

THE RESISTANCE: THE FIRST 100 DAYS

Navigating The Deep Partisan Divide In The Administrative State



A PROJECT OF THE
NAPOLITAN INSTITUTE

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NAPOLITAN INSTITUTE MISSION STATEMENT

We recognize that the only legitimate authority for government comes from the consent of the governed. Our mission is to amplify and magnify the voice of the American people so clearly and powerfully that it becomes the driving, framing, and shaping force for the crucial conversations of our nation.

"Never underestimate the intelligence of the voters, nor overestimate the amount of knowledge at their disposal."

-Joseph Napolitan

"In the elite political bubble, Napolitan's wise advice is not only rejected, but turned upside down. Too many political elites mistakenly believe both that voters are stupid and that they hang on every word uttered in official Washington."

-Scott Rasmussen

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Napolitan Institute conducted surveys of 500 Federal Government Managers, 1,000 members of the Elite One Percent, and 1,000 Registered Voters nationwide to measure attitudes towards the early actions taken by the Trump Administration.

The surveys were conducted two months into the new Administration, from March 18, 2025, to March 25, 2025.*

The surveys documented a highly partisan battle raging within the federal bureaucracy. On many key initiatives, Republican Managers tend to think that President Trump has not gone far enough, while Democratic Managers think he has gone too far.

The results suggest that the Trump Administration will face ongoing resistance from Democrats in the federal bureaucracy. In a finding little changed since a December survey, just 16% of Managers who voted for Harris would follow a legal order from the president if they disagreed with it.

It is worth noting that the partisan response to the president's agenda would be similar, but reversed, with a Democrat in the White House.

While the surveys found little change in attitudes since December among Government Managers, there was a noticeable softening of support for the president among both the Elite One Percent and Registered Voters.

Additionally, the surveys found disturbing alignment between the Elite One Percent, Republican Managers, and Democratic Managers on regulatory attitudes. All three of those groups tend to favor more regulations and government control. Most voters take the opposite view and think things would be better with less regulation and government control.

In surveys conducted last summer, we found a similar alignment between the Elites and Government Managers on topics such as social media monitoring, gun ownership restrictions, and education. Simply put, the American people consistently think that they will be better off with more freedom. The Elite One Percent and Federal Government Managers, regardless of their political affiliation, support more government restrictions on those freedoms.

Collectively, this research confirms the view that the Administrative State is highly arrogant at best and deeply committed to pursuing its own agenda irrespective of who controls congress or the White House. The bureaucracy has little interest in neutrality or listening to voters. Not surprisingly, therefore,

supplemental research shows that 66% of voters believe the federal government has become a special interest group looking out primarily for its own interests.

**The three surveys were completed before President Trump's announcement on tariffs.*

TERMINOLOGY

The Napolitan Institute has developed a specific terminology to define various subsets of both the Elite 1% and everyday Americans.

Elite 1%: People in this group have postgraduate degrees, earn more than \$150,000 annually, and live in densely populated areas (10,000 people per square mile in their zip codes). An extremely influential group, they represent approximately 1% of the U.S. population. Members of the Elite 1% tend to place a lot of trust in government, and many are concerned there is too much individual freedom in America.

Main Street Americans: This group, representing approximately 70-75% of the U.S. population, are the antithesis of the Elite 1%. They have none of the three attributes of the Elite 1%. They do NOT have postgraduate degrees, do NOT live in densely populated urban areas, and earn LESS than \$150,000 annually. On many foundational issues, the gap between Main Street views and Elite 1% views is enormous. Main Street Americans have little trust in government, and most believe there is not enough individual freedom in America today.

Elite Adjacent: This group sits between Main Street and the Elite 1%. They have at least one of the three Elite 1% attributes, but not all of them. On many issues, their attitudes are different from Main Street views but not as extreme as the Elite 1%. One reason for tracking this group is that a credible sample of Elite Adjacent voters can be found in a standard national opinion survey of approximately 1,000 voters. Where sizable gaps on a topic exist between Main Street and Elite Adjacent Americans, it may be an indication of an especially large gap between Main Street and the Elite 1%.

Ivy Plus Schools: This refers to a list of 16 elite colleges and universities: Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, University of Pennsylvania, Stanford, University of Chicago, UC Berkeley, Johns Hopkins, MIT, Cornell, Northwestern, Dartmouth, Brown, Caltech, and Duke.

