

Staffing the Governor's Office: A Comparative Analysis

By Patrick Fisher and David Nice

The amount of staff support assigned to the governor's office varies considerably from state to state. Staffing levels tend to be higher in states where the scope and complexity of work facing state government is greater and in states where the Progressive Era reforms to foster direct democracy have not been adopted.

Introduction

A striking development in American politics since World War II is the growth of staff support for elected officials. Staff support for presidents, Congress, governors and state legislatures has increased dramatically, with gubernatorial staffing roughly quintupling from the mid-1950s to the mid-1990s.¹ The growth of staffing at the state level has been very uneven, however; the following analysis will seek to explain variations in gubernatorial staffing in the American states.

A variety of forces have contributed to the creation of large staff systems, including the growth and increasing complexity of governmental responsibilities, a belief that elected officials need the guidance of wise advisors, mistrust of the bureaucracy, public relations needs, officials' inclinations to keep together the team of people that have helped them in the past (in the last election campaign, for example), and officials' desire to have people who can serve as buffers and gatekeepers to absorb the anger of the public, regulate access to the officials, and take the blame for mistakes and failures.²

Large staff systems present a number of potential risks. Many critics have expressed concern over the prospect of unelected, largely invisible people exerting significant influence over public programs. An elected official may not be able to monitor the activities of a large staff very effectively, with the result that staffers pursue their own agendas. Staff members hired to help an elected official cope with a heavy workload may, by generating new proposals and added information, make the workload heavier. A large staff organization, created in part to compensate for the inadequacies of the bureaucracy, may come to display some of the same pathologies as the bureaucracy. Finally, in an era of limited resources and public cynicism about government, the cost of a large staff system may become a point of controversy, a consideration that contributed to reductions in congressional committee staffs in 1995 and reductions in and reluctance to expand legislative staffing in

some states.³ A large staff, then, presents a number of significant risks and costs which must be weighed against the possible benefits.

In an era of increasing governmental responsibilities at the state level, gubernatorial staffs play an important role in many aspects of government. Governors' staffs are involved in public relations activities, legislative liaison, budgetary analysis, monitoring agency behavior and policy analysis.⁴ Without adequate staff support, governors may be heavily dependent on information provided by interest groups, state agencies, and other outside sources whose interests may be very different for the governors'. Governors need staff assistance to draft proposals, analyze legislation that the governor may not have time to evaluate personally and assess programs being administered by state agencies.

The important role played by gubernatorial staffs implies that levels of staff support may have important implications for governors and for state policy-making. A governor with ample staff assistance is likely to be better equipped to face new demands and problems, while a limited staff may be overwhelmed by a rush of new concerns. Levels of staffing may also cast light on the political dynamics that encourage or discourage giving governors substantial staff assistance. We now turn to an examination of factors that influence gubernatorial staffing levels.

Possible Influences on Gubernatorial Staffing

A number of factors may help to shape whether a governor has abundant staff support or relatively limited staffing. Among the most likely influences on staffing are orientations toward government, the socioeconomic environment, the governor's formal power, and the task environment facing the governor's office. We will examine each of those factors in turn.

Orientations toward government influence many aspects of state politics.⁵ Two different orientations affect gubernatorial staffing levels. First, ideology

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is likely to affect staffing. Generally speaking, liberals tend to be more supportive of governmental activism, and conservatives prefer more limited government.⁶ A conservative ideological environment is likely to yield lower levels of staffing, both by providing a less supportive environment for new initiatives and by making revenue-raising more difficult. By contrast, a more liberal environment may yield more new initiatives, which will mean more work for staffers, and make revenue raising easier, which will make funding a large staff system easier.

A second aspect of orientations toward government is the Progressive tradition of direct democracy. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, many states adopted initiative and referendum provisions to enable citizens to bypass public officials and control policy directly. Those actions were prompted in part by mistrust of public officials and the belief that they would not respond to the needs or desires of ordinary citizens.⁷ If those beliefs have persisted, then states that have adopted direct democracy provisions should, by virtue of a climate of mistrust of politicians, have lower levels of gubernatorial staffing.

The socioeconomic environment may also influence gubernatorial staffing, just as that environment affects many other aspects of state politics.⁸ Two aspects of that environment, metropolitanization and affluence, are likely to be particularly relevant for staffing levels.

