May 15, 1882. – Ordered to be printed. Mr. Pendleton, from the Committee on Civil Service and Retrenchment, submitted the following report. (To accompany Bill S. 133.) The Committee on Civil Service and Retrenchment, to which was referred the Bill (S. 133) to regulate and improve the civil service of the United States, submits the following report ..* U.S. Government Printing Office, May 15, 1882.
- Walters, Jonathan. 2002. *Life after Civil Service Reform: The Texas, Georgia, and Florida Experiences*. IBM Endowment for the Business of Government, October.
- West, Jonathan P., and James S. Bowman. 2004. “Stakeholder Analysis of Civil Service Reform in Florida: A Descriptive, Instrumental, Normative Human Resource Management Perspective.” *State & Local Government Review* 36 (1): 20–34. ISSN: 0160-323X. JSTOR: 4355356.
- Wu, Ashley, Elena Shao, Amy Schoenfeld Walker, and Jon Huang. 2025. “Where Trump, Musk and DOGE Have Cut Federal Workers So Far.” *The New York Times: U.S.*, February 12, 2025. ISSN: 0362-4331.

**Supplementary Information**

**Bureaucratic Departures After Civil Service Rollbacks**

**Benjamin Goehring**

**Contents**

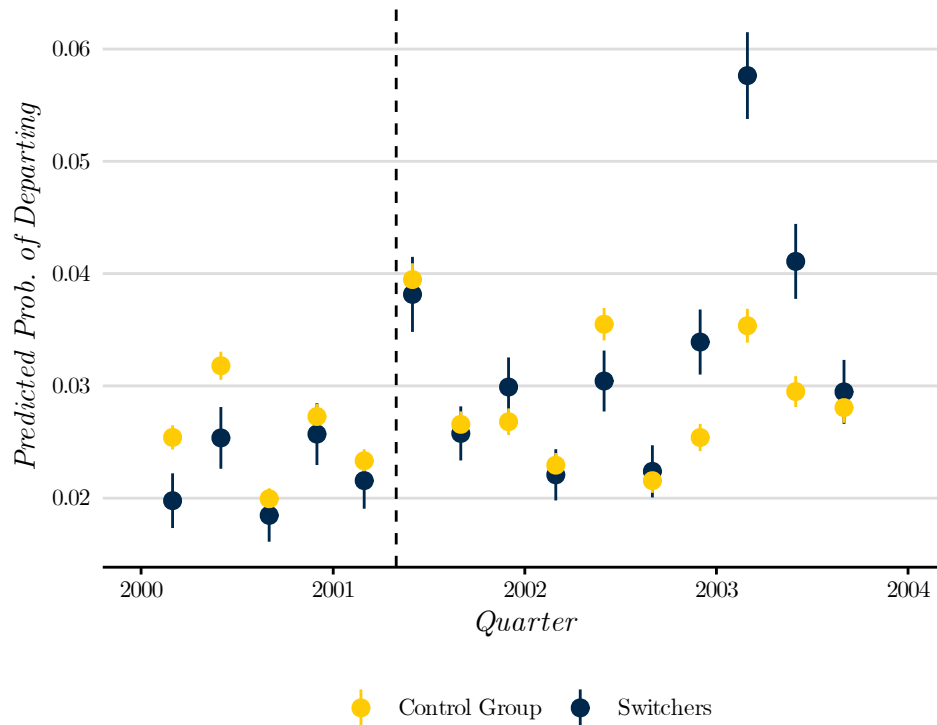
SI A Section 1

SI-1

## SI A Section 1

**Figure A.1 – Employees Switched to SES No More Likely to Depart Immediately Following Service First (Alternative Definition of Treatment Group)**

Shows the predicted probability of departing for employees switched to the SES and control employees who remained in the Career Service. Unlike in Figure 2, the treated “Switchers” includes all employees who were in the “Supervisors” or “Managerial/Confidential” CBU units before July 2001 and/or in the SES after July 2001. This more expansive definition includes employees who were in the SES before and after Service First and employees who remained in the Career Service in the “Supervisors” or “Managerial/Confidential” CBU units after Service First.



**Table A.1 – Calculated vs. Reported Number of Employees, by Civil Service Status** Shows the number of employees, by civil service status as reported in Florida’s annual workforce reports (as of December 31st) and the number calculated in the personnel file as of January 1st of the following year (i.e., one day difference).