A significant portion of the Elite 1% have attended at least one of these schools at the graduate or undergraduate level. On many issues, this group holds views that are further removed from the general public than other members of the Elite 1%.

In the earliest version of research on the Elite 1%, a similar category was focused on only 12 schools. Earlier research by Thomas R. Dye found that half of the political, corporate, and philanthropic elites attended one of those 12 schools.

Federal Government Managers: For Napolitan Institute surveys, Federal Government Managers are defined as federal employees living in the National Capitol Region and earning at least \$75,000 annually.

Politically Active: These are people who talk politics every day or nearly every day. Among voters, approximately 8% talk politics daily. Among the Elite 1%, that total is generally in the 25% to 30% range. Among Federal Government Managers, approximately 13% talk politics daily.

Politically Engaged: This includes people who talk politics daily and those who talk politics on most days. Among voters, approximately 31% are politically engaged. Among the Elite 1%, that total is generally around 65%. Among Federal Government Managers, approximately 39% are politically engaged.

Politically Disengaged: People who discuss politics once a week or less. Among voters, roughly 68% fall into this category including 28% who talk politics rarely or never. Among the Elite 1%, approximately 35% talk politics once a week or less. Among Federal Government Managers, approximately 59% are politically disengaged.

To view previous reports on the Elite One Percent, please visit theeliteonepercent.org.

KEY FINDINGS

In Woodrow Wilson's influential 1887 article on *The Study of Administration*, he presented the Administrative State as a non-political structure empowering experts to resolve complex and technical issues. "Administration lies outside the proper sphere of politics. Administrative questions are not political questions."

However, a Napolitan Institute survey of 500 Federal Government Managers shows the Administrative State to be far from neutral. Instead, in the early days of the Trump Administration, the bureaucracy is deeply divided along partisan political lines.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MANAGERS

- Most Republican Federal Government Managers (52%) believe that the president's efforts to deport illegal immigrants have not gone far enough. Only 10% think they have gone too far.
 - The numbers are reversed among Managers who are Democrats: 56% say the deportations have gone too far, while only 17% say not far enough.
- A similar divide is found on the DOGE cuts. Forty-eight percent (48%) of Republican Managers say the cuts have not gone far enough, while 12% say they've gone too far.
 - Democrats say the opposite by a 60% to 18% margin.
- Seventy-nine percent (79%) of Republican Managers say cutting government spending is good for the economy.
 - Seventy percent (70%) of Democratic Managers say it is bad.
- Ninety-two percent (92%) of Republican Managers want the Trump tax cuts made permanent.
 - Seventy-eight percent (78%) of Democrats in the bureaucracy disagree.
- Eighty-eight percent (88%) of Republican Managers say the changes brought about by Donald Trump have been good.
 - Seventy-one percent (71%) of Democrats say the changes have been bad.

- Following the DOGE layoffs, most Republican Managers (55%) favor continuing to trim the federal payroll by 1% a year for ten years.
 - Sixty-seven percent (67%) of Democratic Managers disagree.

After the current round of layoffs, would you favor or oppose requiring every federal agency to reduce its total payroll by 1% a year for ten years?

Federal Government Managers		
	Republican	Democrat
Strongly favor	20%	7%
Somewhat favor	35%	21%
Somewhat oppose	28%	29%
Strongly oppose	14%	38%
Not sure	2%	6%

These gaps would not be a problem if the administrators simply implemented decisions from elected political leaders. However, that is not the way it works.

- Seventy-six percent (76%) of Federal Government Managers who voted for Kamala Harris say they will resist the Trump Administration.
 - Not surprisingly, 92% of the Managers who voted for Trump indicate they will support the administration.
- Just 16% of Managers who voted for Harris would follow a legal order from the president if they disagreed with it. Seventy-five percent (75%) would ignore the order and do what they thought was best.

These numbers and attitudes appear to be solidly entrenched within the Administrative State.

Looking ahead to the next four years, will your political efforts be primarily to support the Trump administration or resist the Trump administration?

Federal Government Managers		
	Voted for Trump	Voted for Harris
Strongly support	47%	0%
Somewhat support	45%	7%
Neither support nor resist	8%	16%
Somewhat resist	0%	35%
Strongly resist	0%	41%
Not sure	0%	0%

Imagine that you were the head of a federal government agency. Suppose that President Trump gave you an order that was legal but you believed was bad policy. Would you follow the president's order or do what you thought was best?