Historically speaking, metropolitan interests have often found governors to be more responsive than state legislatures to metropolitan concerns, although that tendency may be less pronounced since the reapportionment cases of the 1960s.⁹ In addition, the greater complexity and diversity of metropolitan areas, coupled with the weaker social controls and impersonal encounters common in urban life, make metropolitan areas a source of many demands of government generally.¹⁰ As a result, more metropolitan states are likely to produce added demands on the governor's office and a need for more staff support.

Affluence is another important aspect of the socioeconomic environment that is likely to affect gubernatorial staffing. In a relatively poor state, all available financial resources are likely to be consumed by what are regarded as vital services. Ample staffing for the governor's office is likely to seem a luxury that the state cannot afford in that context. By contrast, wealthier states can more readily generate financial resources for services and capabilities that go beyond the basic minimum.¹¹ Raising the needed funds for financing a large staff system will be considerably easier in more prosperous states,

other things being equal.

The powers and responsibilities of governors are also likely to influence staffing levels. Just as the growth of the president's role in governing the country has helped fuel the growth of presidential staff support, the increasing powers and duties of governors have created a need for more gubernatorial staff.¹² Where governors play a larger role in the budget process, the legislative process, and in making personnel decisions, for example, they will need more staff support; clearly tasks of those types generate much of the staff work load.¹³ Where governors have more extensive powers and responsibilities, then, we expect to find larger gubernatorial staffs.

Apart from a governor's formal powers, the workload placed on the governor's office is likely to affect the amount of staff support needed by the governor. Four significant aspects of that workload are likely to be federal aid, state-local spending, state population and the volume of legislation to be assessed.

A major responsibility of all governors in the modern era is intergovernmental relations. The governors' intergovernmental role takes many forms, from lobbying the federal government to participating in the administration of programs operated by more than one level of government to overseeing flows of intergovernmental grants.¹⁴ Clearly the expansion of intergovernmental responsibilities has encouraged staff expansion.¹⁵ States that receive proportionately more federal aid should, therefore, have a greater need for larger gubernatorial staffs.

In a related vein, the larger the state population the higher the levels of state and local government spending, meaning more funds to monitor and, because of the temptations that immense sums of money can cause, a greater need for monitoring. A larger state population will generate more mail, e-mail and telephone calls to the governor's office. Reaching out to a larger population will require more elaborate methods for managing public relations. A larger population, other things being equal, will include a greater variety of needs and viewpoints;¹⁶ making sense of those various needs and viewpoints will be easier with staff assistance. Moreover, when some viewpoints cannot be reconciled, the staff can sometimes serve as a buffer between the chief executives and disappointed citizens.¹⁷ Higher spending levels can also mean more agencies and programs to assess and analyze. Given that many governors have only modest interest or expertise in budgeting and fiscal administration, higher spending is likely to generate more work for the governor's staff and, consequently, create pressures for more staffing. Not surprisingly,

Table A
SIZE OF GOVERNOR'S STAFF
IN THE 50 STATES

State	Number of staff
Florida	310
Texas	266
New York	180
New Jersey	156
Louisiana	143
Illinois	130
Pennsylvania	90
California	86
Maryland	82
Georgia	77
North Carolina	76
Alaska	70
Massachusetts	70
Hawaii	67
Ohio	60
Michigan	56
West Virginia	56
Arkansas	55
Rhode Island	49
Minnesota	45
Kentucky	40
Wisconsin	40
Arizona	39
Colorado	39
Missouri	39
Tennessee	36
Washington	36
Indiana	34
Oklahoma	34
Virginia	34
Mississippi	33
Delaware	32
Connecticut	30
Oregon	29
New Mexico	27
Idaho	24
Kansas	24
New Hampshire	23
South Dakota	23
Alabama	22
South Carolina	22
Iowa	19
Maine	19
Montana	18
Utah	18
North Dakota	17
Vermont	14
New Hampshire	9
Wyoming	8
Nevada	N.A.

Source: *The Book of the States* 2004, 160.

then, states with larger populations are likely to have larger gubernatorial staffs.¹⁸

A third aspect of the workload is the volume of legislation introduced in a typical legislative session. Legislative proposals that originate in the governor's office need staff support in formulating the proposals and in selling them to the legislature. Proposals that originate elsewhere also add to the staff's workload, for the governor's policy agenda must be defended against conflicting proposals.¹⁹ Where a larger volume of legislative proposals must be developed or assessed, a larger staff system will be needed.