Civil Service Status	Date	Annual Report	Calculated
Career Service	Jan-2000	110,952	104,283
Career Service	Jan-2001	109,389	106,102
Career Service	Jan-2002	90,519	85,865
Career Service	Jan-2003	88,681	86,933
Career Service	Jan-2004	87,466	85,672
SES	Jan-2000	3,440	2,841
SES	Jan-2001	3,696	3,000
SES	Jan-2002	19,454	20,175
SES	Jan-2003	19,478	18,138
SES	Jan-2004	18,925	17,739

	Model 1
White	0.02* (0.01)
Female	0.18*** (0.01)
Annual Salary (\$10k)	−0.10*** (0.01)
Capital	−0.23*** (0.01)
Years of Experience	−0.12*** (0.00)
Years of Experience <sup>2</sup>	0.00*** (0.00)
Quarter FEs	✓
AIC	400061.42
BIC	400498.67
Log Likelihood	−199994.71
Deviance	399989.42
Num. obs.	1391524
*** $p < 0.001$ ; ** $p < 0.01$ ; * $p < 0.05$	

**Table A.2 – Coefficients of Control Variables** Shows the coefficients on the control variables used in the logit model to produce the predicted probabilities shown in Figure 2

**Table A.3 – Influential Employees in Politically Distal or Fiscally-Constrained Agencies No More Likely to Depart** Shows the results of logit models with standard errors clustered at the employee level. The “Post SF” variable includes quarters in the 1 year following Service First. All models include individual-level controls for race, sex, salary, location, years of experience, and years of experience squared. Observed duration is modeled using a cubic trend.

	All SES			Higher-earning SES		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Post SF	1.69 [0.90; 3.17]	2.05* [1.67; 2.51]	1.64 [0.88; 3.07]	2.97 [0.81; 10.86]	2.37* [1.58; 3.56]	2.90 [0.80; 10.47]
Positions	0.96* [0.95; 0.97]	0.95* [0.92; 0.98]	0.95* [0.92; 0.98]	0.95* [0.92; 0.98]	0.94* [0.89; 0.99]	0.94* [0.89; 0.99]
ln(Dems)	4.12* [2.62; 6.47]	4.26* [2.72; 6.68]	4.19* [2.66; 6.58]	2.75* [1.08; 7.01]	2.76* [1.09; 6.97]	2.80* [1.10; 7.17]
ln(Employees)	0.21* [0.13; 0.34]	0.21* [0.13; 0.33]	0.21* [0.13; 0.33]	0.32* [0.13; 0.84]	0.32* [0.12; 0.83]	0.32* [0.12; 0.83]
Post SF * ln(Dems)	1.02 [0.95; 1.10]		1.03 [0.95; 1.11]	0.97 [0.83; 1.13]		0.97 [0.84; 1.13]
Post SF * Positions		1.01 [0.98; 1.05]	1.01 [0.98; 1.05]		1.01 [0.95; 1.08]	1.01 [0.95; 1.08]
Cubic Time Trend	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Individual Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
N	99,117	99,117	99,117	24,874	24,874	24,874

\* Null hypothesis value outside the confidence interval.