Federal Government Managers		
	Voted for Trump	Voted for Harris
Follow the president's order	80%	16%
Do what I thought was best	18%	75%
Not sure	2%	9%

In December, during the presidential transition, just 17% of Harris-voting Managers said they would follow a legal order from the president. At that time, 69% planned to ignore it.

This deep partisan divide among Federal Government Managers is likely to be a defining feature of President Trump's second term in office. We do not have comparable survey data from the president's first term. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that resistance to the president at that time came from both Republican and Democratic Managers.

In this survey sample, 48% of the Federal Government Managers voted for Kamala Harris, and 47% voted for Donald Trump. In the December survey, the Managers favored Harris by a 52% to 45% margin. This shift could reflect nothing more than statistical noise. It might also reflect a change brought about by Trump Administration policies.

THE ELITE ONE PERCENT

Members of the Elite One Percent overwhelmingly favored Kamala Harris over Donald Trump in the 2024 election. In this survey, 62% voted for Harris, while 34% preferred Trump. Those numbers are little changed from the December survey. Initially, a significant number of Elites who voted for Kamala Harris were willing to be supportive of the incoming president. That support has declined.

- In December, 48% of the Elite One Percent said they would work on supporting the new president.
 - Following the first few months of the new administration, only 41% still plan on being supportive over the next four years.
 - The number of Elites who will resist the president grew from 39% in December to 45% today.
- When asked to imagine that they were a Federal Government Manager in December, 49% of the Elites said they would follow a legal order from the president even if they disagreed with it.
 - That figure is down to 43% today.
 - The number who would ignore the order and do what they thought was best rose from 38% in December to 45% today.

Imagine that you were the head of a federal government agency. Suppose that President Trump gave you an order that was legal but you believed was bad policy. Would you follow the president's order or do what you thought was best?

	Follow the president's order	Do what I thought was best	Net
March 20-25, 2025	43%	45%	-2
December 9-19, 2024	49%	38%	11

In December, 48% of the Elite One Percent approved of the president-elect's performance, while 50% disapproved. In March, 47% approved of the president's performance, while 53% disapproved.

As we saw in December, there is a massive gender gap within the Elite world.

- Our March numbers show that 61% of male Elites approve of the president, while 71% of female Elites disapprove.
- By a 55% to 36% margin, Elite men say they plan to support the president rather than resist his administration.
- By a 56% to 26% margin, Elite women plan to resist the president rather than support his efforts.

It is important to note that the survey was completed before President Trump's tariff announcement. Opinions may have shifted further since that time.

On questions about DOGE, deportations, and layoffs, the Elite One Percent is more likely than either Government Managers or voters to think the president has gone too far.

- Fifty-two percent (52%) of Elites think the DOGE efforts have gone too far.
 - Twenty-one percent (21%) say not far enough.
 - Among Registered Voters nationwide, 43% say too far and 24% not far enough.
- Forty-six percent (46%) of Elites say that the deportation efforts have gone too far.
 - Twenty percent (20%) say not far enough.
 - Among Registered Voters nationwide, 38% say too far and 32% not far enough.
- When it comes to layoffs, fifty-three percent (53%) of the Elite One Percent believe they've gone too far. Seventeen percent (17%) say not far enough.
 - Among Registered Voters nationwide, 45% say too far and 21% not far enough.

Have too many federal employees been laid off, or not enough?

	Voters			Elites			Republican			Democrat		
	Voters	Main Street	Elite Adj	Gov Mng	Elites	Pol Act	Voters	Elites	Gov Mng	Voters	Elites	Gov Mng
Too many	45%	44%	46%	40%	53%	64%	18%	22%	17%	77%	66%	59%
Not enough	21%	22%	19%	28%	17%	9%	34%	29%	44%	5%	10%	16%
About the right number	18%	17%	21%	29%	23%	22%	27%	41%	38%	9%	16%	21%
Not sure	16%	17%	14%	2%	7%	6%	21%	8%	1%	9%	7%	3%

Most of these differences between Elites and Government Managers are explained by the partisan make-up of the groups. The Elite One Percent is a heavily Democratic group, while Federal Government Managers are fairly evenly divided. As a result, the answers on many questions show the Elites with views closer to Government Managers who are Democrats.

