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George Washington’s Attorneys: The Political Selection of United States Attorneys at the Founding

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Impressed with a conviction that the due administration of justice is the firmest pillar of good government, I have considered the first arrangement of the judicial department as essential to the happiness of our country and to the stability of its political system—hence the selection of the fittest characters to expound the laws, and dispense justice, has been an invariable object of my anxious concern.

–George Washington to Edmund Randolph, Sept 28, 1789

“. . . I have absolute right to do what I want to do with the Justice Department.”

–Donald Trump to Michael S. Schmidt, Dec 28, 2017

Introduction

George Washington clearly understood the judiciary’s importance. Those whom he selected to fill judicial positions would establish a good government and maintain peace in the nation. As a result, he sought the “fittest characters” to fill them. As federal prosecutors can charge nearly anyone


4. See Angela J. Davis, The American Prosecutor: Independence, Power, Independence, Power,
courtesy of vague and broad criminal statutes and minimal systemic oversight. They have expanded their domain greatly since the Nation’s founding and original practices. This makes the character of federal prosecutors extremely important. Prosecutors motivated by objectives beyond justice administration can use their discretionary power for inappropriate ends.

Current political and prosecutorial norms reflect the belief that the administration of justice must be insulated from partisan politics. Each day, federal prosecutors make decisions regarding people’s lives and liberty. The federal prosecutors decide whom to charge, for what and when. They can charge


11. See Peter L. Markowitz, Prosecutorial Discretion Power at its Zenith: The Power to Protect Liberty, 97 Bos. U. L. Rev. 489, 490 (2017) (“Prosecutorial discretion refers to the power of the Executive to determine how, when, and whether to initiate and pursue enforcement proceedings” (footnote omitted)).
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anyone so long as they have probable cause to believe the person committed a federal crime. Probable cause is not a high standard. Consequently, a federal prosecutor with political ambitions is able use prosecutorial power to advance partisan political purposes. Similarly, ambitious Justice Department lawyers can use their policy-making authority to target political opponents or politically-unpopular organizations. To make this less likely, norms developed to insulate federal prosecutors from political forces.

This Article examines the relationship between the Nation’s first President and the selection of United States Attorneys. It argues that politics played an important, if not primary, role in the President’s selections. George Washington sought those who would represent the government’s interests, adhere to the government’s policies, and advance Washington’s political

12. Fed. R. Crim. P. 3. (“The complaint is a written statement of the essential facts constituting the offense charged . . . [I]t must be made under oath before a magistrate judge . . . ”); U. S. ATTORNEYS’ MANUAL 9-2.030 (U.S.A.M. 2018); MODEL RULES OF PROF’L CONDUCT r. 3.8(a) (AM. BAR ASS’N 2018); STANDARDS FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE 3-1.4 (AM. BAR ASS’N 2015).


15. See Gershman, supra note 4, at 11–16 (explaining potential political targeting of prosecutorial power).

16. See Kent, supra note 9, at 3–5; Adrian Vermeule, Conventions of Agency Independence, 113 COLUM. L. REV. 1163, 1201–03 (2013); David Kris, Presidential Norms and the Special Counsel Investigation: Disclosures to Congress, LAWFARE BLOG (May 3, 2018, 4:50 PM), https://www.lawfareblog.com/presidential-norms-and-special-counsel-investigation-disclosures-congress (stating “[t]here is a real norm of Justice Department independence from the president in the context of individual criminal cases, a real departure from the theory of a unitary executive branch”); see also U. S. ATTORNEYS’ MANUAL 9-27.260 (U.S.A.M. 2018) (listing political associations, activities or beliefs as impermissible considerations).

goals. His selections also demonstrated Washington’s requirement of loyalty to America. In this respect, the politicization of United States Attorneys occurred at the outset. Part I of this Article defines politicization and identifies its four aspects. Part II describes the United States Attorney position as understood through the 1789 Judiciary Act and state experience. Part III examines how Washington’s selections and selection process included three of the four politicization categories. The concluding Section briefly explores the ramifications of politicization and its potential benefits in today’s prosecutorial environment.

I. Modern Assault on Modern Norms

Recent presidential politics brought this norm into public view. Repeatedly, the President has shown ignorance, if not outright disregard, of these prosecutorial norms. Concerns arose prior to the President’s inauguration. One commentator noted, “[t]he soft spot, the least tyrant-proof part of the


government, is the U.S. Department of Justice and the larger law enforcement and regulatory apparatus of the United States government. In a later piece, the commentator explained:

[Trump’s] promise [to appoint a special prosecutor to initiate charges against Presidential opponent Hillary Clinton] tramples on a number of cherished norms in the relationship between the Justice Department and the White House and in the conduct of the Justice Department itself. These norms restrict presidential and departmental behavior far more than the bare bones strictures of the Constitution. They are part of our constitutional fabric and rooted in important constitutional values. But our mode of enforcing them is not legal. It is political. It is a matter of our deepest expectations of the presidency and the Justice Department.

Once in office, the President wasted little time confirming fears that he would not adhere to these cherished norms. Less than one month into his Presidency, Trump stated to then-FBI Director James Comey, “I hope you can see your way clear to letting this go, to letting Flynn go. He is a good guy. I hope you can let this go.” When Comey would not comply, Trump fired

21. Id.


Comey. This apparently occurred after receiving confirmation from Comey that Trump, himself, was not under investigation. With Comey no longer running the investigation, the Justice Department selected former FBI Director and federal prosecutor Robert Mueller to act as special counsel. This angered the President; he did not control the investigation. He resorted to undermining the investigation with tweets but did not fire Mueller. Trump’s intervention efforts were not his only norm-breaking behaviors. During his first summer as President, Trump interviewed potential United States Attorney nominees for the Southern District of New York and Washington, D.C. Presidents rarely speak to United States Attorneys, let alone conduct interviews. Former United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, Preet Bharara, endured Trump’s interview process after never speaking with President Barack Obama. At the same time, Administration critics cited a White

told-comey-i-need-loyalty-i-expect-loyalty?utm_term=.257311a8a7dc.


29. Edward-Isaac Dovere, Preet Bharara Reads Bob Mueller’s Tea Leaves,
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House Press Conference featuring Principal Associate Deputy Attorney General Rob Hur.\textsuperscript{30} This “renewed warnings of blurred ethical lines between the White House and law enforcement.”\textsuperscript{31} One former career Justice Department official noted that the Justice Department “generally goes to great lengths to maintain arms length [sic] distance from the White House when it comes to when it comes to [sic] specific criminal or investigative matters.”\textsuperscript{32} Yet, Trump went further; one month into his presidency, Trump announced that he “called the Justice Department to look into the leaks” involving phone calls he made to certain foreign leaders.\textsuperscript{33} The President has the absolute power to do these things but norms have developed over time such that the President does not ordinarily do these things.\textsuperscript{34}

Over time, Trump learned he could not “control” the Justice Department, or, at least, not as much as he wished.\textsuperscript{35} The non-prosecution of 2016 Democratic Presidential candidate, Hilary Clinton, provides the strongest example.\textsuperscript{36} His campaign promise to prosecute her for using a private email server to save national security information remains unfulfilled. The President stated:

The saddest thing is, because I am the President of the United States, I am not supposed to be involved with the Justice Department. I’m not supposed to be involved with the FBI. I’m not


\textsuperscript{31} Id.

\textsuperscript{32} Id.


\textsuperscript{34} Excerpts from Trump’s Interview, supra note 2.

supposed to be doing the kind of things I would love to be doing and I am very frustrated by it.\textsuperscript{37}

President Trump seeks to direct the Justice Department on a specific case.\textsuperscript{38} Instead, Justice Department employees frustrated Trump’s efforts, which, in the words of one commentator, was an unwitting tribute to their work.\textsuperscript{39}

President Trump’s norm-breaking approach contrasts markedly with his predecessor, Barack Obama. As a constitutional law professor, President Obama diligently observed executive behavior norms.\textsuperscript{40} For example, following a press conference on immigration, someone asked President Obama about the investigation of Maricopa County, Arizona sheriff Joe Arpaio.\textsuperscript{41} Obama responded, “I have to be careful


\textsuperscript{38} See also Bob Bauer, \textit{The Survival of Norms: The Department of Justice and the President’s ‘Absolute Rights,’} LAWFARE BLOG (Jan. 1, 2018, 10:00 AM), https://www.lawfareblog.com/survival-norms-department-justice-and-presidents-absolute-rights.


\textsuperscript{41} Interview by Jose Siade with Barack Obama, U.S. President in Washington, D.C. (Sept. 28, 2011), https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-
about commenting on individual cases. That’s handled typically by the Department of Justice or these other agencies.”  

His response came, in part, from a memo drafted by President George W. Bush’s Attorney General Michael Mukasey, outlining relations between the Justice Department and the White House.  

Mukasey wrote, “[c]ommunications with respect to pending criminal or civil-enforcement matters, however, must be limited. Therefore, the Department will advise the White House about such criminal or civil-enforcement matters only where it is important for the performance of the President’s duties and where appropriate from a law enforcement perspective.”  

Later in the memo, Mukasey described how communications would occur:

> With the exception of national security related matters, which are discussed below, all initial communications between the White House staff and the Justice Department regarding any specific pending Department investigation or criminal or civil-enforcement matter should involve only the Counsel to the President or Deputy Counsel to the President and the Attorney General or Deputy Attorney General.

This significantly narrows the communication channels between the White House and the Justice Department.

Attorney General Mukasey’s White House communications memo resulted from the last major controversy arising from political interference into Justice Department operations. In late 2004 and into 2005, the George W. Bush Administration discussed firing United States Attorneys who were not “loyal

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42. Id.
44. Id.
45. Id. at 2.
As 2006 progressed, seven names emerged. By December, the White House approved firing those seven United States Attorneys. Common traits among those fired were an apparent unwillingness to pursue specific public corruption cases against Democrats, unwillingness to cooperate with Congressional supporters, and not prosecuting a sufficient number of certain types of cases.

Legal scholars identified these rationales as undue political influence on the administration of justice. Professor Laurie Levenson asserted that the firing “jeopardized the credibility of federal prosecutors, disillusioned career prosecutors in those positions, and called into question the separation between professionalism and politics in the enforcement of our federal laws.” Professor Ellen Pogdor argued that the firings “provide a sharp contrast to the history and tradition of a nonpolitical DOJ.” Professor Sara Sun Beale examined the firings from the context of prosecutorial neutrality. She wrote:

The position of U.S. Attorney is... plainly political... Once selected, however, U.S. Attorneys are expected to leave behind partisan politics, adhering to the norm of prosecutorial neutrality. In this context, prosecutorial neutrality means, at a minimum, that the decision whether and when to bring charges in individual cases should be made without regard to either the political affiliation of the individuals.