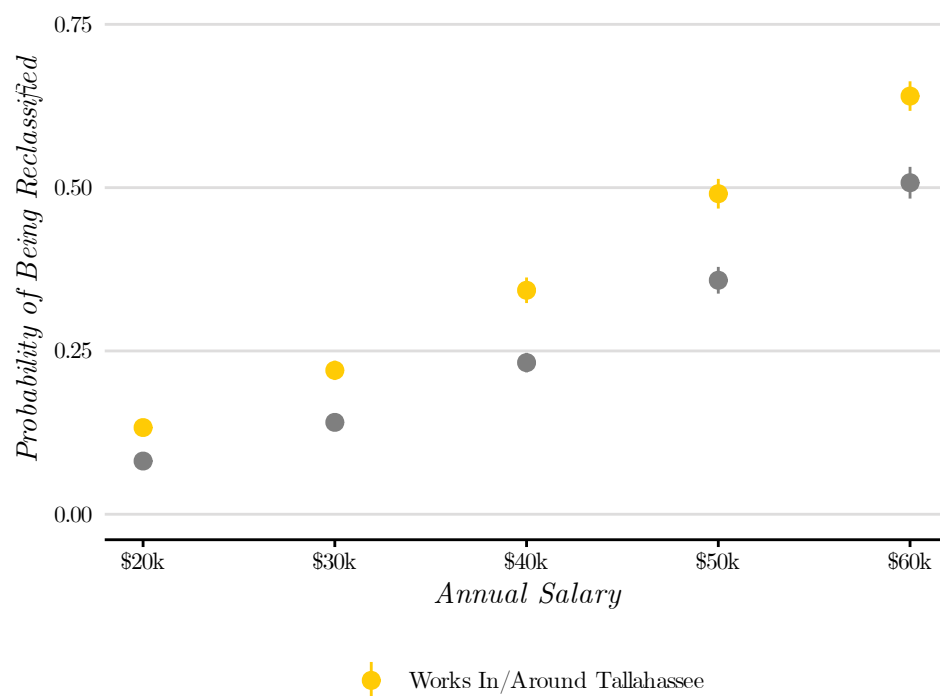


**Table A.4 – Influential Employees in Politically Distal or Fiscally-Constrained Agencies No More Likely to Depart** Shows the results of logit models with standard errors clustered at the employee level. The “Post SF” variable includes quarters in the 2 years following Service First. All models include individual-level controls for race, sex, salary, location, years of experience, and years of experience squared. Observed duration is modeled using a cubic trend.

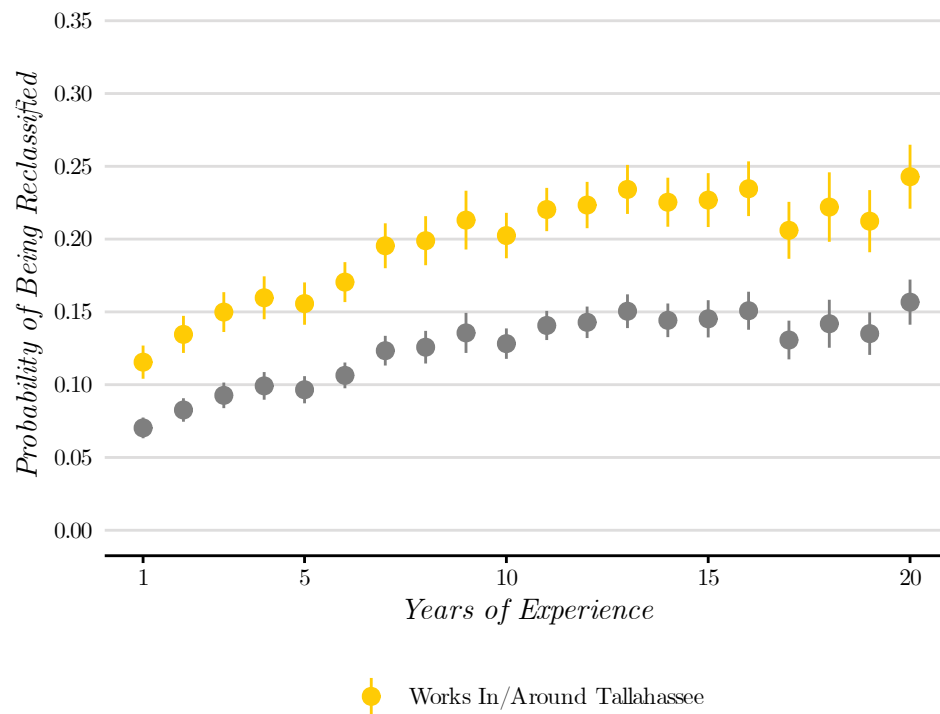
	All SES			Higher-earning SES		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Post SF	1.00 [0.56; 1.81]	1.47* [1.21; 1.77]	0.93 [0.52; 1.66]	1.24 [0.36; 4.32]	1.69* [1.16; 2.45]	1.09 [0.33; 3.63]
Positions	0.97* [0.97; 0.98]	0.95* [0.92; 0.98]	0.95* [0.92; 0.98]	0.98* [0.96; 0.99]	0.94* [0.88; 1.00]	0.94* [0.88; 0.99]
ln(Dems)	1.78* [1.25; 2.54]	1.90* [1.34; 2.71]	1.83* [1.28; 2.61]	2.46* [1.12; 5.39]	2.73* [1.26; 5.92]	2.63* [1.20; 5.77]
ln(Employees)	0.51* [0.35; 0.74]	0.49* [0.34; 0.72]	0.49* [0.34; 0.71]	0.37* [0.17; 0.83]	0.34* [0.15; 0.77]	0.34* [0.15; 0.76]
Post SF * ln(Dems)	1.05 [0.98; 1.12]		1.06 [0.99; 1.13]	1.04 [0.89; 1.20]		1.06 [0.92; 1.22]
Post SF * Positions		1.02 [0.99; 1.06]	1.03 [0.99; 1.06]		1.05 [0.98; 1.11]	1.05 [0.99; 1.11]
Cubic Time Trend	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Individual Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
N	151,413	151,413	151,413	37,989	37,989	37,989

