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WEBINAR

STAFFING THE GOVERNMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF TRUMP'S PERSONNEL STRATEGY
ACROSS HIS TWO TERMS

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INTRODUCTION:

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TENPAS: Welcome to today's panel, "Staffing the Government, an Analysis of Trump's Personnel Strategy Across His Two Terms." This panel is sponsored by the Initiative on Inter-Branch Relations and Improving Government at Brookings and by the Partnership for Public Service. I'm grateful to my colleague Jonathan Rauch, for agreeing to moderate this panel. In the next 75 minutes, we hope to provide a comprehensive overview of the men and women that President Trump has selected to serve at the highest level of our government, highlighting the similarities and differences between 2017 and 2025. The president is not the government, but the men and women he selects to serve are some of the most influential unelected actors in our government.

For that reason alone, they merit our attention and analysis, but it is also worthwhile to examine the Trump approach to hiring and how it may have changed in this second term. After the panel discussion, we will have a live q and a. In the meantime, our online audience can submit questions to events@brookings.edu.

Today's panel includes two of my Brookings colleagues. Jonathan Rauch is a Senior Fellow in Governance Studies. A contributing writer to the Atlantic and the author of "Government's End, Why Washington Stopped Working." My other colleague at Brookings is Russell Wheeler, a nonresident senior fellow in Governance Studies who tracks federal judicial selection among other aspects of the judiciary. And finally, we are pleased to welcome Chris Piper today. Chris is a political scientist and the policy and research manager at the Partnership for Public Service, our co-sponsor for today's panel. Over to you, Jonathan.

RAUCH: Thank you, Katie. Thank you Chris. Thank you Russell. Thanks for our staff hovering here in the background to keep us on track. I am honored to moderate the next approximately 70 minutes. They say personnel is policy. They've been saying that since Reagan, and you're going to understand that aspect of policy better by the time we're done. You're also going to hear the word unprecedented a number of times in the presentation that follow unprecedented administration members wearing multiple hats, unprecedented numbers of nominees, withdrawn, unprecedented purges in the administration, and firing unprecedented absence of vacancies in the district courts.

It's really a new era, and that's what we're here to talk about. The ground rules are going to be for about 10 minutes each. Our three panelists will present their findings on the state of play for staffing in the administration and in the judicial branch. And then we'll have a conversation among ourselves led by me. My job is simple. I'm gonna sit here and ask a few questions and then over to you and the public, and we hope to receive your questions. We got some already before the event and we'd love to get yours. Just email events@brookings.edu. I will try to remember to say that again when we're open for questions, and my colleagues here will help. Remind me. Katie, would you like to lead us off with some of your recent findings?

TENPAS: Sure. I have a small niche in studying presidential personnel, and that is that I look at the top level of presidential advisors. I refer to it as the A team. I have a data set that goes back to Ronald Reagan. In this most recent in the first Trump administration, what was noteworthy? I should say that first of all, no one ever cared about this topic of White House turnover until 2017 when there were a great number of departures from the Trump administration and people wanted to know where that fit in the historical context. That was one time in my life where I could raise my hand and say, I actually have the data, and I can put this in context.

I've cont. and in 2017, he was off the charts with 35% of his 18 staff departing in that first year, 2017. This time around the turnover has declined somewhat. It's declined to 29%, but I should point that out, that compared to other presidents, going back to Reagan, six other presidents, the average turnover rate in the first year of an administration is around 10%. So even though President Trump's turnover was lower this time, it is still almost three x what it is in a typical administration. A large chunk of these departures occurred in the National Security Council activist and political influencer. Laura Loomer met with President Trump in the spring and within a few weeks there was a huge departure set of departures within the National Security Council.

Many of the A team departures that occurred, the reason why they may not have made much news is that they were not household names, and in addition to that, they weren't in positions that were highly visible like the Press Secretary or the Chief of staff. The other thing that's been quite unusual and why people are less interested in turn turnover this time around is that President Trump has not been publicly firing the staff members like he did in 2017, and there have been far fewer forced

resignations. I will point out that all of the forced resignations that occurred in this past year 2025 were all on the National Security Council. So, what accounts for the decline? From the difference between 35% and 29%. I've come up with a few reasons to explain it, and one of them I think that's predominant is loyalty.

An increased emphasis on loyalty in hiring and by carefully vetting their staff members. They create, they have created a more homogenous staff, and this homogenous staff is less prone to disagreement. They're more dedicated to the cause, and thus less likely to get fired. I'd also point out that this time around there was far more preparation. You might recall the transition that didn't really occur in 2016. His disdain for transitions generally and not feeling as though he needed to prepare in the aftermath of the loss. In 2020, however, there were three nonprofit groups that spent the Biden administration years preparing for the possibility of a second Trump administration.

This includes the Heritage Foundation Project 2025, the America First Policy Institute. The Center for Renewing America, all advocacy organizations staffed by former Trump confidants and dedicated to spending the Biden years planning for a second Trump administration. This kind of preparation was in stark contrast to 2016, but I think it's also what helped lay the groundwork for a quick start with all the executive orders, with having people in place and for the staff stability. And then finally, I would cite what I call a learning curve in the sense that they seem to learn that the chaos and the high turnover created a great deal of inefficiencies and got them off track for their programs and their programmatic goals. And I think that there was some recognition this time around that turnover was not good.

And I think example A or exhibit A that really shows, this is National Security Council, Michael Waltz, the signal, group chat, which he shared with a journalist in the first term in 2017. He would've been fired instantly this time around. Reports indicated that Trump was very upset with this by this, but unwilling to fire him. And so, what happened is he stepped down and he moved over to become a Senate confirmed staff member as the US representative to the UN. That would not have happened first time around. In terms of other sort of new features of this administration compared to 2017, Trump has fundamentally altered the role of the National Security Council and the National Security Advisor first through purging staff members at the highest level, and then secondly, by appointing Secretary of State, Marco Rubio to hold that job.

In addition to the position of Secretary of State, he's held both jobs now for nearly nine months. If you interview any former staff members, you find pretty out pretty quickly that these jobs, any single job is an 80 hour a week job and it's very difficult, very stressful to manage. The notion that Marco Rubio can hold both of these jobs just simply is untenable. By weakening the NSC, though Trump is placing more authority in the hands of Secretary Rubic Rubio. No longer is there a neutral arbiter within the White House, the National Security Advisor that would collect information from the intelligence agencies, from the Defense Department and from the Secretary of State, and then they would weigh the various perspectives and make a recommendation to the president.