Data and Methods

The staff in the 50 state governors' offices ranges from a high of 310 in Florida to eight in Wyoming (see Table A). There are five other states with staffs in triple figures—Texas, New York, Louisiana and Illinois—and one other state with a staff in the single digits—Nebraska. A majority of the states (35) fall into the range of 19 to 77 staff in the governor's office with the average being 57 staffers. It is important to note that the defini-

Table B
STATE CHARACTERISTICS AND GUBERNATORIAL
STAFFING: ZERO-ORDER CORRELATIONS

	Number of gubernatorial staffers
Electoral conservatism	.20
Progressivism	-.28 (a)
Percent metropolitan, 2000	.52 (b)
Per capita income, 2000	.25
Governor's formal powers	.03
Federal aid per capita, 2000	-.25
State population, 2000	.72 (c)
Bills introduced, 2003	.68 (c)

Source: Patrick Fisher and David Nice.

Key:

- (a) .05 significance.
- (b) .01 significance.
- (c) .001 significance.

In order to measure ideology, we utilized the findings of Erikson, Wright and McIver which are based on public opinion survey data. It is the most direct measure available of how citizens regard themselves ideologically. The measure is also related to many state policy decisions.²⁰

Progressivism is measured by a Guttman scale, with each state given one point for having some sort of initiative provision (whether direct or indirect) and one point for having some sort of referendum provision.²¹ The scale's coefficient of reproducibility is .98.

Data on metropolitanization, affluence, as measured by per capita income, and population are from Census sources. A square root transformation was used to correct for skewness in state population.

The measure of the governor's formal powers is based on the governor's tenure potential, appointment powers, budgeting powers, legislative budget changing powers, veto powers, and political strength in the legislature.²² Data on federal grants per capita to each state and its localities and the volume of legislation introduced are from *The Book of the States*.²³

Analysis

The zero-order correlations between gubernatorial staffing levels and various state characteristics are consistent with some of the preceding hypotheses, but others receive little or no support (see Table B). We expected that states with more conservative electorates, as measured by Erikson, Wright and McIver would have smaller gubernatorial staffs, but this is not the case. In fact, more conservative states tend to have larger gubernatorial staffs, though this is not statistically significant. On the other hand, states with a strong Progressive legacy, as measured by the presence of initiative and referendum provisions, tend to

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Table C
REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF GUBERNATORIAL STAFFING

	<i>b</i>	<i>beta</i>	<i>t</i>
Electoral conservatism	-.013	-.036	-.318
Progressivism	-.078	-.211	-2.515(a)
Percent metropolitan, 2000	.007	.302	2.24 (a)
Per capita income, 2000	.001	-.226	-1.67
Governor's formal powers	.043	.054	.574
Federal aid per capita, 2000	.040	.084	.874
State population, 2000	.005	.487	4.34 (b)
Bills introduced, 2003	.357	.352	3.33 (c)

Source: Patrick Fisher and David Nice.

Note: $r^2 = .76$ $F = 15.23$ (b)

Key:

(a) .05 significance.

(b) .001 significance.

(c) .01 significance.

have relatively small staffs for governor, as we hypothesized.

The socioeconomic environment proves to be more consistent in its relationship with gubernatorial staffing. Staffs tend to be larger in more metropolitan states and in more affluent states, with the former tendency being particularly strong. By contrast, the formal powers of the governor are virtually unrelated to staffing levels.

Finally, two of the three workload measures are strongly related to the size of the governor's staff, with staffs tending to be larger in states with larger populations and more legislative activity. Federal aid per capita, however, actually displays a weak, negative relationship to staff levels.

Regression analysis of gubernatorial staffing levels supports the contention that the greater the size and complexity of the workload facing state government, the larger the governor's staff will tend to be (see Table C). Governors in states with large populations, high levels of metropolitanization, and high levels of legislative activity are likely to confront a wide range of problems, issues, and demands on a recurring basis and are likely to need substantial staffs.

The analysis also indicates that states where the Progressive movement left a more lasting imprint, as indicated by the presence of initiative and referendum provisions, tend to have smaller gubernatorial staffs, other things being equal. This is consistent with what we expected—states that have large staffs for governors were less receptive to Progressive reforms and their attendant suspicion of politicians.