\* Null hypothesis value outside the confidence interval.

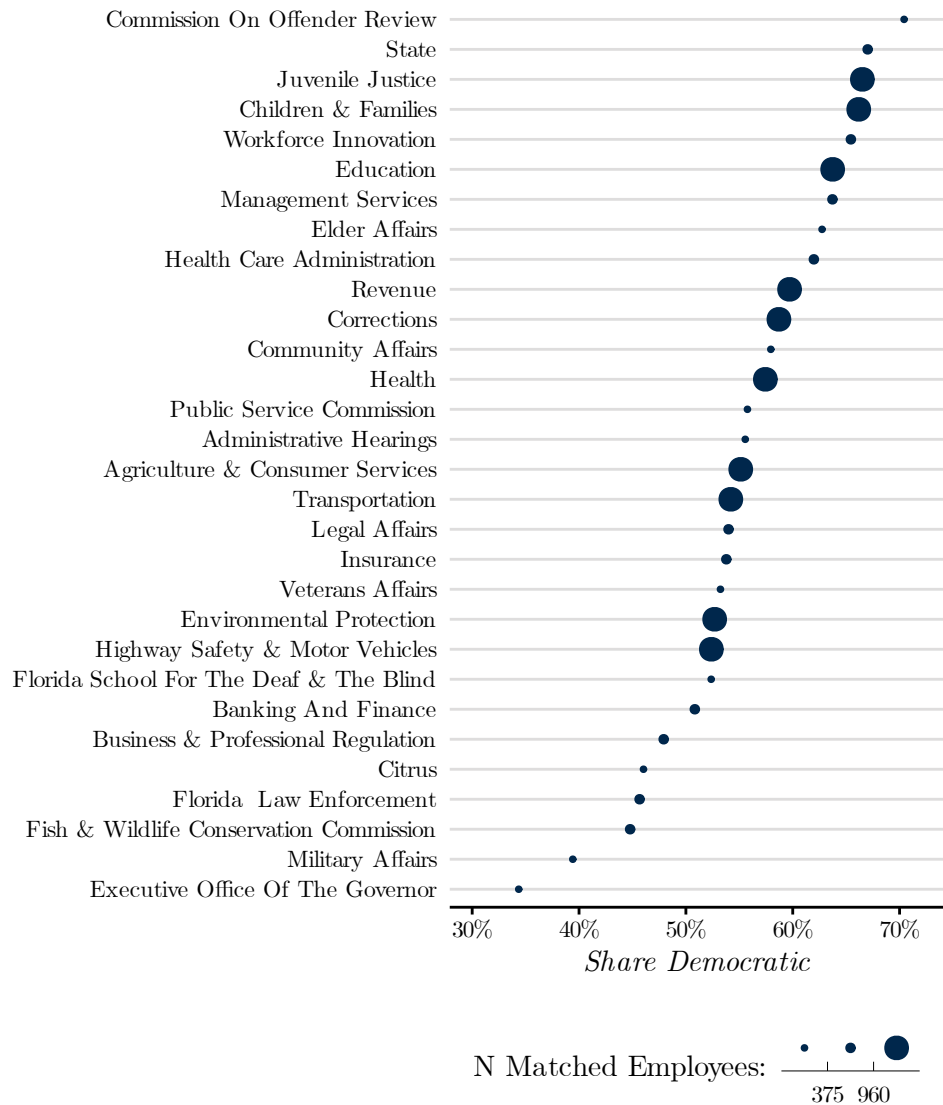
**Figure A.2 – Reclassification Into SES More Likely For Higher Earners Working In/Around Tallahassee** Shows the predicted probability of an employee being reclassified from the Career Service into the SES by annual salary and location. Predicted probabilities calculated from a logit model with race and gender covariates and years of experience fixed effects. The predicted probabilities shown here are calculated for a white female employee who has worked for the state for 11 years.