47. Id.
48. Id.
49. See Beale, supra note 9, at 374–80; see also Richman, supra note 5, at 2100 (describing mechanisms of control over federal criminal enforcement).
involved or the resulting benefit (or harm) to either political party.\textsuperscript{53}

Professor David Driesen reviewed the firings from a unitary executive theory.\textsuperscript{54} This theory places the President over the entire Administration, thus making Justice Department political independence a contradiction.\textsuperscript{55} Driesen resolved this, arguing that a president is only justified firing federal prosecutors who do not faithfully execute the law.\textsuperscript{56} Finally, Political Science Professor James Eisenstein viewed the firings from an organizational perspective. The firings represented a repeated Justice Department process to gain more control over United States Attorneys.\textsuperscript{57} From this perspective, political influence equates with policy enforcement. If the attorneys did not follow policy, they could be removed. One fired United States Attorney, David Iglesias, concurred with Eisenstein that United States Attorney independence motivated the firings, but Iglesias insisted adhering to political wishes was not part of his official oath, instead it was to uphold the Constitution.\textsuperscript{58}

The norm against political involvement in prosecutorial decisions originated relatively recently. By the 1970s, the norm’s formation was underway, but was accelerated by President Nixon’s conduct during the Watergate investigation.\textsuperscript{59} When the Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General refused to fire the special prosecutor, Nixon fired them.\textsuperscript{60} This

\textsuperscript{53} Beale, supra note 9, at 370–71.
\textsuperscript{54} David M. Driesen, Firing U.S. Attorneys: An Essay, 60 ADMIN. L. REV. 707, 714–15 (2008) (unitary executive theory is the notion that the president has complete control over the executive branch).
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Id.} at 709.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Id.} at 727.
\textsuperscript{58} David C. Iglesias, A Prosecutor’s Non-Negotiables: Integrity and Independence, 44 GA. L. REV. 939, 943 (2010).
\textsuperscript{60} See O’Keefe & Safirstein, supra note 59.
led to a movement for career federal prosecutors who remain, regardless of which party controls the Presidency and the Justice Department.61 Prior to this, most assistants remained only as long as the United States Attorney remained.62 This dynamic created an overt connection between federal prosecutors and an administration.

The connection between prosecutors and politics vacillated prior to Nixon’s Administration.63 Nixon’s Justice Department emphasized that federal prosecutors must adhere to Administration policy and promote it through political activity.64 This is true even though the Southern District of New York, renowned for its independence, trained political operatives and used its power to undermine Democratic city leadership.65 Future Republican Presidential Candidate Thomas Dewey established his political credentials as an Assistant United States Attorney during President Hoover’s Administration.66 When Franklin Roosevelt assumed the Presidency, Dewey resigned with his mentor, United States Attorney George

61. Todd Lochner, Strategic Behavior and Prosecutorial Agenda Setting in United States Attorneys’ Offices: The Role of U.S. Attorneys and Their Assistants, 23 JUST. SYS. J. 271, 274, 286–87 (2002). Today, Assistant United States Attorneys work without any connection to the United States Attorney. Id. Assistants remain in office despite Administration changes and party changes. Id. While this insulates assistants from political preferences, it has some effects on agenda setting. Professor Lochner argues that (1) agenda setting is an inherently political act; (2) institutional structures affect prosecutorial agendas; (3) present institutional structures are ill-equipped to handle the unique difficulties and opportunities that stem from a growing league of career prosecutors. Id. Lochner argues that this makes career prosecutors hard to motivate. Id. They view United States Attorneys as political appointees who have no sense about what makes a good criminal case or what cases should be prosecuted. Id.


63. Nancy V. Baker, Conflicting Loyalties: Law and Politics in the Attorney General’s Office, 1789-1990, at 32–35 (Univ. Press of Kan. 1992) (arguing that there have been three norms of attorney general behavior: (1) independent from executive control; (2) nonpartisanship (usually emerges post scandal); and (3) loyalty to president as part of cabinet, and that attorneys general can fall along a continuum from political to neutral).


66. Id.
Medalie. Several years before this, Attorney General Harry Daughterty used his position to coerce campaign funds from German interests who hoped to regain assets unlawfully seized during World War I. Daughterty also allegedly sold pardons and refused to investigate the Teapot Dome scandal because of its adverse potential adverse. Prior to this, President Grant’s personal secretary, Orville Babcock, faced an indictment for conspiring with St. Louis revenue officials to defraud the government of millions of dollars of whiskey tax money. During one trial, special prosecutor John Henderson, alluded to Grant during closing argument. This infuriated Grant, who then fired Henderson. This impaired the Grant Administration’s prosecution of Grant’s personal secretary. Finally, when Thomas Jefferson assumed the presidency, becoming the first opposition party President, he refused to re-nominate several United States Attorneys that Adams appointed but Congress did not confirm, citing their Federalist credentials as justification. Jefferson replaced them with Republican supporters. Toward the end of his second term, Jefferson imposed an embargo on British trade that required judicial enforcement. Many United States Attorneys in the northeast offered their resignations because they refused to enforce the embargo.

67. Id.


69. Id. at 72.

70. 2 ALLAN NEVINS, HAMILTON FISH: THE INNER HISTORY OF THE GRANT ADMINISTRATION 786–90 (Frederick Ungar Publ’g Co. rev. ed. 1957).

71. Id.

72. Id. (explaining that Henderson cast one of the Republican votes against removing President Andrew Johnson from office in the Nation’s first presidential impeachment trial); see also Ralph J. Roske, The Seven Martyrs? 64 AM. HIST. REV. 323, 328 (1959).

73. NEVINS, supra note 70, at 786–90.


75. Id.


77. LEONARD D. WHITE, THE JEFFERSONIANS: A STUDY IN ADMINISTRATIVE
Attorney, George Blake, actively undermined enforcement.\textsuperscript{78} As these examples demonstrate, United States Attorneys and their assistants have long been politicized.

II. Politicization and Prosecution

\textit{Politicization} has become a code word for complaints about the government’s use of law enforcement power. When the government makes a controversial criminal law enforcement decision, critics assert that the Justice Department has become politicized.\textsuperscript{79} These conflicting accusations impede the usefulness of politicization to determine the propriety of Administration and/or Justice Department decisions. This section defines politicization by dividing it into four types, each type connecting the political process to criminal prosecution. This more nuanced definition provides insight into how politics pervades prosecution.\textsuperscript{80}

Of the different paths through which politics affects prosecution, policy likely is the most palatable. Politicization through policy uses criminal prosecution choices to advance particular policy goals. These policy goals are identified by a particular political party. Discussion about politics and policy focuses upon who should make the decision rather than whether politics is a permissible basis. Professor Eisenstein observed this during his study of federal prosecutors in the 1960s.\textsuperscript{81} He

\textsuperscript{78}. Id. at 455.


\textsuperscript{80}. \textit{See} Steven I. Friedland, \textit{“Advice and Consent” in the Appointments Clause: From Another Historical Perspective}, 64 DUKE L.J. ONLINE 173 (2015), https://scholarship.law.duke.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://scholar.google.com&httpsredir=1&article=1010&context=dlj_online; Russell L. Weaver, \textit{“Advice and Consent” in Historical Perspective}, 64 DUKE L.J. 1717 (2015) (explaining that a similar approach was used by Professors Weaver and Friedland in their debate about the historical role the Senate played in the advice and consent of judicial appointments).

\textsuperscript{81}. \textit{See generally} EISENSTEIN, \textit{supra} note 64.
saw tension between the Justice Department in Washington, D.C., and the United States Attorney’s offices, located in each federal district throughout the United States.\textsuperscript{82} The Attorney General is the nation’s chief law enforcement officer and the United States Attorney is a federal district’s chief law enforcement officer.\textsuperscript{83} For uniform law enforcement, the Attorney General must establish policy preferences because the government cannot prosecute every federal law violation.\textsuperscript{84} Presumably, United States Attorneys will adhere to the Administration’s policy preferences.\textsuperscript{85} At the same time, each district presents unique problems which the United States Attorney must address, especially those that the state cannot or will not address.\textsuperscript{86} Sometimes the United States Attorney must choose between district issues and national priorities.\textsuperscript{87} These conflicts must be resolved internally, through bureaucratic politics.\textsuperscript{88}

The magnitude and frequency of disputes between the Justice Department and United States Attorneys can be minimized by selecting United States Attorneys based upon political affiliation and ideology. This is another method for politicizing prosecution. Presidential administrations use the United States Attorney position to reward political loyalty, especially at the local level.\textsuperscript{89} Politically-motivated selection ensures loyalty. Appointees will adhere to the Administration’s policies.\textsuperscript{90} Patronage often conflicts with merit-based selection.\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{82} Id. at 4–8, 16.
\textsuperscript{83} Levenson, supra note 50, at 303–05.
\textsuperscript{84} Richman, supra note 5, at 2097–2100.
\textsuperscript{87} See id.; Andrew B. Whitford, Bureaucratic Discretion, Agency Structure, and Democratic Responsiveness: The Case of the United States Attorneys, 12 J. PUB. ADMIN. RES. & THEORY 3, 6 (2002).
\textsuperscript{88} Whitford, supra note 87, at 12–13.
\textsuperscript{89} Beale, supra note 9, at 372–73.
\textsuperscript{90} Richman, supra note 5, at 2104–05 (outlining the steps taken by Bush Administration to put loyal U.S. Attorneys in place).
\textsuperscript{91} Griffin B. Bell & Daniel J. Meador, Appointing United States Attorneys, 9 J. L. & Pol. 247, 249–51 (1993) (describing the effects of merit-
Party loyalists, even those with the proper statutory qualifications, are not always the most able. Assuming some degree of competence is desired, the question becomes the balance between political loyalty and legal ability.

Loyalty causes people to act on behalf of those to whom loyalty is owed. In a prosecutorial context, party loyalists can channel prosecutorial power to serve the interests of the prosecutor’s political party, thus creating another politicization method. To exercise prosecutorial power, prosecutors only need probable cause that a person violated a vaguely worded and broadly written criminal statute. In a world where accusations equate to presumptions of guilt, a politically-motivated prosecutor can use criminal charges to damage opposition candidates if not eliminate them. While the charges themselves might cause damage, the prosecutor must still prove the case to a jury beyond a reasonable doubt so federal prosecutors cannot stray too far from what can be proven. Similarly, prosecutors may use their position to advance particular political interests by targeting opposing fundraisers or prominent supporters. By selecting opposition interests for investigation, prosecutors are more likely to find actual crimes.

92. See Perry, supra note 14, at 142–46 (discussing different characteristics and how their interaction affects decision-making); Rickhoff, supra note 86, at 518–20 (identifying ideal characteristics).
94. See generally Lerner, supra note 13.
96. See U.S. ATTORNEYS’ MANUAL 9-27.300 (U.S.A.M. 2018) (“Once the decision to prosecute has been made, the attorney for the government should charge and pursue the most serious, readily provable offenses. By definition, the most serious offenses are those that carry the most substantial guidelines sentence, including mandatory minimum sentences.”); Larry Laudan, Is Reasonable Doubt Reasonable?, in PUB. LAW & LEGAL THEORY RESEARCH PAPER, at 295 (Ser. No. 144, 2003) (on the ambiguity of reasonable doubt); Miller W. Shealy, Jr., A Reasonable Doubt About “Reasonable Doubt,” 65 OKLA. L. REV. 225 (2013) (discussing the origins of reasonable doubt).
committed by opposition interests.\textsuperscript{98} However, criminal investigations do not always target the opposition. Presidents may find that their Administration or their political allies become the target of a criminal investigation.\textsuperscript{99} The President may respond by using prosecutorial powers as a shield, thus the fourth means of politicization. Presidents can remove prosecutors suspected of disloyalty and replace them with more loyal officers.\textsuperscript{100} They can also terminate the investigation.\textsuperscript{101}

Of these four politicization categories, policy is the most palatable to modern sympathies. Prosecution is an inherently political act.\textsuperscript{102} Presumably, these are candidates who win elections because their policy choices are more popular.\textsuperscript{103} Thus, an Administration may legitimately use policy preferences when governing, including when making criminal prosecution decisions. Patronage is less palatable than policy, though still accepted at certain levels. Incoming administrations reward top advisors with policy positions; however, the advisors should


\textsuperscript{100} See generally Beale, supra note 9; Levenson, supra note 50; Podgor, supra note 51.