That step just doesn't occur anymore. Nixon tried this in 1973 by appointing his National Security advisor Henry Kissinger to become Secretary of State. That was relatively short-lived and has not been repeated since. But that is something that's fundamentally this time around there is a clear effort to downsize or rightsized the National Security Council. What's old when it comes to watching President Trump assemble a White House staff and manage a White House staff, he continues the practice of dual and triple hatting staff members. So instead of just being in charge of the Office of Communications, you might also be in charge of the Office of Public Liaison, the Office of Political Affairs, et cetera.

This time around President Trump has ramped it up from asking White House staff members to wear more than one hat to asking secretaries of the 15 major departments to hold more than one job. Perhaps the most blatant one at this point in time is asking the Treasury Secretary Scott descent to also serve as the IRS Commissioner. It's again, very difficult to hold more than one of these jobs, even one is a lot. And so, the dual and triple hatting is something that is truly unique to President Trump. I've only seen it in the first Trump administration, and I'm seeing it now, but now I would say it's a little bit on steroids in the sense it's, he's not just asking White House staff members to do more.

He's asking his Senate confirmed secretaries across the fifth. Some of the secretaries confirmed across the 15 departments. The other thing that's old is that President Trump is reluctant to recruit staff members externally. So, what I mean by that is when somebody departs from within, he finds somebody else within the White House and moves them to that position rather than hiring externally. And what that does is it simply drives up the turnover rate because they're pulling other senior people

from other jobs creating more disruption and I would argue more inefficiency. So, there's a little bit of old and a little bit of new, while the turnover rate overall has declined some I would say still compared to his six predecessors, it's quite high. And I think I'll leave it at that, Jonathan, and wait for your excellent question.

RAUCH: Thank you. Thank you very much Katie. I do have some questions, but why don't we move on to Chris who will tell us about the Senate appointees nominees and confirmation process.

PIPER: Yes, thank you. I'll just go ahead and share some slides here. If you can all see my screen. So, I'll be talking about the Senate confirmed presidential appointments that serve across the executive branch. There are over 1300 Senate confirmed appointees that presidents have the ability to fill. Now some of these might be filled by holdovers coming into a new administration. You have some individuals with fixed terms, but generally, most positions become vacant when a president comes into office on January 20th of their inauguration day.

And these range from cabinet secretaries to agency heads of independent executive agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency. You then through cabinet departments and those other agencies have layers of additional Senate confirmed officials through directors and assistant secretaries. Board and commission members from the securities and Exchange Commission to the Merit System Protection Board that presidents can appoint inspectors general, and hundreds of ambassadors as well. And through the first year, we've seen four key trends in the president's handling of the Senate confirmed officials.

First the president hit the ground running with making record numbers of nominations that quickly dissipated and his nominee started running into trouble. And the Senate. With record number of withdrawals, there was a Senate rules change to make it more efficient to confirm Trump's nominees and unprecedented firings. So, we'll, I'll walk through each of those individually, starting with Trump's approach to nominations. And as Katie mentioned, there was a lot of transition planning, particularly relying on external organizations during the transition period that allowed President Trump to come into office making historic numbers of nominations, both on Inauguration day, making 66 66 nominations.

And then within the first quarter, up until the end of March, President Trump made 289 nominations. This was six times more than he made in his first term, and about four times the historical average from Reagan to Biden. However, in each subsequent quarter, Trump made fewer and fewer nominations, setting record lows. And in totality, he ended up finishing the year slightly below average in total nominations while making a little bit more than he made in the first term. President Trump's also withdrew nominees at unprecedented levels. As Jonathan mentioned withdrawing nearly four times the many nominees as his nearest contemporary and President Biden.

In total, about 12% of his nominations were withdrawn. And the reasons for this vary from the presidential personnel office. So, they maybe got someone's name wrong, got their home state wrong or incorrectly put in their title. There were failures in vetting in which they later on found out some sort of a knee or they changed their mind about where they wanted to place an individual. So, they might have submitted them for assistant secretary position but then decided to put them up for a higher-level position. We also saw that the Senate changed their rules to facilitate higher levels of confirmation. In the first almost eight months of the Trump administration, President Trump's nominees faced a lot of procedural barriers in the Senate.

Senate Democrats required each individual nominee to have a cloture vote to end debate on the nomination and a final recorded vote. And this was taking the Senate a lot of time on the Senate floor to individually process each individual nominee. Every previous president had seen some of their nominees at least go through via voice vote, but that was not occurring in this Congress. So, both with President Trump's pressure and Senate Republican frustration with how much time they were having to spend considering each nominee, they invoked the nuclear option to change Senate rules, allowing for nearly unlimited bundles of nominees to be considered at once. And what this allowed the Senate to do is package large numbers of nominees together and more speedily move them through.

In three bundles of nominees in a series of votes, they were able to confirm 60% of all of the confirmations in the first year. This allowed Trump to change what could have been historic low numbers of confirmations to the highest rate or highest percentage of nominees confirmed in the first year since the George W. Bush administration. And the final point, I'll make that sticks out from this first year was an unprecedented number of firings by President Trump. His personnel director came in

into his position saying they wanted to clean house and start fresh. And they approached that vigorously.

They have fired 16 inspectors general who are independent. Officials that conduct investigations and audits. They have fired 13 board and commission members, and two executive officials with four cause protections, meaning they are only supposed to be fired for negligence or not completing their job as they're supposed to which are pending Supreme Court cases on the legality of those firings that fired an additional 19 board and commission members leaving several boards and commissions without any Democratic members in some cases causing quorums to be lost in the Merit Systems Protection Board.

30 Career Foreign Service ambassadors were removed at the end of December. And there's been six executive agency officials and two other Congressional agency officials that have also been removed. You might recall the Bureau of Labor Statistics director was removed. Trump even removed two officials that he had nominated in 2025, the IRS Commissioner and CDC Commissioner for not towing the line for the administration. And for most of these positions, they were for positions or entities intended to exercise independent authority or provide neutral expertise. So, we really have seen remarkable movement against guardrails that are in place across the executive branch. So, I'll end there and pass it back to you, Jonathan.

RAUCH: Thank you. Let's go to Russ in a minute. I just wanna, since both of you are in the world of nominations and executive appointments just lob a couple quick questions at you before we move on. One is a why question for Katie. Now, I realize your data doesn't answer why questions, but do you have any conjecture as to why President Trump's nominees have been so front loaded? Unprecedentedly front loaded?

TENPAS: Yeah. You mean the sense of like why they were

RAUCH: So many at first and then so few after?

TENPAS: Yeah, I think

RAUCH: Not the standard pattern.