Despite our original expectations that states with relatively liberal climates of opinion, high per capita incomes, larger levels of federal aid, and governors with strong formal powers would also have larger

gubernatorial staffs, these factors appear to be unrelated to gubernatorial staffing levels. As was the case with the zero-order correlations, ideology, affluence, federal aid and governor power were found to be essentially unrelated to gubernatorial staffing levels in the regression analysis. Overall the model is able to account for three-fourths of the total variation in staffing levels from state to state.

Discussion

Critics of big government are inclined to depict government as expanding in a relatively mindless way, at least in the sense that expansion allegedly takes place without regard for the actual amount of work that needs to be done or public sentiments regarding what government needs to do. A large body of evidence indicates, however, that the scope of government is strongly influenced by the tasks facing government and public sentiment regarding what government should be doing.²⁴ The results of this analysis are broadly consistent with the second perspective. Specifically, where governors must contend with the many demands of a larger population and the more difficult task of managing communications with a larger population, where state and local spending is higher, where a larger share of the population is concentrated in metropolitan areas and where there is more legislative activity, the governor cannot cope effectively without considerable staff support.

A significant component of the Progressive movement was distrust of politicians, a sentiment that underlay proposals to create policy processes that could bypass politicians entirely. Reformers hoped that the initiative and referendum would enable citizens to make policy directly and without the meddling of party bosses and tools of special interest groups. Ironically, some of the reformers might be appalled by the role played by political consultants and interest groups in large-scale initiative and referendum campaigns in some states today. Where the Progressives' direct democracy reforms, with their implicit distrust of politicians, have taken root, a large staff system appears somewhat out of place.

The office of governor has changed dramatically in the last 100 years, with dramatic increases in the scope and complexity of gubernatorial responsibilities.²⁵ In a similar fashion, state governments have become substantially more involved in a wide range of issues and programs during this century. Moreover, the job of governor does not promise to become any less demanding for the foreseeable future; if anything, the job will become more demanding in light of the revenue problems of many localities, efforts to

devolve power away from the federal government, and the federal government's seeming inability to make fundamental decisions on any number of issues. The result is likely to be even more demands on gubernatorial staff.

Notes

¹John Hart, *The Presidential Branch* (New York: Pergamon, 1987); Alan Rosenthal, *Governors and Legislatures* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1990), 46; Larry Sabato, *Goodbye to Good-time Charlie* (Washington, DC: CQ Press), 85; Thad Beyle, "Governors' Offices: Variations on Common Themes," in *Being Governor*, editors Thad Beyle and Lynn Muchmore (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1983), 158-73.

²Thomas Cronin, *The State of the Presidency*, 2nd edition (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), 244-46; William Mullen and Paul Hagner, "The American Presidency," in *Chief Executives*, editors Taketsugu Tsurutani and Jack Gabbert (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 1992), 1-59; Hart (1987), 45-47.

³Cronin (1980), 243-44; Edward H. Flentje, "Clarifying Purpose and Achieving Balance in Gubernatorial Administration," *Journal of State Government* 62: 161-167; Alan Rosenthal, "The Legislature: Unraveling of Institutional Fabric," in *The State of the States*, 3rd edition (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1996), 134-37.

⁴Donald Sprengel, "Trends in Staffing the Governor's Office," *Comparative State Politics Newsletter* 9: 11.

⁵David Nice, *Policy Innovation in State Government* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994); Robert Erikson, Gerald Wright and John McIver, *Statehouse Democracy* (New York: Cambridge, 1993).

⁶Lyman Sargent, *Contemporary Political Ideologies*, 12th edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2002).

⁷Daniel Grant and Lloyd Omadahl, *State and Local Government in America*, 6th edition (Madison, WI: Brown and Benchmark, 1993); Thomas Cronin, *Direct Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Alpheus Mason and Gordon Baker, *Free Government in the Making*, 4th edition (New York: Oxford, 1985).

⁸Thomas Dye, *Politics in States and Communities* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1996).

⁹Charles Adrian and Michael Fine, *State and Local Politics* (Chicago: Lyceum Books/Nelson-Hall, 1991), 247.