\textsuperscript{101} See Mark Greenberg, Can Trump Obstruct Justice?, in PUB. LAW & LEGAL THEORY RESEARCH PAPER (Ser. No. 18-24, 2018); Josh Blackman, What Obstruction Law Applies to the President?, LAWFARE BLOG (June 6, 2018, 12:00 PM), https://www.lawfareblog.com/what-obstruction-law-applies-president.

\textsuperscript{102} See Broughton, supra note 85, at 167-69; Lochner, supra note 61, at 273; Perry, supra note 14, at 131–32.

\textsuperscript{103} Erik Luna, Prosecutorial Decriminalization, 102 J. CRIM. L. & CRIMINOLOGY 785, 797–98 (2012) (“Legislators and elected chief prosecutors serve as professional delegates of a given constituency. For representative democracy to work—that is, for the will of the people to be served by its delegates—lawmakers and chief law enforcers must be accessible to the citizenry, responsive to popular demands, and accountable for their decisions.” (citation omitted)); see generally Lawrence J. Grossback et al., Electoral Mandates in American Politics, 37 BRIT. J. POL. SCI. 711 (2007) (discussing electoral mandates finding that electoral mandates exist in the American political process).
have a high-level of legal ability. When prosecutors use their discretionary authority for partisan purposes, they cross a line. Using the legal process to achieve political advantage impugns the legal system’s apparent objectivity. Finally, administrations who use political power to shield themselves from criminal liability place themselves above the law.

III. The Political Context of Washington’s Selections

Throughout George Washington’s eight years as President, policy, patronage and partisanship played a significant role in his United States Attorney appointments. Washington understood these appointments visually represented federal government. If the people respected the appointments then the people would, in turn, respect the fledgling national government. This meant those hired had to endorse Washington’s vision for the nation as expressed in policy decisions. The people he selected had to be loyal to the federal government. They had to actively advance its political interests.

To understand Washington’s politicized selections, one must understand the political context of the time and how the United States Attorney role fit within that context. Although the issues differed, today’s sharp political divisions replicate those, which existed as Washington made his appointments. As the President noted in his letter to Attorney General nominee Randolph, selecting the best people as United States Attorneys was crucial to the new government’s success.

A. The Perception and Role of USDAs

While the 1787 Constitutional Convention left several issues unresolved, the most significant was the Judiciary.

104. Beale, supra note 9, at 370–71.
105. Levenson, supra note 50, at 309–10; Podgor, supra note 51, at 1582.
106. See, e.g., Peter M. Shane, Presidents, Pardons, and Prosecutors: Legal Accountability and the Separation of Powers, 11 YALE L. & POL’Y REV. 361, 398–400 (1993) (using the Iran-Contra investigation as an example of how Presidents can shield themselves and allies from investigation).
Congress first met in 1789 and it addressed the judicial issues. A senate committee consulted with the fledgling Nation’s legal leaders and debated the Judiciary Act’s details. One issue was the creation of federal courts in each state. With a federal district court in each state, the committee understood that the federal government required an attorney in each state to represent federal interests. The federal government created United States Attorneys. United States Attorneys had to meet two statutory requirements: (1) a meet person and (2) learned in the law. Washington

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113. Id. Despite the plethora of research on the Attorney General and United States Attorneys that references the requirement that those who hold the position meet people, the term is never defined. Historical research in other areas employs the term when quoting texts from the 17th and early 18th centuries. In a 1661 Boston General Court Decree, the Court had the power to issue arrest warrants for Quakers. Henry Cadbury, The King’s Missive, in 63 Quaker Hist. 117, 120 (1974). These warrants could be directed to the constable or, in the constable’s absence, “to any other meet person . . . .” Id. In a 1715 prenuptial document, a woman stipulated that “her self [sic] or with the [a]ssistance of [s]uch meet person or persons whom [s]he shall appoint . . . .” may control her wealth. Virginia Bernhard, Cotton Mather’s “Most Unhappy Wife”: Reflections on the Uses of Historical Evidence, 60 New Eng. Q. 341, 355 (1987). In 1677, as a pastor left his congregation, the congregation requested the pastor’s “help and advise [sic] and direction respecting a meet person for that work . . . .” Walter R. Steiner, The Reverend Gershom Bulkeley of Connecticut, An Eminent Clerical Physician, 2 Med. Libr. & Hist. J. 91, 93 (1904). From these three uses it appears that “meet person” refers to a person who will act in the place of or in coordination with someone else. The term also appears in a 19th century British sermon on the nativity by Reverend Lancelot
prepared his selections, as he was aware of the committee’s plans.114

Washington considered the United States Attorneys’ part of the judiciary. Four key pieces of evidence demonstrate this: first, traditional state practice made district attorneys judicial figures. Second, by including them within the Judiciary Act, Congress indicated its understanding. Washington had no reason to disagree. Third, in Washington's letter informing Randolph of his nomination, Washington discussed the qualities of those for the judiciary. The letter’s context indicates Washington believed those representing the government fell into this category. Finally, Washington included the United States District Attorneys in the same appointment message as federal judges.

In the years preceding Washington’s first United States Attorney appointments, prosecutors began shifting from purely private attorneys to government-appointed, sometimes by the local judiciary.115 Criminal prosecution had been largely a

Andrewes. LANCELOT ANDREWES, SERMONS OF THE NATIVITY AND OF REPENTANCE AND FASTING 23 (1878). In reference to Jesus’s relationship as a “Child” or “Son,” Andrewes uses “meet person” three times. Id. “Therefore, though two natures, yet but one Person in both. A meet person to make a Mediator of God and man, as symbolizing with either, God and man. A meet person, if there be division between them, as there was, and ‘great thoughts of heart’ for it, to make an union; ex utroque unum, seeing He was unum ex utroque. Not man only; there lacked the shoulder of power. Not God only; there lacked the shoulder of justice; but both together. And so have ye the two Supporters of all, 1. Justice, and 2. Power. A meet Person to cease hostility, as having taken pledges of both Heaven and earth—the chief nature in Heaven, and the chief on earth.” Id. In these instances, “meet person” refers to someone who brings two sides together. Id. Most likely, the Act’s drafters had some combination of meanings in mind. To stand in for someone else requires good character and trustworthiness. Therefore, “meet person,” as used in this article, refers to a person of high-character.


private pursuit. Crime victims pursued offenders through the courts, pleading their own cases in minor matters and securing the services of attorneys in serious matters. Not every crime had an identifiable victim; moral offenses often only had society as a victim. In some places this meant those offenses were not prosecuted. To remedy this, some states hired local attorneys to prosecute. In others states, the Attorney General initiated the cases. The new federal courts would not adjudicate victim crimes as most federal crimes were against the federal government.


119. Flaherty, supra note 118; Greenberg, supra note 118.

120. Greenberg, supra note 118.

121. Ma, supra note 115, at 199.

122. Id. at 199–201.

this, those who made nomination recommendations knew that those nominated would represent the interests of the United States.

While state practice served as the model for the Judiciary Act and Congress identified the new United States Attorneys as judicial officers, Congress debated who would appoint these attorneys.\textsuperscript{124} Initial drafts granted the Supreme Court appointment power.\textsuperscript{125} Later, Congress changed the provision, giving it to the President with the Senate’s advice and consent.\textsuperscript{126} While this might indicate a desire to make the District Attorneys executive officials, the judges were subject to the same process.

On September 24, 1789, Washington signed the Judiciary Act and sent most of his nominees to the Senate for its consent.\textsuperscript{127} Among these nominees was Virginia’s Edmund Randolph as Attorney General.\textsuperscript{128} Four days later, Washington wrote Randolph informing Randolph of the appointment and expressing Washington’s desire that Randolph accept it.\textsuperscript{129} Washington began by defining the characteristics he hoped those in the judiciary would possess, writing, “the selection of the fittest characters to expound the laws, and dispense justice, has been an invariable object of my anxious concern.”\textsuperscript{130} Removed from its context, this seemingly refers to judges. However, Washington then wrote, “I mean not to flatter when I say that considerations like these have ruled in the nomination of the Attorney-General of the United States & that my private wishes wd [sic] be highly gratified by yr [sic] accepte [sic] of the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{124} Warren, \textit{supra} note 108, at 108–09.
  \item \textsuperscript{125} \textit{Id}.
  \item \textsuperscript{126} \textit{Id}.
  \item \textsuperscript{128} Letter from George Washington to the U.S. Senate, \textit{supra} note 127.
  \item \textsuperscript{129} Letter from George Washington to Edmund Randolph, \textit{supra} note 1 (noting that interestingly, Washington nominated, and the Senate confirmed, many of Washington’s nominees prior to informing the nominee of the nomination).
  \item \textsuperscript{130} \textit{Id}.
\end{itemize}
Office . . .” 131 With these words, Washington indicated that the United States’ legal representatives were as much judicial figures as judges.

By nominating his attorneys, Washington demonstrated that he considered them part of the judiciary. When Washington nominated United States Attorneys, he did so at the same time as judicial appointments. 132 For each judicial district, Washington nominated a judge, an attorney, and a marshal, all of whom served the court. 133 He also nominated the Supreme Court Justices and Attorney General. 134

Compared to those with whom they were nominated, the United States Attorney position was not prestigious and was considered, at best, a second-rate position. The most reputable attorneys sought and filled Congressional and Supreme Court positions. Of the ninety-five men who served in the first Congress, forty-three had formal legal training and backgrounds, 135 two became presidents, 136 one temporarily became the Supreme Court’s third Chief Justice and another would serve on the Court, 137 one was a president of the Continental Congress, 138 and four had signed either the Declaration of Independence or the United States

131. Id.
133. Letter from George Washington to the U.S. Senate, supra note 127.
134. Id.
Constitution. Washington’s Supreme Court Justice appointments also included illustrious attorneys. Washington chose John Jay, a leader in the Continental Congress and writer of several Federalist Papers, to be Chief Justice. He also chose John Rutledge, who temporarily became the third Chief Justice. Rutledge had been a state governor and a delegate to the Constitutional Convention. James Wilson, also nominated to the Supreme Court, was a leading American legal scholar and played an important role in the Constitutional Convention.

Well respected attorneys not elected to Congress or appointed to the Supreme Court hoped for federal district court judgeships. During the summer of 1789, once certain there would be lower federal courts, people began sending Washington

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142. Casto, supra note 141, at 54.

143. James Haw, John Rutledge: Distinction and Declension, in SERIATIM: THE SUPREME COURT BEFORE JOHN MARSHALL 71 (Scott Douglas Gerber ed., N.Y.U. Press 1998); see also Elkins & Mckitrick, supra note 18, at 526–27. (explaining that Rutledge was nominated, but was not confirmed due to his opposition to the Jay Treaty).

judicial recommendations. Not knowing the legal community in these states, Washington accepted the recommendations, as most came from the state’s congressional delegation. Recommenders usually ranked candidates. The first person listed was the federal judge recommendation and the others became candidates for the United States Attorney position. Thus, the pool of potential district attorneys was limited to those not selected for Congress, the Supreme Court, or the federal bench.