TENPAS: Right? I think Chris and I both mismentioned this, and I'm happy to have Chris, sorry. But I think the issue was that there was so much preparation by those three other external organizations that they had people all queued up and so they were able to issue all of the nom. However, they might have been a little bit too hasty. 'cause as Chris pointed out, there were a lot of withdrawals due to errors. So, I think I think that the pre-planning enabled them to hit the ground running, and I feel like they learned their lessons from the first term. They were slower on a lot of these things, and they felt like that somehow in retrospect, that sort of slowed their progress and inhibited their capacity to accomplish more and fulfill more of their campaign promises. But Chris, what do you think?

PIPER: Yeah, I think that's exactly right and on, on the slow down. I think the reason for that is you go from a robust transition organization with the external support to many officials then going into the administration, and you have a much smaller personnel shop in the presidential personnel office once the administration begins. And that office has also seen a high level of turnover with both the director and deputy director leaving their positions. So, there's just a lot less capacity in the personnel office to be able to continue that pace where I think they had the front loading of all the external transition organizations helping them get the first batches through. And they've just not been able to be able to keep up that pace throughout the rest of the first year.

RAUCH: So, I'm gonna translate that. Tell me if this is wrong, but I'm going to interpret that as the outpouring of nominations very quickly was part of their shock and awe campaign, but it proved not to be sustainable. Does that sound generally right as an interpretation?

PIPER: I think that's, I think that's right and that there's a realization that the president is much better served by getting officials into place as soon as possible across these agencies. Trump finished the first year with over a hundred more Senate confirmed officials in place, and those are all people who can help drive the president's agenda throughout the executive branch.

RAUCH: While we're here with Russ's continued forbearance for just another minute, Chris, one of your more interesting findings, which you didn't mention in your presentation, I think it'll surprise a lot

of people. That Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice, according to your findings, have some of the largest declines in the number of nominations that the administration has put forward. Now, one would think, as you again say in the finding, given these centrality of these two organizations to his agenda, that he would be rushing to fill them with his appointees. What do you think is going on there?

PIPER: I think that might be a case where the president has a preference for acting officials in some cases. So, he might not want to have to put someone up who has to go through more extensive vetting or who has to go through the Senate confirmation process. We saw during the transition that President Trump announced who he was going to select to be the Acting Ice Director, rather than submitting someone to officially be Senate confirmed to that position. So, in some of these priority places, the president would rather be able to just unilaterally select someone without having to go through Senate vetting, and then they can move people in and out of the position more efficiently, as has happened with ice, with a few different acting directors for some of his more priority areas.

RAUCH: So, we speculate this using actings is a way for him to keep people on shorter leashes.

PIPER: That's right. And the president in the first term said he liked actings and he liked the flexibility it gave him. So, another lesson that's carried through to the second administration,

RAUCH: and again, building on your paper, is there a cost to this in terms of competence? We already saw a disaster with an improperly appointed prosecutor who's now been basically kicked out by the courts. It's an extraordinary and humiliating thing and it's upset his agenda. So, I, is there a cost for going with this strategy of actings?

PIPER: There is, I think in a few realms. One is it can end up resulting in agency actions or decisions being revoked because the court might decide they were serving illegally as an acting. Another is that there is some academic research have been a part of that shows that vacancies lead to worsened performance for agencies. So, you have likely less competent, capable with more qualifications, folks that tend to step into these acting roles than would be normally first senate confirmed official.

And lastly, it's against our separation of power system in which the Senate. It's supposed to serve as a check on who the president's nominees are. And for position as important as ICE Director and others, we would want the Senate to be able to affirmatively say that person should be in their position. And this strategy prevents the Senate from playing that role.

RAUCH: Thank you, Russ Wheeler maybe not quite saving the best for last, but the courts are the area where the president makes lifetime appointments and will inflect the direction of our policy, and in fact, our constitution for decades to come. And your findings are also interesting and somewhat counterintuitive. Over to you.

PIPER: Oh, Russell, you're on mute.

WHEELER: When I'm finished, maybe you wished I had stayed on mute. The court, the Supreme Court this morning, heard arguments in this case of Lisa Cook and whether the president could, what capacity or authority the president has to basically create vacancies in this case on the board of the Federal Reserve. And from the firings that Chris showed us, and from people just leaving executive positions. Once the administration turns over. We know the president indirectly or directly has a lot of say over how vacancies are created in the executive branch. Has no say over how vacancies are created in the judicial branch to create a vacancy, invest.

The opportunity for a new appointment is entirely up to the judges who serve in those positions. And I think in assessing the. Potential Trump's potential to influence the composition of the judicial branch. The creation of vacancies is gonna turn out to be in this second Trump administration, r rather remarkably and influential factor. Some basics. After a year in office in Trump's first term, he had appointed 22 judges. This, so far now he's appointed 27 judges. These are below, pretty much below the level of most of his predecessors, in the middle. But as we know in the first Trump administration, although he got off to a slow start, he ended up having a substantial impact on the.

The composition of the courts as in a variety of ways about a third of the judges serving now in full-time judicial positions are Trump appointees, both in the court of appeals, in the district court. And when we look at it in terms of the proportion of judges as to the party of appointing president, and we

can talk more if you want, about the importance of that variable. We see that Trump was able to turn things around rather dramatically. We can see that he inherited a judiciary that was pretty well, that was not dominated but had a significant majority of Democratic appointees in full-time judicial positions. And he managed basically to turn that around.

Then President Biden had four years of appointments, and now we're at a position where the, the allocation is pretty much even. And so, the question becomes, will Trump be able to affect a significant increase in the number of Republican appointees on the bench and a corresponding decrease in the number of Democratic appointees? I am fairly my, my view is that he's not gonna be able to do that. That he's gonna have much less of an impact his second administration than he had in the first administration. Although he is had more a slightly more appointments in his first year this time around, he's also faced a stronger opposition.

Hasn't stopped any confirmations, but as I mentioned, that could be significant. And also, fewer nominations in waiting. Now on the court of appeals, for example we see this result and. Several things are worth keeping in mind. One is that when Trump ended when Trump ended his first year of his first term, there were seven nominees in waiting, ready to go. There are now no nominees waiting to go. Trump is has appointed six judges of the court of appeals. There are no nominees in waiting. That's partly because there's no vacancies in waiting. So that's the difference. But there also just the number of vacancies themselves, if we could see the next slide.