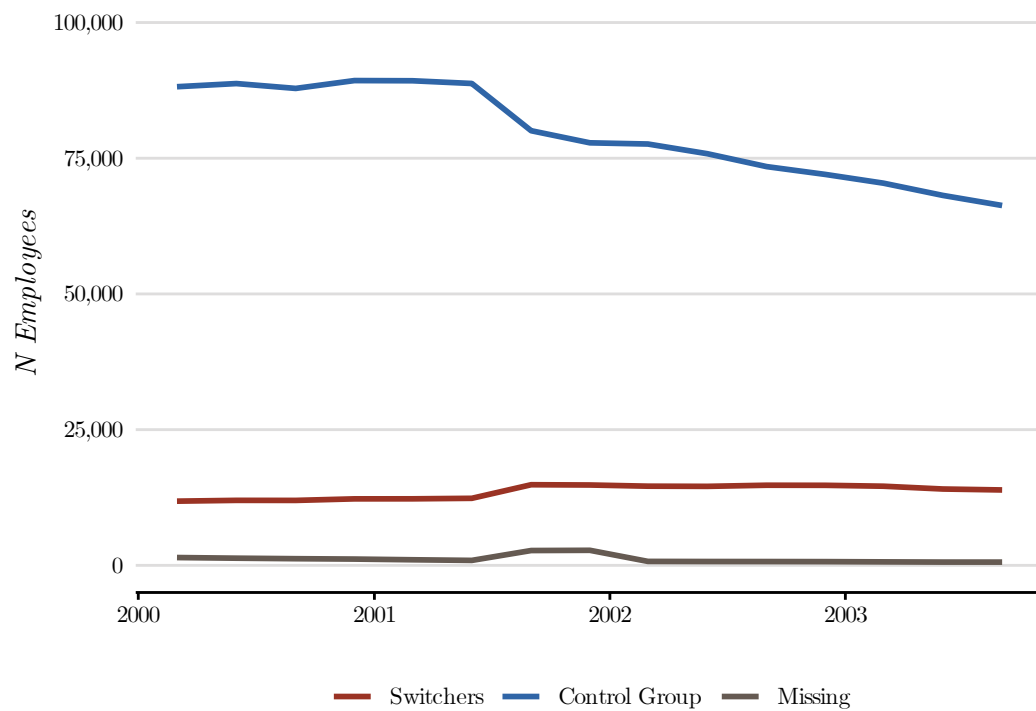
**Figure A.3 – Reclassification Into SES More Likely For More Experienced Employees Working In/Around Tallahassee** Shows the predicted probability of an employee being reclassified from the Career Service into the SES by years of experience and location. Predicted probabilities calculated from a logit model with years of experience fixed effects and race, gender, and salary covariates. The predicted probabilities shown here are calculated for a white female employee with an annual salary of \$30,000.



**Figure A.4 – Share of Matched Employees That are Registered Democrats**  
 Shows the share of matched Florida employees that are registered Democrats by agency. The size of the dots are binned into tertiles and correspond to the number of (matched) employees in the agency.



**Figure A.5 – Size of “Switchers” Treatment Group and Control Group Over Time** Shows, per quarter, the number of employees imputed as having lost their civil service protections due to Service First (Switchers) and the control group of employees who remained protected.



**Figure A.6 – Unprotected Employees in Department of State No More Likely to Depart During Reorganization** Shows the predicted probabilities and associated 95% confidence intervals for SES and Career Service employees, respectively, in the Department of Education (top panel) and SES employees in the Department of Education and rest of service, respectively (bottom panel). Predicted probabilities are calculated for a white female employee working in or around the state capital with mean earnings, years of experience, and squared years of experience. Shading indicates the onset of the cabinet reorganization that gave the governor greater control of the agency.