Another limiting factor was the position’s financial compensation. The job of a United States attorney was a part-time position, as the United States government was one of many clients. United States Attorneys received a fee for each case they pursued. While this incentivized filing cases, some United States Attorneys were less inclined to act and later submitted bills for services rendered for work unrelated to a court case. Future Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall was one of Washington’s initial appointments. Marshall declined the appointment, however, citing his significant state-court practice. This shows that Marshall, who would become a staunch Federalist, did not believe the federal courts and the position’s compensation were worth his time.

146. See infra IV(A).
147. Id.
152. Letter from George Washington to the U.S. Senate, supra note 127.
B. Types of “Politics” When Hiring

President George Washington began to experience partisan turbulence similar to today’s political atmosphere. Unlike today’s deeply entrenched allegiances, partisan political alliances formed and mutated during Washington’s presidency. Hoping to stay above the political fragmentation, Washington navigated these changes to fulfill his particular political objectives.\textsuperscript{154} The first divide Washington encountered arose between the Constitution’s supporters and detractors.\textsuperscript{155} Once the federal government began operating, its detractors turned to constitutional interpretation.\textsuperscript{156} Republicans pushed for a strict, narrow interpretation, along with some who favored the Constitution, giving the federal government little authority beyond the Constitution’s specific wording.\textsuperscript{157} Their opponents favored a more expansive constitutional interpretation that gave the federal government powers implied in the constitution’s wording.\textsuperscript{158}

Having served as the Constitutional Convention’s presiding officer, Washington identified with Constitutional federalists, or those who supported ratifying the new Constitution.\textsuperscript{159} He had agreed to serve this function because his experience as the Continental Army’s Commander-in-Chief gave him a national perspective.\textsuperscript{160} His post-war commercial business interests required interstate commerce and he understood the need for

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{154} John Ferling, \textit{The Ascent of George Washington: The Hidden Political Genius of an American Icon} xix–xxi (Bloomsbury Press 2009).
  \item \textsuperscript{157} Christian G. Fritz, \textit{American Sovereigns: The People and America’s Constitutional Tradition before the Civil War} 155–56 (Maeva Marcus et al. eds, Cambridge Univ. Press 1st ed. 2008).
  \item \textsuperscript{158} Id. at 150–51.
  \item \textsuperscript{159} Ferling, supra note 154, at 267–68.
  \item \textsuperscript{160} Id. at 262–67.
\end{itemize}
national regulation, a power the Articles of Confederation lacked. However, Washington also knew that the anti-federalists feared a centralized national government and identified themselves more closely with their respective states. His appointments had to balance these interests. He sought people with strong local reputations who also supported the new national government. Therefore, Washington chose constitutional federalists with his initial government personnel selections.

This initial divide did not last long as the Constitution’s opponents quickly accepted its legitimacy. Unity did not result, however, as competing constitutional interpretations emerged, most noticeably from within Washington’s administration. Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton led the Federalists, or those supporting an expansive constitutional interpretation. Meanwhile, Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson led the opposition to Hamilton’s centralization of executive branch power. Washington generally sided with Hamiltonian Federalists, Hamilton served Washington during the Revolutionary War and, despite some differences, Washington supported Hamilton’s philosophy.

161. Id. at 258–61.
162. Id. at 270–73; see also GORDON S. WOOD, EMPIRE OF LIBERTY: A HISTORY OF THE EARLY REPUBLIC, 1789-1815, at 75–76 (David M. Kennedy ed., Oxford Univ. Press 2009).
164. WOOD, supra note 162, at 106–10.
166. FRITZ, supra note 157, at 150–55.
170. CHERNOW, supra note 168, at 395.
171. FERLING, supra note 154, at 282–84.
with these preferences, Washington’s later United States Attorney appointments aligned with Hamiltonian Federalists to ensure enforcement of Hamilton’s legislative agenda.172

IV. The Process, the Prosecutors, and Politicization

Against these political backdrops, Washington made his initial attorney selections and, as time passed, selected replacements when necessary. To make each appointment, Washington relied upon others in the government and others he trusted to provide recommendations. Following these recommendations, Washington would select someone and then send the nomination to the Senate. His selections shared certain characteristics, especially in terms of age, experience, and personal connections. These similarities resulted in a group loyal to Washington and his policies.173

A. Process

Even before George Washington assumed the Presidency, those hoping to work for the new federal government wrote seeking appointment, mostly for Treasury and public works positions.174 Nearly all involved Treasury and public works positions.175 There were more jobs and more applicants than people whom Washington knew.176 This required Washington to rely upon other’s recommendations. Reputation played a particularly important role;177 it equated to political currency.178 Knowing that the fittest characters were necessary for the judiciary to earn its desired respect, Washington utilized a

172. See infra notes 366–396 and accompanying text.
175. WOOD, supra note 162, at 108–109.
176. Id. at 108–09.
178. Id.
similar process whereby he sought recommendations from people he knew.\(^{179}\)

On September 24th and 25th, Washington nominated thirteen United States Attorneys, the Attorney General, and all federal judges.\(^{180}\) The Senate confirmed each appointment on the 26th.\(^{181}\) Washington would appoint twenty more people as United States Attorneys during the next eight years.\(^{182}\) All

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Age at Appointment</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Years in Office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christopher Gore</td>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Lithgow</td>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Samuel Sherburne</td>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierpont Edwards</td>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Lewis</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Read, Jr.</td>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Potts</td>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Marshall</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Julius Pringle</td>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew McAllister</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Nicholas</td>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Harison</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6*</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Stockton</td>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Does not count years of experience prior to Declaration of Independence.


181. 1 Journal of the Executive Proceedings of the Senate of the United States of America 29 (Duff Green 1828) (1789), https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llej&fileName=001/llej001.db&recNum=35&itemLink=%23230010036&linkText=1 [hereinafter Senate Executive Journal].

182. The table below lists those who Washington nominated for United States Attorney throughout the remainder of his tenure in office:
but three replaced one of Washington’s initial appointments. In each instance, like Washington’s initial appointments, the Senate confirmed the nominees quickly.\textsuperscript{183}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Age at Appointment</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Years in Office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Sitgreaves\textsuperscript{*}</td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Channing\textsuperscript{*}</td>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Jacobs\textsuperscript{*}</td>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Davis</td>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Davis</td>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwards St. Loe Livermore</td>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Rawle</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zebulon Hollingsworth</td>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Nelson, Jr.</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Parker</td>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Jackson</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Murray</td>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abraham Ogden</td>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Hill</td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray Greene</td>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amos Marsh</td>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Campbell</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Woodruff</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Woods</td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Nelson</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{*}Although listed with replacements, these attorneys were the first for their state. Their states did not ratify the Constitution until after Washington made his initial appointments.


183. See Journal of the Executive Proceedings, supra note 181 (stating that all of Washington’s nominees were confirmed within one week of nomination and most were within one to two days following nomination). While Professor Friedland asserts that this shows the Senate did not provide
One of the first recommendations Washington received came from George Thacher, an attorney and Congressman from Maine.\textsuperscript{184} Thacher sided with the Federalists and remained in Congress until 1801.\textsuperscript{185} Thacher wrote Washington on September 14\textsuperscript{th}, 1789 saying:

I take the liberty of handing to you the names of two Gentlemen either of whom in my opinion will make a respectable District Judge for the District of Maine—viz. the Honourable David Sewal & William Lithgow Junr. The former was appointed one of the Judges of the Supreme Judicial Court, for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, about the year 1776—which office he has sustained to the present time—He lives at York in the District of Maine.

The latter is a respectable Attorney at Law of about thirteen years standing he lives at Hollowel on Kennebeck River[.] He served four or five years in the Army—where he lost the use of his right arm by a ball he received [sic] in an engagement with the enemy—He is now Major General of the Militia in the eastern Division of Massachusetts.

Should the former be appointed Judge in Maine District—the latter appears to me the most suitable person in that District for the Attorney to the United States in the said District—But if the latter be appointed Judge, I wish to mention Daniel Davis of Portland as a suitable person for the Attorney in that District.\textsuperscript{186}


\textsuperscript{185} Id.

Washington followed Thacher’s advice and appointed Sewall as judge and Lithgow as attorney. This demonstrates the role advise and consent played in the selection process. Washington made only one visit to Maine and likely knew little about its legal community. Therefore, Washington relied on those familiar it. No one else in Congress would be familiar with Maine’s legal community because, at that time, it was a District within Massachusetts; Maine did not have its own senator. Therefore, no one in Congress could credibly question Thatcher’s judgment. There was no need for further inquiry; they trusted their colleague’s judgment.

North Carolina provides another example of Washington’s consultations prior to making an appointment. When North Carolina ratified the Constitution in the fall of 1789, it meant Washington had more positions to fill. He received recommendations from as many of the North Carolina Congressional delegation as would provide them. Four North Carolina Representatives provided advice, but no Senator did. When the recommendations arrived, Washington tasked

187. Letter from George Washington to the U.S. Senate, supra note 127.
188. See Ferling, supra note 154, at 287 (noting that just before making his nominations, Washington journeyed to the New England states reaching as far north as Kittery, Maine, his journey taking him a month to complete, which did not give him significant time in any one place).
189. Maier, supra note 155, at 161–62 (discussing Maine as part of the Massachusetts constitutional ratification convention).
Jefferson with summarizing them. Four United States Attorney candidates emerged. Representative Timothy Bloodworth, an anti-Federalist during ratification but elected to serve in the First Congress, recommended four people, more than any other recommender. His list included the eventual nominee, John Sitgreaves, whom John Ashe also mentioned. Ashe had served as chair of North Carolina’s ratification convention, but was opposed to the Administration. When Jefferson collected the names, he consulted one of North Carolina’s Senators, Benjamin Hawkins, for his thoughts on the candidates. Hawkins served on Washington’s staff during the Revolutionary War and supported the Constitution’s ratification. According to Jefferson, Hawkins vouched for all candidates but one, who was under indictment for fraud. The others possessed good character but, of Sitgreaves, Hawkins said, “he is a gentlemanly man, & as good a lawyer as any there.” With that, plus Ashe’s concurrence and Bloodworth’s acquiescence, Sitgreaves received the nomination. This demonstrates that when Washington lacked knowledge about whom to appoint, he relied upon the State’s elected officials and deferred to their opinions while seeking consensus. North
Carolina also provides evidence that Washington relied more upon those who shared his views than those who did not. While Bloodworth names Sitgreaves, the nomination was not made until Hawkins lent his support.

B. Salient Nominee Characteristics

At least twenty-six pieces of correspondence remain discussing United States Attorney nominees. While Washington wrote a few, most were sent to the Administration providing attorney recommendations. These letters provide insight into the characteristics Washington and the recommenders considered most salient. Anyone recommended to Washington had to meet the statutory requirements, so it is not surprising that legal and character factors were most common. Legal factors appeared in all twenty-six recommendations and character in twenty.