Adriana, thank you. What this shows is, this is quite striking. This shows the number of vacancies created in the Court of Appeals from election day through the end of the first term in office. And so, we see, for example, for George W. Bush from the election day in 2000 to the end of his first term, in office 12. Full-time judges, full-time status judges either announced they were leaving active status or actually did leave full-time status without having announced it. You can see that number has been a little lower for Obama. For Trump. Trump won 30 judges left office for Biden even more, but only three judges Since Trump was reelected in November of 2004, only three court of appeals judges, all Republican appointees have announced they are leaving.

Now. We can speculate on why that is, but what it suggest is that Trump is not going to have the number of vacancies he had in his first term to be able to change the composition of the judiciary. Now we see somewhat the same thing for the district courts. And Adriana, if we can see the third slide? No, the third slide. It's the other. Yeah, there we go. Trump also in inherited from eight years of Obama appointees a district bench, which was heavily dominated by de Democratic appointees. He managed to take that up to more or less, even by the time he left office in 2000 21. And then the years of the Biden administration, again, have created a fairly sizable gap between the number of demo, the percentage of Democratic appointees over 50 and the percentage of Republican appointees.

So, the question we have again, is will Trump be able perhaps to, to at least bring those proportions back to equilibrium or perhaps create a core of district judges who were dominated by Republican appointees? But again, keep in mind Trump, started his second year of his first term with 44 pending nominees in the Senate waiting for action. There are only six now waiting for action. And furthermore, the number of vacancies to be created is small. Again, Adriana, if you can see the for slide there again, we see significant vacancy creation after the election for a variety of reasons, but certainly a good number of those judges and Republican appointees.

After, for example, the election of George W. Bush said to themselves, I can safely resign now re retire now knowing that a president of the party who appointed me will be appointing my successor if I didn't explain it earlier, what this shows is re retirements of judges of the president's party in blue retirements of judges of the opposite party are in the yellow or brown. And so, we, again, we see a significant number of vacancy creations after the election of Bush, Obama Trump won, if you want to put it that way, Biden, but only 28 judges. Most of them Republican judges. Republican appointees have left active status since Trump was reelected in November of 2000 24.

So, we have this factor of vacancies and whether or not Trump is just simply gonna be able to appoint enough replace enough Democratic appointees to have much of an impact on that breakdown that I've highlighted in the party of appointing president Now, there's a variety of factors operating here. I will. Be posting a paper either tomorrow or perhaps on Friday, fairly soon in which I go through the arithmetic of what Trump would, what kind of appointments would Trump be able to make, how many

Democratic appointees are eligible to leave active status on salary, which is how most of them create vacancies.

And I'm not gonna go through those numbers now, but as I say paper will be out tomorrow or Friday, which go through that. But the fundamental fact here we have to pay attention to is this remarkable phenomenon of failure, paucity of vacancy creation. And then there is one other factor I'll mention and mention quickly, and that is the number of opposition votes to, to pre to judicial nominees has been growing steadily. There were the days of Ronald Reagan, or even William Clinton, when almost all judicial nominees were confirmed by voice votes or unanimous consent. Those days are over. And you get an increasing proportion of judges who were confirmed but confirmed by rather narrow margins. And that's increased.

Also consider this, that of Trump's 12 court of appeals appointees in his first term. Relatively few had more than 40 votes, an against them. Of the six judges he's appointed to the court of appeals in his second term. So far, every one of them has more than 40 votes against them, and there's a similar phenomenon for his district judges, and that is just something that's been growing over time. It's not peculiar to Trump and b Biden had a lot more than Trump won, for example, in terms of opposition votes. But what that may tell us is that as Trump's if an as Trump loses his grip. On the Republican Senate, there may be more renegade senators who are not willing to vote for him, that so far he's only had three Republican votes in any of his nominees, two by Murkowski and one by Collins.

But as the if he begins to lose his grip, you may see more renegade Republicans refusing to vote for his nominees, thus decreasing again, his ability to influence the composition of the judiciary. If the Democrats should take the Senate in the midterm elections, unlikely, but certainly not out of the question, I would think confirmations would pretty well come to a stop and any effort that Trump could make to influence the composition of the judiciary would end just as well. So, I'll stop there. Stop there, Jonathan, and pick up whatever questions you may have.

RAUCH: Thank you. I will ask a few before we go to general conversation. It sounds again I'm being the journalist here and interpreting, or perhaps overinterpreting, it sounds reading between the lines as if this extraordinary paucity of vacancies in both the appeals and the district court levels amounts

to a lot of judges hanging on because they don't want Trump to replace them. And it looks like that's happening in both parties, although perhaps more democratic appointed judges than Republican ones. Do you think that's a plausible reading of what judges are, what's going through their minds right now?

WHEELER: To state the obvious judges can leave active status for any number of reasons. Health or health reasons, you name it. But the numbers as they were displayed seems to me makes almost a prima facie case that what you describe is going on. Keep in mind the president has been rather dismissive of judges. He's called judges who voted contrary to his preferences traitors, treasonous, idiots. He's put their lives in danger. We know that judicial security is a much bigger issue now than it used to be. And on that basis, you might think judges would say, I'm getting out of this business. I don't want to have to worry when my, if my husband and kids are coming home from school, or they get a house is gonna be bombed.

But that is evidently not happened. So, all I can surmise is that reluctance to have Trump appoint a replacement has to be. Has to be a main reason. Judges are hanging in there, sticking around rather than giving him appointments to make. A lot of other people thought that when he appointed Emil Bove to the Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, Emil Bove, one of his personal lawyers and then one of his temporary appointees of the Department of Justice was a step too far. Most of appointees, most of his appointees though, have not been of that category. There's one other controversial court of appeals appointees. They've been quite conservative, but they don't, it doesn't seem to be the judges are saying, I just don't like who he's appointing. I think it's matter. They just don't want to give him any appointments, no matter who they might be.

RAUCH: That raises the question of you, you say in the paper, and again, you emphasize here. I'll quote from the paper. Trump's judicial appointments have produced minimal change in the judiciary that Biden left him. Moreover, it's unlikely that Trump too can produce strong Republican appointee dominance on the lower federal courts. Let's assume for purposes of this question that Republicans maintain control of the Senate. He's still got three years left, right? So, if judges are holding off on retiring and sandbagging that's not a sustainable strategy. Some will die, some will get sick, some will just decide they've, they can't hold on any longer. Could we look, could we be looking at the opposite

of what we see in in personnel appointments, which is a backloaded sudden large influence on the composition of the judiciary in his last, couple of years?