One interesting exception, however, is on the question of whether cutting government spending is good or bad for the economy.

- Fifty-six percent (56%) of Elites say cutting government spending is good for the economy.
 - That's very close to the 60% of voters who hold this view.
 - Only 17% of Democratic Managers think cutting government spending is good for the economy. Seventy percent (70%) say it is bad.
 - Among Republican Managers, 79% say cutting government spending is good for the economy.

Would cutting government spending be good for the economy or bad for the economy?

	Voters			Elites			Republican			Democrat		
	Voters	Main Street	Elite Adj	Gov Mng	Elites	Pol Act	Voters	Elites	Gov Mng	Voters	Elites	Gov Mng
Very good	26%	25%	27%	17%	23%	34%	44%	45%	34%	7%	15%	3%
Somewhat good	34%	35%	33%	28%	33%	18%	38%	40%	45%	30%	29%	14%
Somewhat bad	16%	15%	17%	23%	21%	22%	8%	8%	15%	23%	27%	30%
Very bad	13%	12%	15%	23%	13%	18%	3%	3%	1%	24%	18%	40%
No impact	4%	4%	3%	7%	4%	5%	1%	2%	4%	6%	5%	10%
Not sure	8%	9%	6%	2%	6%	3%	6%	2%	1%	10%	7%	2%

There is also one question on which the Elite One Percent, Republican Government Managers, and Democratic Government Managers agree with each other but disagree with voters.

- By a 53% to 28% margin, voters believe less government control and regulation would be good for the economy.
 - By a 55% to 44% margin, Republican Managers think more control and regulation would be better for the economy.
 - Democratic Managers agree by a 51% to 38% margin.
 - Among the Elite One Percent, 50% say more government control and regulation is better, while 40% take the opposite view.

This attitude is consistent with earlier research showing that Federal Government Managers, regardless of party, agree that the government should have more power over individual Americans.

- Forty-eight percent (48%) of Democratic Government Managers and 53% of Republican Managers believe the government should be allowed to censor social media posts.
- Fifty percent (50%) of Democratic Government Managers say parents have too much control over their children’s education.
 - Forty-two percent (42%) of Republican Managers agree.

Which of the following would be better for the economy: less government control and regulation of the economy or more government control and regulation of the economy?

	Voters			Elites			Republican			Democrat		
	Voters	Main Street	Elite Adj	Gov Mng	Elites	Pol Act	Voters	Elites	Gov Mng	Voters	Elites	Gov Mng
Less gov't control and regulation	53%	54%	51%	40%	40%	33%	61%	48%	44%	45%	36%	38%
More gov't control and regulation	28%	27%	30%	53%	50%	52%	28%	50%	55%	30%	50%	51%
Not sure	19%	19%	20%	7%	10%	15%	12%	1%	1%	25%	14%	11%

ISSUE PRIORITIES

The Elite One Percent and Federal Government Managers continue to rate both the economy and immigration as far less important than voters. They also rate climate change, education, and the state of American politics as much bigger concerns.

Government Managers also see healthcare and guns/crime as bigger issues than either the Elites or voters.

In just a few words, please let me know what you consider to be the most important political issue right now.

	<i>Voters</i>			<i>Elites</i>			<i>Republican</i>			<i>Democrat</i>		
	Voters	Main Street	Elite Adj	Gov Mng	Elites	Pol Act	Voters	Elites	Gov Mng	Voters	Elites	Gov Mng
Economy	35%	34%	35%	20%	23%	18%	39%	30%	19%	31%	20%	21%
Immigration	17%	17%	16%	7%	6%	5%	26%	10%	11%	7%	4%	5%
Trump	8%	9%	5%	-	7%	14%	1%	1%	-	13%	9%	-
War/Int'l	5%	5%	6%	5%	7%	6%	7%	10%	7%	2%	5%	3%
America's politics	-	-	-	-	10%	13%	-	6%	-	-	12%	-
Healthcare	-	-	-	9%	-	-	-	-	9%	-	-	9%
Guns and crime	-	-	-	8%	-	-	-	-	8%	-	-	8%
Climate change	-	-	-	8%	9%	12%	-	10%	8%	-	9%	8%
Education	-	-	-	7%	5%	7%	-	2%	8%	-	6%	6%
Other	32%	30%	37%	36%	33%	26%	24%	30%	31%	43%	35%	40%
No answer	3%	4%	2%	-	-	-	2%	-	-	4%	-	-

CONCLUSION

Advocates for the Administrative State present it as a neutral and non-partisan source of expertise to help guide the nation. It's a claim that has been actively promoted at least since Woodrow Wilson's influential 1887 article on the Study of Administration. The imagery offered is of non-partisan "experts" making careful decisions about the best policies completely independent from politics.