Three different legal factors emerged: (1) legal knowledge, (2) talent, and (3) experience. Rarely, however, did they provide detail about the factors. For example, in the summer of 1792, Maryland’s United States Attorney resigned, forcing the Administration to select a replacement.203 William Vans Murry, an attorney and Congressman from Maryland aligned with the Hamilton Federalists, recommended the person Washington selected saying, “[a] long acquaintance with him enables to say that he is a man of integrity; & I conceive of parts exceedingly brilliant, with a knowledge of his profession which has raised his consequence at the bar . . . .”204 In Rhode Island, where appointments were hotly contested, the nominee for District Judge wrote Vice President Adam about the eventual nominee, “I do not know where are [sic] Atty for the District can be found so worthy of Attention as Mr. Wm. Channing:—In extensive Practice and Law Knowledge scarcely equalled, inferior to none—His Name & Family will be well known to the President

upon recollection . . .”).\footnote{Letter from Henry Marchant, Dist. Judge, U.S. Dist. Court for the Dist. of R.I., to John Adams, U.S. Vice President (June 7, 1790), http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-0976.} Channing, who had served as Rhode Island Attorney General, exemplifies the importance of experience with knowledge.\footnote{See Letter from William Channing to George Washington, U.S. President (June 8, 1790), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-05-02-0307.} Finally, Congressman Ashe’s recommendation of Sitgreaves as United States Attorney for North Carolina revealed the distinction between legal experience and ability.\footnote{See Letter from John B. Ashe to George Washington, supra note 191.} Ashe said Sitgreaves, “has [practiced] the Law for some years past in No. Carolina, tho’ [sic] not so brilliant in abilities, Stands as a favorably as to rectitude of mind, as any of his profession.”\footnote{Id. (footnote omitted).} While Ashe and others distinguished, Washington apparently did not.

Legal experience also played a key role. Washington’s selections averaged eleven years of experience prior to selection. Of Washington’s initial nominees, only four had less than ten years’ experience. Two had eight and nine years respectively. The other two—Delaware’s George Read and New Jersey’s Richard Stockton—had four and five years.\footnote{Christian Gullager, Office History: A Rich History of Public Service, U.S. DEPT OF JUST.: U.S. ATT’YS OFF., DISTRICT OF N.J., https://www.usao-nj/about/officestory.html (last visited May 8, 2018) [hereinafter Read, Jr.]; Jim Meek, George Read, Jr. (1765-1836), NEW CASTLE, DEL. COMMUNITY HIST. & ARCHAEOLOGY PROGRAM, http://nc-chap.org/portraits/details.php?wname=george_read_jr_wertmuller (last visited Nov. 6, 2018).} As for the replacements, less is known about their prior experience. Thomas Parker of South Carolina entered office with the least experience (seven years), but he remained for twenty-eight years, the longest tenure of any Washington appointee.\footnote{See Letter from Tobias Lear to Thomas Jefferson, U.S. Sec’y of State (Oct. 26 1792), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-11-02-0146.} At the other end, Abraham Ogden, who quickly replaced Stockton in New Jersey, had twenty-three years of experience when he assumed the role, the most of any Washington nominee.\footnote{William Ogden Wheeler, THE OGDEN FAMILY IN AMERICA: ELIZABETHTOWN BRANCH AND THEIR ENGLISH ANCESTRY: JOHN OGDEN, THE PILGRIM AND HIS DESCENDANTS 1640-1906, at 103–04 (Lawrence Van Alstyne.
total, all of Washington’s nominees, with the possible exceptions of Read and Stockton, practiced long enough to establish legal reputations.

Character played a part in twenty of the twenty-six recommendations. Several different traits emerged. Some spoke of character generally. When Congressman Timothy Bloodworth recommended Sitgreaves, he wrote, “[Sitgreaves] is a gentleman of [c]arrecter [sic] & represented the State in Congress in the [y]ear 1785.”212 Others provided more detail. For example, Ashe referred to Sitgreaves as having “rectitude of mind,” meaning that he did what was proper.213 In Georgia, Washington’s eventual nominee for District Judge, Nathaniel Pendleton, wrote to Washington recommending Matthew McAllister as the United States Attorney.214 Pendleton referred to McAllister as “a man of [s]trickt [sic] honor and [i]ntegrity . . . very well qualified to fulfil [sic] the duties of the [o]ffice he solicits if he should be appointed to it.”215 Washington used this information to conclude his appointees were meet people, learned in the law.

C. Politicization

While legal training and character were the statutory requirements, Washington did not select people on this basis alone. Instead, he selected people based on their politics. First and foremost, these were political patronage positions. Nearly every person selected had served Washington or had a close connection to the recommender. Able lawyers were not selected because they lacked the requisite connections. Second, those Washington selected matched Washington’s policy goals. If there was no evidence that they supported the Constitution prior to ratification or had not demonstrated loyalty to the Republic

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212. Letter from Timothy Bloodworth to George Washington, supra note 191.
213. Letter from John B. Ashe to George Washington, supra note 191.
215. Id.
in some other manner, then Washington did not select them. Finally, and while not the case in every instance, many of Washington’s nominees supported Washington’s partisan interests. They were loyal Federalists.

1. Patronage

Nearly every person Washington appointed as a United States Attorney was a political patronage position. They had a direct connection to Washington or were one step removed from him so that a trusted recommender identified them. Those whom Washington knew either came from prominent families or had served the Revolution. Among the patronage selections, two were most obvious: Delaware’s George Read and New Jersey’s Richard Stockton. Both were among Washington’s first nominees, had less legal experience than any other nominee, and were the youngest of any Washington nominee. They shared one other common trait: their fathers were two of only six people who signed both the United States Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution. Having nothing else merit their selection, their selection was clearly a reward for their fathers’ loyalty and service.

216. See generally Domonic A. Bearfield, What Is Patronage? A Critical Reexamination, 69 PUB. ADMIN. REV. 64, 68–69 (2009) (Patronage has a variety of meanings. At minimum, it involves a relationship between people with unequal status who participate in an exchange relationship and is anchored only loosely to law or norms. Bearfield identifies four patronage styles. Organizational patronage strengthens or creates political organizations. Democratic patronage uses patronage to achieve democratic goals. Tactical patronage uses public offices to achieve political or policy goals. Finally, reform patronage uses public offices as a means to replace the disfavored previous regime. At the time Washington made his appointments, patronage meant the selection of close family members to important positions in order to maintain power.); ELKINS & MCKITTRICK, supra note 18, at 52–55. For purposes of this article, patronage refers to the more modern conception.


219. Despite their similarities, their service as United States District Attorneys differed substantially. Read went on to become one of the longest serving United States Attorneys while Stockton remained only one year See
For several other nominees, Washington utilized his professional and personal knowledge. One, John Davis of Massachusetts, served in the Treasury Department during Washington’s presidency and another, Daniel Davis of Maine, served as de facto United States Attorney when William Lithgow could not. Two nominees served in the Revolutionary War: Lithgow and North Carolina’s John Sitgreaves. While neither fought under Washington’s direct command, both demonstrated their loyalty. Lithgow’s service cost him the use of one arm.

Others did not fight in the war, but provided assistance. New Jersey’s Abraham Ogden lent his residence to Washington’s army following the Battle of Princeton. William Channing, Rhode Island’s first United States Attorney, had assisted Washington in 1781.

Those whom George Washington did not know had well-established political connections that aided their nominations. Several had connections to Administration members. Richard


223. See John Francis Sprague (Ed.), Sprague’s Journal of Maine History (Vol. XIV, No. 2), ME. COLLECTION 31 (1926).

224. Wheeler, supra note 211, at 103–04.

Harrison, who received the appointment for New York, worked closely with Alexander Hamilton in the matter of Vermont independence and New York’s Constitution ratification convention. John Julius Pringle received South Carolina’s first United States Attorney nomination. During the Revolution, he studied law in London then left for France, becoming the United States consul for France Ralph Izard’s personal secretary. While in France, Pringle volunteered to meet with the British and negotiate the release of captured American seamen. The selection committee, on which future Vice-President John Adams served, chose Pringle. Back in the United States, Pringle studied law under one of Washington’s initial United States Supreme Court nominees. Kentucky’s first nominee, George Nicholas, knew James Madison well, who, at that time, was one of Washington’s closest advisors. Nicholas played a key role in Virginia’s ratification debates and


227. See Letter from George Washington to the U.S. Senate, supra note 127.


229. Letter from John Julius Pringle to Benjamin Franklin et al., supra note 228.

230. Id. at n.1.

231. My Ancestors, supra note 228.

in Kentucky’s statehood movement.\footnote{George Nicholas (ca. 1754–1799), supra note 232.}

Pennsylvania’s two United States Attorneys during Washington’s Administration demonstrated the importance of political connections. The first nominee was William Lewis, a Quaker who studied law under a prominent Quaker attorney in Philadelphia.\footnote{Id. at 4.} When Lewis earned his bar admission, his teacher retired, leaving his practice to Lewis.\footnote{Id. at 20–21.} This gave Lewis the freedom to represent causes that were important to him, including representing Quakers accused of treason in the years immediately following independence.\footnote{Id. at 9–10; John Fabian Witt, Patriots and Cosmopolitans: Hidden Histories of American Law 15–16 (Harvard Univ. Press 2007).} This work connected him with James Wilson, one of six people to sign both the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.\footnote{Witt, supra note 237, at 16.} Wilson was a leading legal scholar when Washington nominated him to the Supreme Court.\footnote{Letter from George Washington, U.S. President, to the U.S. Senate (Oct. 31, 1791), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-09-02-0077).} While no record remains, Wilson likely recommended Lewis to Washington. However, Lewis remained less than a year because Washington’s Pennsylvania District Court Judge appointee died, allowing Lewis to receive the district judge nomination.\footnote{Id.}

To replace Lewis, Washington nominated William Rawle.\footnote{Id.} Rawle was a Philadelphia native and Quaker who remained loyal to the British during the Revolution.\footnote{Id.} He escaped to New York when the British abandoned Philadelphia.\footnote{Id.} While in New York, Rawle studied law and then went to London for further legal study.\footnote{Id.} In 1782, Rawle returned to Philadelphia and was later admitted to the bar in 1783.\footnote{Id.} Rawle subsequently joined

\footnotesize{
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{George Nicholas (ca. 1754–1799), supra note 232.}
  \item George C. McFarland, Jr. et al., William Lewis, Esquire: Enlightened Statesman, Profound Lawyer, and Useful Citizen 3 (Diane Publ’g Co. 2012).
  \item Id. at 4.
  \item Id. at 20–21.
  \item Id. at 9–10; John Fabian Witt, Patriots and Cosmopolitans: Hidden Histories of American Law 15–16 (Harvard Univ. Press 2007).
  \item Witt, supra note 237, at 16.
  \item Id.
  \item Id.
  \item Id.
  \item Id.
  \item Id.
\end{itemize}
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the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, which connected Rawle to Lewis. 245 When Rawle received his appointment, he noted he had not solicited it; someone else recommended Rawle to Washington. 246 It is most likely that Lewis recommended Rawle. The two worked together closely prior to and after Rawle’s appointment. 247

Finally, New England politics influenced Washington’s selections. Those recommended to Washington had to be on the “right” side of the state’s political alliances. New Hampshire and Rhode Island proved the most contentious positions. New Hampshire politics featured a battle between those living along the coast and those living inland. 248 The groups advocated joining the new federal government but divided over who should serve in the government. 249 At first, the coastal faction prevailed so Samuel Sherburne, a political operative for the coastal faction, received the initial appointment. 250 This faction later opposed Administration policies. 251 Sherburne remained in office until 1793 when he became a member of the United States House of Representatives. 252 Edwards St. Loe Livermore, whose


249. See Turner, supra note 248, at 121, 142 (explaining the origins of the divide in New Hampshire, stating “[n]othing except vague and conflicting personal antagonisms divided the leaders of New Hampshire in 1792. Within a few months, however, these men were to find themselves arrayed in hostile ranks under banners inscribed Federalist and Republican, fighting at the side of other men with whom, in many cases, they had exchanged heavy blows during the paper-money struggle or at the ratifying convention.”).