WHEELER: Not for reasons that I lay out in the paper, not enough to allow him to make a significant change in the balance. During the first Trump administration, eight Democratic appointees took senior status or left voluntarily one way or the other. If that were to happen in the second Trump administration and we have zero now, keep in mind he might be able to affect a change among the 179 appellate positions, but I don't think even eight are gonna take senior status based on what we've seen so far. You may be wrong. We may this is all speculation, and we may wake up tomorrow and see a wave of a wave of retirements. I just don't expect it to happen in the numbers necessary to allow him to affect a major change in that, in the. Relative composition of the judiciary, he'd need over a hundred Democratic appointees to take senior status on the district courts. I just don't see that happening.

RAUCH: Yeah, that's not happening. I'll ask one more which is something that you also point out in the paper is that he is not submitting nominations for district court vacancies in states with democratic senators. Can you explain why that matters? What it means, and why it matters?

WHEELER: I will, and he's not the only one. President Biden submitted very few nominees to states, to vacancies in, in states with Republican senators. And it goes back to the blue slip rule in the Senate for district appointments. The Senate operates on a presumption that home state senators of either party can pretty well veto a nomination. And this is true for US attorneys as well, so if the president nominates an individual in a in a vacancy in Virginia, for example, and Senators Kae or Warner may clear they're opposed to the nomination. The Senate Republicans won't process the nominee. Trump has been very upset about that.

He's asked Senator Grassley to change the rules, but Grassley's enough of a traditionalist, he hasn't done so. So rather than. Risk along, drawn out negotiations with democratic senators to find someone they regard as mutually acceptable and will let go through you. Just turn your attention to states with Republican senators who are not rubber stamps but are much more amenable to the kind of person Trump would want to annoy a point. And so, to in, in the Biden administration, you don't wanna

wrestle with Republican senators, so you just pick out vacancies where there are no Republican senators to object.

RAUCH: And that implies, I think you at least suggest in your paper growing polarization on the court because democrats only appoint in safe democratic states. Republicans only appoint in safe Republican states. You don't get the negotiations that might happen in the swing states. Is that correct?

WHEELER: You don't, and one ex, one example is this wave of litigation against the Trump executive orders of one, the other are almost all filed in states with. Democratic senators, because those happen to be states that have courts with a heavy concentration of democratic appointees. And when Biden was in office, you saw the same thing in reverse opposition to the president's policies in forms of litigation were filed in larger of them in Texas, which is loaded with Republican appointees. And that polarization, it seems to me in the long run, it could be quite dangerous for the judiciary.

RAUCH: Yeah, it certainly doesn't sound like a terribly healthy development. Let's talk among ourselves a bit. We got some excellent questions from our attendees in advance, and I'd like to go to some of those. Before I do. I'll just remind those of you who are listening that you can participate and we hope you will. So, send those cards and letters, or at least those questions to events@brookings.edu. I also wanna put in an advertisement for yesterday morning. The 2026 Brookings Trump Tracker went live, and you should all go look at it. Katie, why don't you just give us a little bit of a description of what that is.

TENPAS: Yeah. Basically, it shows everything I talked about. It shows all the data going back to Ronald Reagan about turnover in the first, second, third, and fourth year of president's term. And it also lists the individuals from the Trump administration who departed the nature of their departure. Were they forced out, were they promoted, what have you where they were before the Trump administration and what job they currently have, if that was publicly available and their successor. And so, it's just a compendium. On the turnover in 2017, we or in 2018, I released a report indicating that there was 35% turnover.

There was so much interest that the report then became the first Trump tracker. And over time there were multiple departures. So, we had a whole separate table called serial turnover because there were four or five national security advisors and multiple chiefs of staff. So, we kept all of that clear. This time around, we don't have the serial turnover tracker going because we don't have that turn kind of turnover yet. I think it's also worth noting that I track the turnover in the 15 cabinet positions and Trump did not have any departures in his first year. In 2017, 2 individuals departed those rates were better this time around as well.

But the turnover tracker is a good reference if you wanna see. And we update it from time to time when there are significant departures. New. I just wanna put one other thing is to promote Chris and I will have a report coming out next week that sort of documents a lot of the things we've talked about today about the rates of turnover in my case and why those occurred. And then Chris is gonna talk about his report addresses all of these details and those slides that you saw today. So that'll be next week.

RAUCH: New from Brookings. Everyone go look at it. Katie, will we be updating the Trump tracker year by year over the course of the administration?

TENPAS: Yeah, and we'll be even updating it month to month if there is turnover within the 18. So, you can check. It always has a date of when we last updated it, but yes, definitely at the year mark, but also throughout the year.

RAUCH: I'll go with, let's put on the table some of the questions we received in advance because they're all very good. One is, what are the effects of DOGE? Do we see the effects of DOGE in the data? It was an unprecedented effort by the executive branch to bring in outsiders to reduce government spending, reduce government jobs. They did a lot of that. There is litigation that's ongoing as a result of that. Do we see effects of DOGE at Chris and Katie at the level of appointments you're talking about?

TENPAS: Chris, you go ahead. It actually doesn't affect the senior White House staff and the, it doesn't affect Senate confirmed individuals. It's more of the career staff. But I think that Chris has a better handle on this topic.

PIPER: Yeah, I Katie's exactly right. It doesn't, it hasn't affected appointments. What I will say is it has significantly affected the career workforce. And I know Washington Post, New York Times have put out estimates for how many career officials have departed the government. In the first year, I think it's around 300,000 that have departed. What does happen as Trump has inserted all these appointees, and there's also non senate confirmed appointees that President Trump has made unprecedented numbers of them. That leads to a diminished career workforce plus record levels of appointees. So, you have higher levels of politicization than you would have in normal situations, and you don't have the career workforce and career leadership as in place to serve as that check or guardrail on the administration.

RAUCH: Well, leads to another question that came in from our audience. Do we know anything about the partisanship of the people that the Trump administration is installing? I guess we can all assume it's senior. We can assume that all of the ones at senior levels, of course will be Republicans. Do we know anything about the levels below that? Beyond that he's vetting people carefully for loyalty?

TENPAS: Yeah,

PIPER: I think with the, oh, go ahead Katie.

TENPAS: I would just say I would be shocked because their vetting process is much more careful. There's loyalty types of questions that these potential appointees have to answer, and I would be shocked if they were other than Republican. But I think that even using the term Republican is a little bit perhaps of Avis Nova because the Republican party has changed so much. It's more about the party of Trump and that individual president. But I would be I. Shocked if they hired a Democrat, somebody who admitted they were Democrat.

They have overlooked in the past. Some of the nominees contributed to Democrats in the past, and they've looked at their campaign finance records to see that, and they've let those people through. But

there are a few cases like that, and those people have subsequently pledged their loyalty to President Trump. And if there was somebody that was a Democrat I would be shocked. Go ahead, Chris.