This report shows that the underlying premise of the Administrative State is false. Rather than thoughtful and non-partisan experts carefully deliberating over policy details in a neutral manner, the leadership of the Administrative State is actively engaged in hyper-partisan activity.

When compared to a survey conducted before President Trump took office, the results show that there has been no softening of partisan attitudes and polarization. This suggests that there is likely to be an ongoing battle within the federal bureaucracy throughout President Trump's second term in office.

While the partisan behavior of unaccountable Administrative State leaders is troubling, what is perhaps even more troubling is the fact that both Republicans and Democrats in the ranks of Federal Government Managers agree. While the partisans may disagree on policy applications, they tend to agree on themes giving more power to government, and to themselves, and less freedom for the American people.

There are, however, a couple of silver linings in all of these findings. First, the very public partisan battles within the Administrative State will elevate public awareness of the problem. This will likely lead to calls for increased checks and balances on appointed officials and regulators.

Second, these findings suggest a potential reversal of typical power dynamics. Throughout history, rulers have maintained power by making sure their subjects were busy fighting each other rather than uniting against their rulers. Now, Administrative State leaders may be so busy fighting each other that their chaos will lead to an opening for the clear, common-sense voice of the American people to once again be heard in the halls of power.

METHODOLOGY

The surveys for this study were conducted online by Scott Rasmussen. Field work was conducted by RMG Research, Inc.

The survey of 1,000 Registered Voters was conducted March 25, 2025.

The survey of 1,000 Elite 1% Voters was conducted March 20-26, 2025.

The survey of 500 Federal Government Managers was conducted March 18-25, 2025.

The Elite 1% are defined as those having postgraduate degrees, having household incomes of more than \$150,000 annually, and living in zip codes with more than 10,000 people per square mile. Approximately 1% of the total U.S. population meets these criteria.

These parameters were determined after the observation of numerous surveys indicated that these elite segments of the population consistently exhibited views that were distinct from the general population. For additional background information on the Elite 1%, see the report issued by the Napolitan Institute in [September 2024](#).

Federal Government Managers were defined as those working for the federal government or federal government agencies, having household incomes of more than \$75,000 annually, and living in the National Capitol Region (the D.C. metro area).

For the survey of Registered Voters, certain quotas were applied, and the sample was lightly weighted by geography, gender, age, race, education, internet usage, and political party to reasonably reflect the nation's population of Registered Voters. Weighting for political partisanship was determined through the standard Dynamic Weighting process developed by [RMG Research](#).

For the survey of Elite 1% voters, the sample was lightly weighted to reflect aggregated survey results from the three months leading up to Election Day. In this sample of Elite 1% voters, 69% were Democrats or leaned Democrat, while 26% were Republicans or leaned Republican. That is slightly less Democratic than earlier surveys of the Elite 1%. This difference may merely be statistical noise, or it may reflect a modest shift in elite views following high-profile examples like Bill Ackman.

For the survey of Federal Government Managers, the sample was lightly weighted by gender, age, and race. Forty-eight percent (48%) were Democrats or leaned Democrat, while 41% were Republicans or leaned Republican. This is modestly more Democratic leaning than the Napolitan Institute's prior survey of Federal Government Managers. In the May 2024 survey, 44% were Democrats and 43% were Republican. Once again, this shift could be merely statistical noise. The changes are within the survey's Margin of Sampling Error.

The margin of sampling error for the full sample and for the Elite Voters is +/-3.1 percentage points. The margin of sampling error for the Federal Government Managers is +/-4.4 percentage points.

It's important to note that sampling error is only one potential source of error in any survey. That's especially the case with surveys of rarely measured populations such as the Elite 1% or Federal Government Managers.