250. Id. at 103; Letter from George Washington to the U.S. Senate, supra note 127.

251. Turner, supra note 248, at 143.

father was a prominent New Hampshire judge from the inland faction, replaced Sherburne. This group adhered to the Washington Administration’s political positions.

Rhode Island politics revolved around commerce because of its two major ports, Providence and Newport, each of which had its own faction. The two factions sought consensus selections for federal appointments. If one person aligned too closely with one side, then that person was eliminated from consideration. When William Channing, Rhode Island’s first


254. TURNER, supra note 248, at 143.


256. Id.

257. Id.


Formerly, by being a Colleague in Congress with Mr. Howell, I became well acquainted with him, but since that time I have not often seen him. He has for some years studied and practiced [sic] Law, and his professional knowledge may be competent to the business of District Attorney; but it is apprehended, if he should be appointed to that Office, and a dispute should arise between the United States and certain mercantile houses in Providence, his connections by marriage, and the patronage and encouragement he has received from them, might give him a bias to their side. In a similar case the Merchants in Newport might not hope to receive any favor from him. . . . With Mr. Barnes I have but a slight acquaintance. He married into a respectable family in Providence where he resides; but it is not probable that he would be biased [sic] by his connections in that town to the disadvantage of the United States. . . . But as this affair having assumed a party complexion, has suggested an inquiry, whether there may not be a third character competent, eligible, and who would not be liable to a similar difficulty, I would mention our Senator Bradford and our Representative Bourn, was I not informed that neither of them would accept the Office. There is a young Gentleman,
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United States Attorney, died, a contentious debate arose over his replacement.259 One candidate, David Howell, promoted himself to Jefferson who, in turn, lobbied Washington to appoint Howell.260 Howell, a Providence law professor, also had support from some prominent local citizens.261 Howell’s political opponents proffered David Barnes, a Massachusetts attorney who relocated to Rhode Island.262 Rhode Island’s political factions finally settled on Ray Greene.263 In the 1780s, Greene’s father had been Rhode Island’s Governor.264 His mother had been a Correspondent with Ben Franklin.265 Greene was from Warwick, a neutral site between Providence and Newport.266 With this background, he appeased everyone.

2. Policy

Washington entered office with particular policy goals. One was to make the new federal government respected

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Mr. Ray Greene, who I think would be agreeable to both parties.

*Id.* (footnotes omitted).


265. *Id.*

domestically. To accomplish this, Washington sought people who would enforce the laws, but also respect local sensibilities. The first nominees had strong connections to the newly ratified Constitution, especially if they lacked a political patron vouching for their loyalty. Two key pieces of evidence demonstrate that Washington only selected those who favored nationhood. First, most whom he initially selected served at their State’s ratification convention and supported the Constitution. Second, those whom Washington selected came of age during the independence movement, thus spending little of their life as colonists.

Of Washington’s initial thirteen United States Attorney positions, four supported the Constitution at their respective state’s ratification convention. Future Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall led the Constitution’s supporters at the contentious Virginia ratification convention. Likewise, Christopher Gore of Massachusetts was a vocal supporter who led the opposition to antifederalist John Hancock. In Connecticut, Pierrepont Edwards, the son of prominent minister Jonathan Edwards and uncle of Aaron Burr, had served in the Continental Congress and at the ratification convention. Finally, Maryland’s Richard Potts supported the Constitution at Maryland’s convention.

267. Sharp, supra note 156, at 17–27.
268. Fritz, supra note 157, at 72–74, 79 (arguing the Administration’s response to the Whiskey Rebellion was based on a desire to assert and demonstrate the federal government’s law enforcement power); Wood, supra note 162, at 72–74 (noting that the executive would be the energetic center of the government).
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At least two of Washington’s subsequent appointees also served their state’s ratification conventions: John Sitgreaves and John Davis. John Sitgreaves, North Carolina’s first nominee in 1790, supported ratification during North Carolina’s final convention.\textsuperscript{274} John Davis, who succeeded Gore in Massachusetts, also was a delegate to his state’s convention.\textsuperscript{275}

Support for the Constitution as a prerequisite clearly appears in the debate about Maryland’s second United States Attorney. Two of Washington’s initial Maryland nominees did not accept their commissions.\textsuperscript{276} Potts, the United States Attorney nominee, delayed conveying his acceptance and ultimately resigned in 1792, citing the distance he lived from court.\textsuperscript{277} This forced Washington to find a replacement; Washington turned to James McHenry.\textsuperscript{278} McHenry responded, “[i]t is to be lamented that the best qualified man in the State is the last person who merits this appointment. I mean Mr. Luther Martin. Very few of his description have so far altered their principles as to be safely trusted with power.”\textsuperscript{279} Martin had been a delegate to Maryland’s ratification convention but left in protest and actively opposed ratification.\textsuperscript{280} McHenry clearly equates support for the Constitution with meriting appointment. Those who did not support the Constitution could

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\item Davis, John, supra note 220.
\item Letter from George Washington, U.S. President, to James McHenry, U.S. Sec’y of War (Nov. 30, 1789), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-11-02-0002 (explaining that Judge Harrison declined his Supreme Court nomination and Johnston declined his district judge position).
\item Id. (“I have no information of Mr [sic] Potts, the Attorney . . . having accepted their Commissions”); Letter from Richard Potts to George Washington, supra note 203.
\item Letter from James McHenry to George Washington, supra note 278; see also Maier, supra note 155, at 90–93 (regarding Luther Martin).
\item Letter from James McHenry to George Washington, supra note 278, at n.7.
\end{enumerate}
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not be entrusted to represent the federal government’s legal interests.

Washington also used age as an indicator of loyalty to the nation, rather than the thirteen individual states. Of Washington’s first thirteen United States Attorney nominees, only one was born prior to 1750. His nominees averaged thirty-three years old. This coincides with Washington’s cabinet selections. Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton, Attorney General Edmund Randolph and Secretary of War Henry Knox were also born in the 1750s. This becomes significant when related to the nation’s independence. By the late 1760s and into the early 1770s, the colonists pushed toward independence. At that time, Washington’s eventual nominees were studying law and becoming adults. They only knew the wish for independence and did not recall peaceful times as colonists. By war’s end, they were solidifying their place in the new Nation’s political circles. Therefore, national interests preceded state interests simply because the nominees better accepted the possibilities nationhood offered than the previous generation who lived peacefully as colonists during their formative years. This trend continued with Washington’s replacement attorneys. Only three were born outside the 1760s giving them even less colonial experience.

3. Partisanship

While everyone accepted the newly-ratified Constitution, some who served in Congress opposed the Administration.

281. See Initial United States Attorney Table, supra note 180.
282. Id.
283. NORTH CALLAHAN, HENRY KNOX: GENERAL WASHINGTON’S GENERAL 16 (Reinhart 1958) (stating Knox was born in 1750); FERLING, supra note 167, at 11 (stating Hamilton was most likely born in 1755); JOHN J. REARDON, EDMUND RANDOLPH: A BIOGRAPHY 5 (Macmillan Publ’g Co. 1974) (stating Randolph was born in 1753).
285. See Replacement United States Attorney Table, supra note 182.
286. The Biographical Directory of the United States Congress lists 28 Congressmen as “Anti-administration” among those who served in the First Congress. See generally BIOGRAPHICAL DIRECTORY U.S. CONG., supra note 135. This is a fluid label, however, as it includes James Madison who did not oppose
Partisan fractures emerged over executive power. Within Washington’s Administration Hamilton and Jefferson clashed repeatedly. Washington tended to side with Hamilton, as the latter obtained an excise tax on whiskey and a pro-British version of neutrality. Hamilton needed people to enforce his political objectives: (1) establish the federal government’s power and (2) improve the nation’s economy. Therefore, supporting these objectives became a key selection criterion for Washington.

Partisan selection also became more prominent because Washington could not devote as much time to filling federal offices as he could at the outset of his presidency. Washington delegated the collection and review of recommendations to the Secretary of State. Washington first utilized this process in June 1790 when he received several different United States Attorney recommendations for North Carolina. The next instance occurred in January 1794 during Rhode Island’s contentious process to replace Channing. Randolph, now Secretary of State, summarized the debate and provided a recommendation for Washington which Washington ultimately accepted. By 1796, the practice became much more common. At that time, Timothy Pickering, an ardent Federalist, who zealously investigated Jeffersonian Republicans during the administration until late in the First Congress. Nonetheless, the Administration faced Congressional challenges. When Washington sought its advice on a treaty, he left irritated because the Senate did not simply consent. When Hamilton introduced his economic program, it was met with strong opposition. These actions illustrate the nation’s partisan divide.

287. ELKINS & MCKITRICK, supra note 18, at 18–28.
289. Id. at 220–22; WOOD, supra note 162, at 90–92.
290. WOOD, supra note 162, at 106–11.
293. Letter from Edmund Randolph to George Washington, supra note 264.
Adams Administration, chose several United States Attorneys. Correspondence remains regarding Pickering's recommendations of John Davis in Massachusetts and Daniel Davis in Maine. Pickering wrote:

I was hence induced to write to Stephen Higginson, Esqr. of Boston, a private letter, requesting him, by enquiring among gentlemen of law-knowledge, to ascertain Mr Davis’s professional talents. Mr Higginson's answer I received yesterday, and have now the honor to inclose [sic]. I also wrote to a nephew of mine in Boston for the same information; and his answer corresponds with Mr Higginson’s. Both being so decidedly in favour [sic] of Mr Davis, I have this day transmitted to him his commission; it appearing to the Secretary of the Treasury & to me, upon comparing your letters to us, that you desired no delay in the commissioning of Mr Davis, when we should be satisfied of his professional abilities.

Stephen Higginson was a prominent Federalist merchant in Massachusetts who would not have endorsed someone possessing divergent interests from Higginson. Other appointments that year included Charles Jackson, of Georgia, and Thomas Nelson, of Virginia. In one instance, Washington

295. **Letter from Timothy Pickering to George Washington, supra note 221** (stating “[t]he enquiries concerning a successor were made by me before the rising of Congress, in expectation of Mr [sic] Lithgow’s resignation”); Letter from Timothy Pickering, U.S. Sec'y of State, to George Washington, U.S. President (July 26, 1796), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-00783.
296. **Letter from Timothy Pickering to George Washington, supra note 295.**
relied on Tobias Lear, one of his personal secretaries, to make the selection.\textsuperscript{299} Washington wrote, “The District Attorney of New Hampshire has sent his resignation—I am entirely unacquainted with the characters in that line, in that State, and would thank you to name the person whom you think best qualified to succeed Mr. Sherburne, & most likely to give general satisfaction.”\textsuperscript{300} Both incidents show Washington’s deference to his advisors and his lack of knowledge about qualified candidates.