PIPER: Yeah I'll just add, there were these questionnaires that Katie mentioned asking folks who they voted for, even asking them their opinion of January 6th. You even saw nominees that got withdrawn by the president because they later on found out that one had criticized him after January 6th. Another had donated to Mitch McConnell's campaign and then thereafter was withdrawn. So even Republicans is not sufficient enough to become a nominee. There has to be that more stringent loyalty and buy-in to the president's views and agenda.

RAUCH: So, in a nutshell, all administrations put partisan people in jobs, but this administration is doing that on steroids.

TENPAS: Yeah, and I would just add it's something called the Pendleton Act, which passed in the late 18 hundreds. It was designed to protect career officials from politicization so there wouldn't be this cleaning out of government based on one's political views. The idea was to strive for what they called neutral competence, meaning that you wanted people to fulfill these government jobs and positions because they were capable of doing it, not because they were affiliated with the particular party. And it seems as though Pendleton might be turning in his grave right now because President Trump has turned that whole notion of neutral competency on its head.

RAUCH: Yes, there are a lot of Senate confirmed jobs that do require a lot of expertise in places like the IRS and the DOJ and so forth, and you do wanna find people who are really good at them.

PIPER: And even beyond that, there are 4,000 appointees total and the president's trying to initiate schedule policy career which was an executive order at the beginning of administration. There's a pending regulation that would convert tens of thousands of career positions to essentially being politically appointed that could be removed at will. So that could add further ability for the administration to fire tens of thousands of career officials if they're not in total alignment. We've also seen the administration adding in politicized questions in the hiring, federal hiring process for career

officials, for example, asking them what their favorite executive order of the president is on their applications to be considered for a job in the federal government.

RAUCH: That, that leads to a couple other things I wanted to ask, and we'll go back to our audience question. One is the significance of the firing of for cause appointees that comes up. Chris and Katie in your paper a couple of times. I wonder if you could draw out the significance of what Trump is doing there. It is. Is it correct to say it's unusual, if not unprecedented, for a president to come in and try to fire hands full of for cause federal appointees that this is different and important is that right in your view?

PIPER: It certainly is. Since the Humphreys Executor Case, I believe in 1935, there has been a ruling that these four cause protections that Congress puts in agency statutes are constitutional. So since then, we have. Not seen attempts to fire any member of the board and commission that has these for cause protections. And Congress instituted them to give com commissioners a sense of independence and to prevent anyone president from exerting too much authority over these independent boards and commissions.

So, in addition to four, cause they might have partisan balancing to prevent one party from having two men, many members, they have fixed terms. All of these are institutional features that Congress has use to insulate these agencies so that they can exert independent authority. And the president has systematically targeted these boards and commissions members, both with for cause and without removing, I think around 33 board and commission members that are Democrats and basically wiping out a lot of Democratic membership on these boards and commissions and making it so that Republicans dominate these entities and can act unilaterally.

RAUCH: And this is being litigated at the moment.

PIPER: It is. There's two Supreme Court cases, as Russell mentioned, one with the Federal Reserve member and then another with the Federal Trade Commission member who was fired.

RAUCH: And meanwhile, in your paper, you point out that at least two of these boards, the National Labor Relations Board and the Merit Systems Protection Board have been effectively paralyzed by the removal of for cause appointees. That's right. So, it's not as if this is having no effect.

PIPER: Exactly. And that was going on at the exact same time that. Thousands of federal employees were being fired or having adverse employment actions taken against them. And the Merit System Protection Board, which is supposed to hear those cases, was not operable and created a backlog of thousands of cases that could not be heard.

RAUCH: Here's one for all of you, because I think it applies to the courts. We've talked about the unprecedented number of nominations withdrawn by the Trump administration and Chris and Katie. I think you attribute a lot of that to, for example, a hasty vetting or the administration changing its mind. But to all of you, one of the things some of our colleagues, for example, over at the American Enterprise Institute are saying is that some of this is that the Senate is quietly telling the administration that one's not gonna get through. So, try again with both judges and with, executive branch nominees. Is that what's going on with withdrawals?

WHEELER: No, I don't know of any judicial nominations that have been withdrawn. I note in my paper there's one nominee from Florida who was not resubmitted when the second session of Congress Senate took over. That's the only one I know about Jonathan. And it's a little hard for me to tell who's doing the judicial picking and the White House. I'm sure people more plugged in than I know and what kind of vetting they're going through. Almost all of Trump's people are members of the Federal Society, which is the conservative legal organization, but Trump is disowned. Leonard Leo, who was doing the, a lot of the judge picking in the first administration called him a. All sorts of names. I think partly because Leo is also opposed to his tariff policies.

TENPAS: Yeah.

RAUCH: And also, yes. Plus, I'm sorry. Katie Trump is not happy with the way some of his appointees at the district courts have ruled. He's been quite disappointed,

WHEELER: But all three levels they have they've not come through for us. In other words, he used, they've let us down.

TENPAS: And I would also point out, Jonathan, that generally speaking, presidents really wanna avoid a loss on a floor vote for a nominee. And so, they'd rather have them withdraw earlier in the process if it looks like the cards are not in their favor. And I'd also point out that of the 15 cabinet secretaries, only one came to Tiva, or Vice President Vance had to step in. And that was Pete. So, in the early part of the first year of the Trump administration, they had a lot, very solid Republican support for nominees that were even thought to be on the precipice. There, there didn't seem to be any problems except for the Defense Secretary.

Speaker 3: Yeah I'll just quickly add I agree with Katie that in most cases, withdrawals are not due to the Senate objecting to the nominee. There are a couple exceptions. I think the most prominent one was EJ and Tony's nomination to be the commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics when some past statements came out. But by far, that's the exception and not the rule.

RAUCH: And even behind the scenes, the quiet kind of pressure, not the public pressure. You don't, neither of you suspects too much of that is going on.

PIPER: I, I feel the Republican majority, I think, has shown a deference to the president, but there's historically been deference to presidents and who they want to nominate to these positions.

TENPAS: We've had, oh, sorry. Please, things could change over the next couple years Jonathan, as he becomes more of a lame duck and as they look to midterm elections and the prospects at midterm elections. You could see more, a little bit more strength coming outta the Senate Republican party, or more willingness to oppose the President.

RAUCH: There is a long tradition of the Senate quietly jawboning administrations on appointments and saying, look, let's not have an embarrassing accident. We've had two people ask different versions of the same question. I'll use the more recent formulation because it's a good one. What opportunities exist for a possible 2029 Democratic president to reverse the personnel policies now enforced? The way the other person put it is when a Democrat elected president will, that necessitate

an overall change in their bureaucracy in order to facilitate the new administration's policies. So how reversible or changeable are the patterns that you all are seeing, especially in the executive branch?