¹⁰John Bardo and John Hartman, *Urban Sociology* (Itasca, IL: Peacock, 1982), 101-102 and 129-30; Nice (1994), 26.

¹¹Nice (1994).

¹²Cronin (1980), 244-46; Hart (1987), 45-6, and Beyle (1983), 162.

¹³Adrian and Fine (1991), 250-51.

¹⁴Thad Beyle, "Governors," in *Politics in the American States*, 7th edition, editors Virginia Gray, Russell Hanson, and Herbert Jacob (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1999), 235-38; Adrian and Fine (1991), 255.

¹⁵Beyle (1983), 162.

¹⁶James Madison, "The Federalist Paper No. 10," in *The Federalist Papers*, by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay (New York: Bantam, 1982).

¹⁷Mullen and Hagner (1992), 31.

¹⁸Coleman Ransone, *The American Governorship* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1982), 110; Beyle (1983), 161.

¹⁹Adrian and Fine (1991), 250-51; Ransone (1982), 132.

²⁰Erikson, Wright and McIver (1993); Nice (1994).

²¹Raw data are from *The Book of the States 2004* (Lexington, KY: The Council of State Governments, 2004), 329.

²²Beyle (1999), 218.

²³*The Book of the States* (2004), 42.

²⁴Thomas Dye, *Understanding Public Policy* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2004); Alan Rosenthal, John R. Hibbing, Burdett A. Loomis, Karl T. Kurtz, and John Hibbing (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2002); Aaron Wildavsky and Namoi Caiden, *The New Politics of the Budgetary Process*, 4th edition (New York: Longman, 2001); Nice (1994); Erikson, Wright and McIver (1993).

²⁵Sabato (1983).

About the Authors

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Comparative Legal Analysis regarding CSR. Today, scholarship at the intersection of law and sociology 'decenters' the state as a locus of regulatory power in favor of a more nuanced view of various systems of control that have an impact on conduct, including law, norms, industry and professional practices, markets and even architecture (Lessig, 1999; Scott, 2003). And yet comparative legal analysis still has much to offer in understanding CSR, since the laws governments pass to encourage CSR are uniquely powerful, in at least three respects. First, the standards established by laws and mandates. A comparative analysis essay is just one of the many types of analysis essays which are aimed to teach students how to work with different materials, break them up into smaller parts and do an in-depth analysis of each element in order to arrive at a certain conclusion. Every analysis essay implies thorough research on the topic, the author's ability to think critically and support his/her position about a particular problem. Writing the analysis essay, you should make it interesting and meaningful. Comparative analysis essay may seem to be a complicated task, but if you follow all the steps mentioned. Comparative analysis can be any detailed research study or any simple decision on anything that you arrive on by having compared two or more objects. This study is often conducted to have clarity on any subject, or for taking a decision and avoiding confusion. We have designed a number of templates to comparative analysis for your convenience, so check those templates out today! 28+ FREE ANALYSIS Templates - Download Now Adobe PDF, Microsoft Word (DOC), Microsoft Excel (XLS), Google Docs, Apple (MAC) Pages, Google Sheets (SPREADSHEETS). Table of Contents: 5 Steps to Make a Comparative Analysis... This functional comparative analysis based on reports from thirty-three countries and with references to economic literature deals with the concepts, instruments (including soft law), and sources of corporate governance, and analyzes the regulation and practice of the various actors in corporate governance: mainly the board and the shareholders, but also labor, gatekeepers (in particular the auditors), the supervisors. Hopt, K., "Corporate Governance," in Brown, K. and Snyder, D. (eds.), *General Reports of the XVIIIth Congress of the International Academy of Comparative Law/Rapports Généraux du XVIII^eme Congrès de l'Académie Internationale de Droit Comparé* (Dordrecht/Heidelberg/London/New York: Springer, 2012), pp. 295-320. In comparative analysis technique, you are asked to compare and contrast two different theories, two schools of thoughts, two scientific techniques or any two historical personalities. With the help of a comparative analysis, you may find some amazing commonalities beside contrasts or differences. First of all, the comparative analysis process is bit tricky that requires careful handling as you need to sort out the commonalities from the text. For example if you are talking about autocratic and democratic rule, as already mentioned, then you have a thorough study and absolute understanding about the two. Later on, with the help of your research you might be able to restructure the commonalities and then you will be able to write a comparative analysis.