Nearly all of Washington’s appointments had strong Federalist credentials and the few exceptions demonstrate the rule. Several of Washington’s Federalist appointments have been identified previously, falling under multiple politicization categories. Livermore, in New Hampshire, replaced Sherburne who resigned to pursue other \textit{avocations}.\textsuperscript{301} Sherburne’s political leanings are demonstrated by Jefferson nominating Sherburne to become a United States Attorney in 1801.\textsuperscript{302} Pennsylvania’s United States Attorneys both had strong Federalist ties as well.\textsuperscript{303} Finally, Alexander Campbell, nominated in 1791, worked closely with Virginia’s leading Federalist, John Marshall.\textsuperscript{304}

In some places, finding Federalists to represent the government proved challenging. In Kentucky, the Administration could not find people willing to serve.\textsuperscript{305} When
Hamilton obtained his desired whiskey excise tax, much of the western populace protested and refused to enforce it.\textsuperscript{306} Kentucky was one of the most vigorous opponents.\textsuperscript{307} Washington attempted several nominations, but all refused.\textsuperscript{308} Only one Federalist stepped forward, William Murray, but he only served one year and the post remained vacant until after Washington's presidency.\textsuperscript{309} In South Carolina, Thomas Parker succeeded Pringle in 1792.\textsuperscript{310} Although Parker's credentials are unknown, he provided Charleston’s customs officers a narrow statutory construction during the Administration’s efforts to enforce neutrality which permitted the French to arm privateers in Charleston.\textsuperscript{311} When the Federalist Customs Collector, Isaac Holmes, reported this to Hamilton, Hamilton responded, “[a]s to the construction which the District Attorney has given to the Act, I must acknowledge [sic] that it entirely [sic] confounds me. After what has been said, I need scarcely add that it must not govern your conduct.”\textsuperscript{312} Despite Parker’s interpretation, however, he was not removed but became the longest tenured of all of Washington’s appointments.\textsuperscript{313} This fact reveals that Parker’s political leanings as Republicans held the Presidency
for most of his tenure.  

Parker was not the only United States Attorney with a contrary political view that Washington tolerated once it was revealed.  Pierpont Edwards, in Connecticut, also held strong Republican views. Edwards aligned with his nephew, Aaron Burr, who would become Hamilton’s nemesis.  In 1792, Hamilton expressed skepticism about Edwards’ allegiance, informing Washington that Edwards aligned with Burr.  Near the 1792 Presidential election, Vice President Adams wrote his wife, “Mr Pierpont Edwards came off miserably. He gave such offence by mentioning his Nephew [Aaron Burr], that they would not appoint one Man who had any connection with him.”  Supporting Burr politically isolated Edwards, but it did not cost him his federal post.  While this might evidence non-partisanship, it is equally likely that it reflects uncertainty about the President’s power to remove people from office.  What is certain, however, is that Washington did not remove Parker and Edwards despite their political opposition.

314. Thomas Jefferson became the first Republican president in 1801. Presidents, WHITE HOUSE GOV, https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/ (last visited Nov. 16, 2018). After an eight-year term, he was replaced by Madison and Monroe, who both served eight years. Id. John Quincy Adams was the last Republican president, serving until 1829. Id.

315. Heckman, supra note 272, at 671.

316. Id.; CHERNOW, supra note 168, at 421–22, 687–89, 702–04; FERLING, supra note 167, at 339–47.


V. Effects of Politicization

Undoubtedly politics influenced Washington’s United States Attorney selections and he had no evident qualms about using political preferences as a basis for appointments. Washington sought people who shared his vision because those whom he selected would publicly represent the government’s positions. Although politicization is used in a critical or derogatory fashion today, Washington’s politicized selections had important effects that should inform the modern debate surrounding politicization. First, by hiring people who represented specific political positions, the citizenry could voice their support of or objection to the position. Second, by including Congress in the process and relying on their political connections, Washington’s decisions were not unilateral but represented the voice of government as a whole. Finally, by representing the government as a whole, Washington’s selections represented the will of the “people,” for better or worse.

A. Democratic Check on Federal Government Power

Most view politicizing criminal prosecution as an abuse of power. If political preferences are used in hiring, then politically-motivated prosecutions will result. Politically motivated prosecutions are improper because they are not based on actual law violations. This reasoning reveals a lack of faith in jury trials. If we trust juries to decide cases based on law

321. See generally Ingram, supra note 173.
324. Broughton, supra note 85, at 164–79; Bruce Green & Rebecca Roiphe, Can the President Control the Department of Justice?, ALA. L. REV. (forthcoming).
325. Scholars have neglected juries as a potential check on politicized prosecutions. Beale, supra note 9, at 415–16. For example, Professor Beale
and facts, then politically-motivated prosecutions are not as problematic because juries would acquit. If such prosecutions were more than isolated incidents and not based on sufficient evidence, then the people could remove the party from power with the next election. Washington’s appointees, in many instances, were overtly political. They pursued prosecutions that furthered their political interests. However, when they did this, juries failed to convict, thus establishing a powerful check on federal prosecutorial power.

As Washington’s presidency progressed, he developed specific ideas about how to address national problems. However, not everyone agreed with his policy choices. Those who opposed Washington’s policy choices resisted the laws implementing his priorities and prosecutions ensued. Washington trusted his attorneys to present those cases.

Two specific instances arose during Washington’s second term. First, in 1791, Hamilton convinced Congress to pass an excise tax on whiskey. Many in the western United States discusses whether the US Attorney role should be reconceptualized by redefining it as a nonpartisan career appointment. She ultimately decides it is not a good idea because the Justice Department leadership will be politically appointed thus allowing the possibility of political influence. She argues the Senate confirmation of US Attorneys provides a counterbalance, making United States Attorneys more local and responsive to local political influences. Others argue that juries do not provide a sufficient check. See Gersham, supra note 4, at 9–19 (describing three politically motivated prosecutions that resulted in jury convictions despite questionable evidence).

326. One pressing problem was the nation’s debt. Assuming the state’s debt and paying it from federal tax revenues was a central feature of Alexander Hamilton’s economic policy that Washington adopted. See Fritz, supra note 157, at 172–74. One particular aspect of this was the whiskey excise tax that generated significant and occasionally violent protests. Id.

327. See, e.g., Fritz, supra note 157, at 175 (discussing the disagreement with the whiskey excise); Wood, supra note 162, at 140–46 (discussing the creation of the Bank of the United States).


329. Slaughter, supra note 328, at 3, 93–97.
violently resisted its collection.\textsuperscript{330} In the summer of 1792, Hamilton convinced Washington that criminal prosecutions were necessary to demonstrate federal resolve.\textsuperscript{331} Attorney General Edmund Randolph had already opined that the conduct Hamilton identified was protected by the First Amendment.\textsuperscript{332} Nonetheless, acting on Washington’s instructions, the United States Attorney for Pennsylvania, William Rawle, initiated prosecutions to demonstrate the federal government’s power.\textsuperscript{333} The Administration’s hasty efforts were exposed, however, when it became apparent that those accused were victims of mistaken identity.\textsuperscript{334} Second, two years later, in 1794, Hamilton and Washington led a militia group to confront protesters in western Pennsylvania.\textsuperscript{335} With the rebellion quashed, Rawle initiated numerous criminal cases, reinforcing the Administration’s desires, creating a broad definition of “levying war” in the process.\textsuperscript{336} Like the first case, most cases ended with dismissals or acquittals.\textsuperscript{337} Only two were convicted and both subsequently received pardons.\textsuperscript{338}

\textsuperscript{330} Id.
\textsuperscript{338} Id.
While the whiskey rebellion cases only arose in Pennsylvania, prosecutions for violations of Washington’s neutrality proclamation occurred throughout the Nation. In February 1793, a war began between France and Great Britain causing considerable policy problems for the United States due to the citizenry divided over whom to support.\textsuperscript{339} Knowing that the United States could not fight a war, Washington declared neutrality and warned those who might join a side that they would be prosecuted.\textsuperscript{340} During the summer of 1793, cases arose in Pennsylvania,\textsuperscript{341} Georgia,\textsuperscript{342} and North Carolina.\textsuperscript{343} Federalist prosecutors in each state brought cases without any clear legal prohibition regarding the accused’s conduct.\textsuperscript{344} In at least one instance, the facts were not sufficient for a conviction.\textsuperscript{345} While the North Carolina case was dismissed, juries in Georgia and Pennsylvania acquitted the Defendants.\textsuperscript{346} In 1794, Congress enacted a neutrality statute and more cases arose.\textsuperscript{347} Federalist prosecutors in Massachusetts\textsuperscript{348} and Virginia\textsuperscript{349} investigated neutrality violation cases. Only in Federalist Massachusetts did a jury convict.\textsuperscript{350} Juries across the
country refused to enforce the federal government’s neutrality efforts because they disagreed with it. Only South Carolina’s Parker offered any internal resistance.\footnote{351}

These cases demonstrate how a jury can check government power. Prosecutions resulting from policy enforcement largely failed. Washington’s hand-picked attorneys presented cases to the people and the people rejected them.

Unlike during Washington’s presidency, today’s federal cases rarely go to trial.\footnote{352} One significant reason is that prosecutors, rather than juries, now have the final say on policy enforcement.\footnote{353} By only prosecuting cases with ample evidence, a jury will never have the opportunity to acquit because defendants will plead guilty.\footnote{354} Without this important check, politicized prosecutions can cause significant societal harm. A jury may only exercise its power to check the federal government’s policy-oriented prosecutions when defendants assert their right to trial.

B. Actual Advise and Consent

While the Judiciary Act gave the President power to appoint United States Attorneys, it required the Senate give its advice...
and consent. When Washington required assistance filling the positions, he wisely looked to representatives from the states to recommend candidates. This became the roots of Senatorial courtesy. While there was no formal hearing about a nominee’s suitability, Congress approved Washington’s nominations because, in effect, its members selected the nominees. By providing Washington with recommendations, Congress enhanced the politicization effects; however, George Washington consulted those who shared the Administration’s perspective making the nominees more likely to support his agenda.

More recently, Congress has abandoned this role. While Congress might subject judicial nominees to more strict scrutiny, rarely is any United States Attorney scrutinized, let alone challenged. Most selections result from discussions between lower-level staff at the Justice Department and Congressional offices. This is why President Trump’s discussions with potential United States Attorney nominees raised such concern. There could be no other reason for a President to meet with a potential nominee, other than to exert improper influence over that person or to ensure that person is loyal to the Administration.

However, this is exactly what Washington had in mind when making his United States Attorney selections. He wanted people loyal to the federal government who would represent the federal government’s interests in court. Washington consulted

357. Perry, supra note 14, at 143–46 (discussing how U.S. Attorney type could affect behavior, responsiveness to Administration agenda).
358. Kent, supra note 9, at 28–30; Tuerkheimer, supra note 323, at 620–22 (arguing that senatorial courtesy in United States Attorney appointments enhances political influence and minimizes advice and consent).
361. Smith, supra note 28.
362. Id.
with those who supported his Administration; they thought like him and knew his desire to make the new government succeed and become respected among the populace.

C. Balancing National versus Local Politics

When people are elected to public office pursuant to our constitutional system, it is presumed that they represent the public’s will because they were elected to advance particular political ideas. The Nation’s diversity ensures that a significant percentage of the populace may not like those ideas. When those ideas manifest themselves in criminal law, then prosecutions naturally follow those enactments. One benefit of separating politics and prosecution is the independence United States Attorneys gain to address important local matters. However, Washington’s politicized selections and his expectations that they advance policy and partisan interests demonstrate that politicization does not mean United States Attorneys cannot still address local problems.

Washington’s United States Attorney selections were chosen for their support of Federalists, both Constitutional and Hamiltonian. They were expected to enforce the Administration’s policies. However, they also had to be respectable local figures. Washington, consistent with his overall philosophy and practical necessity, deferred to the decisions of his United States Attorneys. This deferment and discretion appeared in several national policy-related matters.