TENPAS: From my perspective, it seems like a lot of them have been done through executive order. What can be done through executive order can be undone by the next president who would issue executive orders, rescinding all the other ones. And I don't think that Congress has basically sat back and let him do a lot of other things that they shouldn't be letting him do. I guess it depends on the strength of Congress as an institution as well. Chris, what do you think?

PIPER: I'll just add on the appointee side. I think depending on how the Supreme Court rules, it could provide the next president with the flexibility to then remove any border Commission member or any official with a fixed term in the next administration. They'd have that flexibility to then fire any Trump appointee. There's also the career workforce that's been undermined in the past year with those 300,000 individuals who have departed. And any administration relies on the career workforce to deliver on the policy administration of the government. So, there might have to be some rebuilding and hiring initiatives to, to put the pieces back together.

RAUCH: So are we living now in a world in which what Trump too did will become a pattern where the next president coming in will realize he or she has to move very quickly with a flood of nominees and has to do a whole lot of aggressive restaffing will assume that Trump's appointees are partisan hacks and kick out as many as possible and so on. Is that the world we live in?

PIPER: I think so, and I'll also add the Biden administration also took a different approach of moving more quickly at the beginning of the administration with personnel, particularly with non-Senate confirmed appointments. They made record numbers of non-Senate-confirmed appointments in the early stage of the administration that were just broken under this term of Trump. So, I think that's a new pattern in which administrations realize they need to staff up quickly. And then there is the question of all these norms that have been broken are the next, is the next administration, regardless of party, going to go back to the norm that served as institutional check guardrail? Or do they feel freer without having to follow all of these historical norms because Trump broke them?

TENPAS: Yeah, and I would just add one more thing, which is that. One of the problems is that there's very little transparency. So, DOGE came in with its bulldozers, but it's been very hard for even news organizations as well as political scientists and others to figure out exactly what they destroyed, what was destroyed. And so, I think we really need to work hard to think about, to figure out a roadmap of which aspects of the government were shed and figure out if a future president wants to rebuild them. There was no question our system needed civil service reform. We needed meaningful change in within the bureaucracy.

The problem is that you needed sort of a scalpel. You didn't need a bulldozer. And there could have been a more insightful, like reinventing government, which occurred during the Clinton administration, where they were carefully analyzing the parts of the government that needed the most attention, and then turning to those as opposed to, using a more vengeful strategy to destroy aspects of government that they did not like or were not in their sort of programmatic future.

RAUCH: Russ, I'll ask you to conjecture, maybe it's not fair because of course none of us knows what happens after Trump. But might the pattern that we see now of judges simply hanging on because they don't want the other party to replace them doing that in larger numbers than we've seen in the past, might that become a pattern in the future, thus leading to a more partisan bench?

WHEELER: I think the question is whether or not this paucity of vacancy creation is because of the party that Trump represents or because of Trump himself. If I had to conjecture, I would say the disinclination to create vacancies for him to fill, I suspect, are based primarily on a view that trumped the person in his attacks on judges, which are really unprecedented. Does not need to be rewarded with additional vacancies. Does not so much. It's not so much the party, although Republicans are gonna create vacancies for Republicans to feel more than they're to Democrats and vice versa. But I think it's, I think a lot of it just has to do with Trump and his really just nasty behavior towards the courts that, that cross him and a disinclination to gratify him and give him more appointments to make.

RAUCH: So, a return to a more normal kind of president might lead to a return of a normal, more normal retirement pattern.

WHEELER: I, I think there's several things that I don't know how many of 'em get ratcheted back. I think on the first part, you're exactly right, whether or not the opposition, this every vote on a judicial nominee being a knockdown, drag out battle, whether that's gonna continue in the future, I tend to think it might because those things just don't get ratcheted down. And so too with this tendency to nominate two friendly states and thus avoid the need to negotiate with unfriendly senators, I think that could well be the pattern for the future as well.

RAUCH: We got a couple of related questions which both relate to competence and. And the efficiency costs of running the government the way we're now running it. One is how would you recommend vetting presidential competence of presidential appointments to ensure selection of qualified candidates? And the other is what kind of costs are we talking about when jobs go unfilled when people who are not competent have to be shifted out and other people then put in on short notice? Do we know anything about how to vet better and what the costs are of not doing it well?

TENPAS: I think in some ways it's immeasurable, right? Because if you just think about turnover at your own institution or at your university or within any private sector business organization, there are costs to turnover that, that are hard to measure. And the absence of leadership within these institutions, it makes it very difficult for any kind of long-range planning hard to budget into the future. Hard to have a rapport and a, have a decent morale within the institution so that it's highly functioning. There have been studies done that show that turnover, at least in the private sector, does cause a great deal of disruption and inefficiencies. So, there are clearly that, but I think there is it is difficult to actually quantify and come up with a dollar amount of how much damage has been done.

RAUCH: And what about the question about are there ways to institute better vetting? It's one of the themes of your report is that we're seeing more vetting for loyalty certainly more under Trump than in the past. But I would guess maybe there's also been more of that under, as other presidents recently. Is the public's confidence in the civil service and the bureaucracy has eroded? Are there ways to instate better ways of vetting in the process so that we can get qualified people nominated.

TENPAS: I think, it's really up to the senators. They're the ones that are voting on a lot of these Senate nominees, these confirmations, and they're willing to let certain nominees get through

because they passed some of the tests, maybe having to do with financial background or criminal background or things of that nature. But they don't seem to be as concerned with some say, personal transcriptions that have occurred before this person was nominated. I'm talking about defense secretary here. And they're willing to let people through who don't seem to be amongst the best and the brightest. And so, I think in the end we have the senate to blame, and the Senate would say they didn't wanna be primaried, right?

They're all focused on reelection, not all of them, that many of them are focused maniacally on reelection. And the fear of going up against Trump seems to be real because there were a lot of people in this sort of January through March, April 1st set of nominees. I actually did a small project where I was looking at the credentials of prior FBI directors of prior secretaries of state, et cetera, to try to compare sort of the credentials between prior administrations and their nominees and this current one. And in many cases there was a far cry. The people that President Trump were nominated did not seem to have the historically high level of credentials for these jobs, but the Senate confirmed them. So, in the end, the President has shown that he can pretty much get whoever he wants to serve at the highest levels of our government.

RAUCH: Chris, what, oh, I'm sorry.

TENPAS: Go. No, you go ahead.

RAUCH: The Partnership for Public Service surely must have something to say about how to improve the quality of nominees and build in some better safeguards than we seem to have. Question mark.

PIPER: Certainly. And. I'll just add to Katie's point, I think a lot of the responsibility comes through the personnel office as well of making sure that nominees have their background checks done by the FBI, that the Office of Government ethics is able to do a check to make sure that there are no conflicts of interest. And something that happened for this administration was there was a reluctance to, to sign agreements with agencies to get vetting underway, and the administration ended up submitting some nominee as without their FBI background checks completed, or their ethics office of Government Ethics, being able to do a check as well.

And that has led to problems, led to delays and can result in nominees not getting the proper background check and quality check on their conflicts of interest. So, the. It is incumbent on the president to make sure that they collaborate with those government service organizations during the transition and ensure that those steps are taken before nominees are submitted to the Senate.

TENPAS: Yeah. And I just wanna add one thing Jonathan, which is that when Chris and I talked about how there were these three external organizations that participated in trans transition, that was purely for Trump becoming the president. I should point out also that the actual transition that, that is run by the GSA, the Government Services administration, Trump was not compliant with that. There were requirements for certain signatures and so that the vetting could begin and lots of parts of the transition could get going. And they were very slow to either sign them or sometimes they didn't sign them at all. So, while he was willing to have his own set of people prepare for a subsequent administration, he was far less compliant when it came to the government's efforts to help with the transition and help to get potential nominees vet.

RAUCH: Why would he wanna slow down his own nominees by not getting an early start on, for example, background checks.

PIPER: I'll add, I think there was a belief that they didn't need to have these background checks completed by the FBI and other entities that they believed the Senate would be willing to go along with them without these checks completed. But this was an instance in which Senate Republicans wanted further government backed checking on nominees before they were willing to proceed with the normal process. And that's how things have always been done in the Senate of usually needing those background checks to be completed and paperwork completed before nominees can be cleared out of their committee of jurisdiction.

RAUCH: Yeah. Chris, one of your interesting findings, which maybe needs a little explaining, is that even though the Senate is now confirming nominees in bulk. Which has sped up the process considerably. You still note that since the first term, the average confirmation delay which is now 145 days, which is pretty darn long, has more than doubled. What accounts for this slowdown in the confirmation process? If I'm reading your results correctly?

PIPER: A lot of the delays are within committees of jurisdiction, so as nominees are being considered. By the committee that is reviewing them. Some of the delays might be due to delays in paperwork being completed or these checks being completed. So, if the Senate doesn't have everything they need to do their own vetting from the beginning, that can create delays. And then you'd have delays from Senate wanting to take their time reviewing Domini backgrounds. I think in the digital environment we are in now, there's a lot of vetting of past written statements, past tweets, any video media appearance that folks have taken all gets thoroughly checked within the Senate.

And that can cause delays. They have to schedule hearings schedule votes and all of those steps in the process can just lead to issues. And then on the Senate floor. Up until the rules change, we had a lot more reliance on the Senate needing to take individual votes on every nominee. And the Senate has to make a decision between taking time on the floor to vote on an individual nominee or vote doing any other business that the Senate wants to do. So that would also create significant delays in the process that floor time now should be shorter. Now that they have an easier mechanism to get bulk numbers and nominees through. But the committee delays remain the same, and that's where the majority of the time is spent for a nominee.

RAUCH: So, these delays are not political. They're procedural as far as you can tell.

PIPER: I think we have seen a grow of delays across every single administration. I do think there is more partisanship in the senate's confirmation process. Historically a lot fewer nominees go through on voice votes than was done in the past, but I think that's a bipartisan further scrutiny of whoever the other party's nominees are and more reluctance to give the president a high degree of deference. That was the norm in previous administrations.

RAUCH: We're coming to the end of our time. And Katie, just to warn you I'll ask you to wrap up for about two minutes on why all this matters. But one, one smaller question on vetting to wrestle. The American Bar Association used to provide a kind of informal vetting service for judicial nominees. Is that gone?

WHEELER: It was rather, in fact, it was a rather formal vetting process with a committee on the federal judiciary and can still find their ratings. The what's what, it's not gone. But the starting with the Bush administration the second Bush administration moved a BA vetting out of the White House on the theory that no, no individual group should have a special access to the nomination process. So, the A BA still does the ranking, but it does it once the nomination has been submitted and makes its recommendation to the Senate. Some people think that the people, the A, BA inter, a BA representatives interview may not quite as candid, if the nomination is already out there been submitted, and they may be reluctant to answer as candidly as they might have otherwise if the White House was just considering the nomination. So, a BA is still there. Its ranking is important. It's not good to have a non-not qualified ranking, but it's not quite the potent thing. It was earlier

RAUCH: Katie, wrap us up. Take us home.

TENPAS: Okay. I think I'll start where you started at the beginning by making the point that personnel is policy. Meaning that the men and the women that a president selects to serve at the highest echelon of government have a tremendous influence on the future of our government and the future of our country, and that we should pay close attention to them. And I think Russell, Chris and myself all continue to monitor very closely the ins and outs of Senior White House staffing of Senate nominations across the executive branch, and then judicial vacancies as well.

And, in the case of the judicial nom, I'm sorry. In the case of the nominations across the executor branch, what's really important there is to monitor that, not only to see the types of men and women that the president is putting out for confirmation, but it also tells you a lot about the role of the Senate and our system of checks and balances and the degree to which the Senate is upholding. Its advice and consent role within article two. And I think that it's important because that tells you not just about the presidency, but about the overall government and the relationship between the presidency and Congress. So, it's continue, it's important to monitor these pe, these positions.

Some people say, oh, you're just counting. The counting means a lot. If you have historical perspective, if you can go back to Reagan and say, this is how things have changed since then. Numbers in and of themselves only on 2025 don't really tell you a lot, but there is a story to be told,

and I think that the bureaucracy in our government is the engine of our government. There's been a lot of damages, administration, and we need to track it very closely and understand what's happened and where we are headed in the future. And I'm happy to open the floor to both Chris and to Russell too. They would like to add in.

RAUCH: We're, unfortunately, we're going to have to step on them because we're out of, we're out of time. But you, you put that beautifully, Katie. We get some real insight into not only the present, but implicitly the future by looking at these numbers and patterns that we see today. Thank you Chris. Thank you Katie. Thank you Russell. In the background from Brookings production team, we have Adriana and Sasha. Thank you to them too. Above all, thanks to those who tuned in today to learn more about how our government really works. We'll hopefully see you at another Brookings event soon.