363. See Nadia Urbinati, Representative Democracy: Principles and Genealogy 24–25 (Univ. of Chi. Press 2008) (noting that this is just one theory of representative democracy—two others have no relationship between the people’s will and the representative’s actions); see also Grossback et al., supra note 103, at 712–13.


366. See Lochner, supra note 61, at 272; Richman, supra note 5, at 2105.
Two arose in the first years of the presidency. In 1790, the new federal government focused on economic interests and ensuring domestic tranquility with Native American tribes. Dealing with the former meant establishing the legitimacy of government securities. Counterfeiting was rampant; the government had to prosecute vigorously. In one interstate investigation and prosecution, Washington deferred to his Attorney’s expertise and recommendations. In early April 1790, United States Attorney William Lewis heard from the jailer in Philadelphia that a person in custody wished to speak with him about a federal crime. Lewis went to the jail and learned of a counterfeiting operation in New Jersey and New York. The person confined, Smith, would only provide the information in a sworn format upon receipt of a pardon. Lewis lacked pardon authority and sent the information to Washington and Chief Justice John Jay. At the same time, Richard Harrison, in New York, and Abraham Ogden, in New Jersey, were dealing with others involved in the case and also corresponding with Jay. Without waiting for additional information, Washington trusted Lewis’s judgment and granted the first pardon in United States federal history. Washington trusted Lewis not because they worked closely but because Washington knew he and Lewis shared the same priorities.

When dealing with the tribes, Washington proclaimed, “all officers of the United States, as well civil as military, and all

367. Ferling, supra note 167, at 203–05 (discussing Washington’s selection of Hamilton as Treasury Secretary and the speed at which he initiated his economic program); Wood, supra note 162, at 111–19 (identifying border security as the main problem confronting the new administration).


369. Id. at 6–9.


371. Id.

372. Id.

373. Id.


other citizens and inhabitants thereof, to govern themselves according to the treaties and act aforesaid; as they will answer the contrary at their peril.  

He knew many citizens wanted tribal lands and could forcibly take it. However, taking it constituted an act of war and violated treaty terms. Therefore, prosecution was essential for deterrence and retribution. In one instance, James O’Fallon advertised his desire to form an army, invade tribal lands, and establish a new nation in the southwest United States. Word reached the Administration, who determined prosecution was necessary. Jefferson, as Secretary of State, sent Kentucky’s United States Attorney, William Murray, instructions to investigate. Over the next six weeks, Murray collected information about O’Fallon’s activities. When Murray completed his task, he determined that there was no threat and that O’Fallon was more talk than action. Murray refused to prosecute, even for riot as Attorney General Randolph had suggested. Despite the need to demonstrate executive action to enforce its treaty obligations, Washington deferred to Murray. Similar to Lewis, Washington and Murray did not have any pre-existing relationship. Instead, Murray was a Federalist. Washington understood Murray would prosecute if the case was viable because Murray supported both Washington’s desire for the federal government to succeed and Washington’s policies.

Two years later, Washington confronted a similar issue with

377. Id.
379. Id.
382. Id.
neutrality between France and Great Britain. Despite Washington's calls for neutrality, American citizens joined French privateers. To prevent war with Great Britain, the United States had to prosecute these violations. Yet even under these circumstances, Washington deferred to his chosen United States Attorneys when they believed a prosecution was not viable. One of the first reports came in early May, just weeks after Washington issued the Neutrality Proclamation. A French vessel, the Sans Culotte, captured a British vessel and sailed it up the Chesapeake Bay into the Choptank river area. Based on the advice of a Congressman, the local customs inspector detained the vessel and learned a Maryland citizen captained it. Around the same time, the United States Attorney, Zebulon Hollingsworth, learned of the activity and did not think prosecution was possible. Jefferson instructed Hollingsworth that prosecuting the captain was essential to United States national security. Despite this, the captain, John Hooper, was never prosecuted. The Administration did

385. Elkins & McKitrick, supra note 18, at 335.
386. See Ingram, supra note 344, at 494.
388. Letter from William Vans Murray to Alexander Hamilton, supra note 387, at n.3; Letter from William Vans Murray to Thomas Jefferson, supra note 387.
389. Letter from William Vans Murray to Alexander Hamilton, supra note 387, at n.3; Letter from William Vans Murray to Thomas Jefferson, supra note 387.
391. Id.
392. The extant records from the Maryland District and Circuit Courts do not indicate any case against Mr. Hooper in 1793 or 1794. In fact, other than Hollingsworth's first court appearance in the May, 1793 term, there is no record of him appearing in court during the Circuit Court sessions. See Mins. of the Circuit Court of Md., Nat'l Archives – Phila.
not protest and continued working with Hollingsworth.\footnote{Hollingsworth remained in office until 1805 when he resigned. See \textit{Notes on Appointments, 23 December 1805}, \textsc{Founders Online}, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/99-01-02-2865 (last visited Sept. 7, 2018). Despite the fact Hollingsworth remained in office, Jefferson did not hold a strong opinion of his attorney for Maryland. When Jefferson became President he held a cabinet meeting on appointments and slated Hollingsworth for firing after September. See Memorandum from Thomas Jefferson, U.S. President, on a Cabinet Meeting (Dec. 23, 1805), http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-34-02-0101. Despite this, Hollingsworth remained. \textit{Notes on Appointments}, supra.}{393} Hollingsworth had the Administration’s trust because they shared ideological values. The vessel eventually sailed from Choptank back into the Atlantic and arrived near Norfolk where it took on more armaments and crew.\footnote{Letter from Henry Lee, Governor of Va., to Thomas Jefferson, U.S. Sec’y of State (Oct. 4, 1793), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-27-02-0197.}{394} This time, the matter was referred to the United States Attorney for Virginia, Alexander Campbell, another trusted attorney, who also declined to prosecute, citing that his interpretation of the neutrality proclamation and subsequent instructions rendered prosecution impossible.\footnote{Id.}{395} Again, Washington relied on Campbell’s loyalty. However, in a similar instance, when Thomas Parker refused to prosecute a case in South Carolina, Alexander Hamilton turned to Secretary of State Randolph to send Parker additional instructions about proceeding in the case.\footnote{Letter from Alexander Hamilton, U.S. Sec’y of the Treasury, to Edmund Randolph, U.S. Sec’y of State (Jan. 2, 1795), http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-18-02-0006.}{396} Parker’s politics were more akin to South Carolina’s Governor who allowed the French to outfit the initial privateers in Charleston and subsequently set in motion the need to vigorously enforce neutrality through the courts.\footnote{C.L. Bragg, \textit{Crescent Moon over Carolina: William Moultrie and American Liberty} 254–58 (Univ. Of S.C. Press 2013).}{397}

In today’s environment, trusted appointees are those lacking political connection.\footnote{Eisenstein, \textit{supra} note 64, at 41–47; Levenson, \textit{supra} note 50, at 310–11.}{398} Today’s Presidents know even less about their United States Attorney appointees than Washington did.\footnote{See \textit{supra} notes 358–362 and accompanying text.}{399} Today’s process includes many more
bureaucratic layers that mitigate political influence as much as possible.400 This makes establishing trust between the President and the appointed prosecutors difficult because the entire relationship is built around the notion that federal prosecutors will prosecute cases in a politically neutral fashion without input from the person who appointed them.401 Yet this makes federal prosecutors unaccountable. For the systemic checks on prosecutorial power to function properly, prosecutors must be politically accountable.402 Washington understood this and ensured that those he selected had his trust. While all did not perform as expected, he trusted his people to balance the political interests entrusted to them.

Only three of the four politicization types appear in Washington’s United States Attorney appointments. Unsurprisingly, Washington never had occasion to select people to protect him or his Administration from governmental criminal investigation. The opportunity to employ this type of politicization in hiring is exceedingly rare. It requires a vacancy in an office that is investigating the President or a key Administration official. Only a small handful of offices could do this. However, more significant for Washington’s time is the manner in which such investigations occurred. Initially, Congress performed these investigations. In late 1792 to early 1793, Hamilton confronted allegations that he personally benefited from his economic program.403 Eventually, the Congressional investigation cleared Hamilton.404 Congress remained the primary investigator of executive branch conduct until after the Civil War.405

If Washington politicized his appointments, why not remove them when they acted contrary to Washington’s political wishes? Washington did not remove them for two reasons. First,

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400. Id.
401. Id.
402. Beale, supra note 9, at 413–38 (suggesting reforms to selecting United States Attorneys and analyzing the potential effects of removing political influence).
403. Elkins & McKitrick, supra note 18, at 296–301.
404. Id.
Washington, and those like him, denied factions existed. They understood the ideological differences, but factions had to be avoided. By removing those who did not act as Washington preferred, factions could result which would undermine the national unity George Washington sought. Second, there was uncertainty about the President’s removal power. Did Washington have the authority to remove Senate-confirmed appointees? Having many other political battles to wage, Washington accepted that, once confirmed, he could not remove the office holder.

VI. Conclusion

Politicizing criminal prosecution is not new, as it did not originate with Watergate in the 1970s. Instead, efforts to curb politicization arose then. A clear line emerged between political appointees and career prosecutors. This permitted some political control, but as scholars have noted, career prosecutors can wait for the next Administration to remove political obstacles to the career prosecutor’s agenda. Prior to Watergate, the entire federal criminal prosecutorial machinery turned over whenever a new political party assumed the White House. They did this because the new Administration wanted its people with similar political views in these important positions. Selecting people based on their political viewpoints originated with Washington’s selections. He chose people loyal to his specific policy and political agendas, ensuring that his

406. ELKINS & MCKITRICK, supra note 18, at 263–70.
407. Id.
409. See supra note 319 (removal power uncertainty).
411. See Eisenstein, supra note 57, at 235 (identifying five factors promoting the independence of United States Attorneys, which is the converse of politicization and often equates to autonomy from the dictates of the Justice Department); see also Kent, supra note 9, at 5–12.
412. Lochner, supra note 61, at 282–84.
413. Eisenstein, supra note 57, at 228–29, 233.
414. Id. at 233.
policies were enforced and the government followed the course he devised.

Two key lessons emerge from Washington’s practice. First, politicization provides important benefits. The debate about politicized prosecutions cannot be reduced to a simple dichotomy. Politicization takes multiple, interrelated forms. Prosecutorial positions are a reward for loyalty. Prosecutors must enforce specific policy positions that often are ideological and partisan. This is the nature of our system, and we must remember that the elected party has, at minimum, a constitutional mandate to pursue its policy vision. The concern arises when prosecutors target political adversaries or protect political allies.

Addressing the concern about targeting political adversaries is at the heart of the second lesson. We have this concern because we do not trust our political and constitutional processes to deal with the effects of politicization. While we might have good reason to distrust these processes, circumventing the processes in the name of political neutrality further erodes the political and constitutional processes. Washington chose attorneys who perceived national concerns similarly to him. He trusted them to enforce his political objectives. In many instances the popular will held different views. When Washington’s attorneys prosecuted cases in accordance with Washington’s objectives, the public exercised their constitutional duty and checked prosecutorial power by finding people not guilty. When matters of public corruption emerged, Congress exercised its constitutional role and investigated. Ultimately, the people accepted the outcomes. Power was not abused because the checks worked. This is not to say abuses will not happen; however, if the political and constitutional checks are in place, then the abuses are remedied quickly.

Criminal prosecution is an inherently political act. It is a decision to use the government’s power. Preferences are an important basis for political and prosecutorial decision-making. Rather than bar politicized prosecution, we must revitalize the criminal justice system’s political and constitutional checks on it.