

Administering Politics: Rediscovering Campaign Finance and Public Administration

R. Sam Garrett

*Congressional Research Service
American University*

Orthodox public administration separated politics from administration, leaving little room for campaigns. Subsequent work challenged orthodoxy's premium on efficiency at the expense of democratic values. The constitutional school and interdisciplinary studies of transparency, administrative law, and political science provide alternatives. Yet public administration neglects campaign finance, even after major policy developments, including the *Citizens United* ruling. Examining classic and contemporary literature and policy developments, this article is the first to establish how the politics-administration dichotomy provides a framework for studying campaign finance.

More than a century ago, public administration forged an identity that was essentially divorced from partisan politics. Although Goodnow, Wilson, and other founding scholars conceded that politics set the parameters for administering government, they argued that it was up to neutral public administrators to implement political will free from partisan bias. The origins and influence of the politics-administration dichotomy have been disputed for decades (Van Riper, 1984), but by the mid-twentieth century, a consensus emerged that a pure separation between politics and administration was impractical. Some research on the dichotomy continued, but attention to politics largely fell out of favor.

A small body of elections research emerged in the early 2000s. Although public administration has devoted relatively little attention to election administration, the field's interest in the topic makes sense. Tasks such as keeping election administrators neutral and accurately counting ballots are thoroughly consistent with the agency and managerial focus that occupies most public administration research. The more explicitly political topic of campaign finance, which directly affects who wins elections rather than just how the results are counted, would appear to have no place in public administration.

This article breaks new ground to consider whether and how a largely untouched field—campaign finance—can enhance the study of public administration, and vice versa. In so doing, it establishes that by ignoring campaign finance, public administration is ignoring its own history—and missing opportunities to join an otherwise active, interdisciplinary inquiry into how to regulate and administer money in politics. The analysis demonstrates that public administration themes are present in two core areas of public administration scholarship: early views on the

Address correspondence to R. Sam Garrett, Department of Government, American University, 4400 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20016, USA. E-mail: samg@american.edu

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politics-administration dichotomy and, more recently but less concretely, the work on government transparency. In reviewing this literature, the article first contends that ignoring campaign finance in public administration scholarship neglects public administration's intellectual and policy history. The article demonstrates that campaign finance has been and continues to be a form of politics envisioned in the politics-administration dichotomy. Importantly, although public administration largely abandoned further definitions of politics after the field's early days, how to administer this form of politics remains a major public policy issue. The article concludes by discussing two subfields within public administration that appear to be particularly relevant for future research. These are: (a) American political development (Durant, 2009; Orren & Skowronek, 2004); and (b) the constitutional school (Moe & Gilmour, 1995; Newbold, 2010; Rohr, 1986; Rosenbloom, 1983, 2000). The former offers a historical perspective, while the latter is more contemporary. Public administration also provides largely untouched avenues for studying campaign finance at a time when fields such as political science and law are increasingly occupied with familiar questions, and viable policy options are generally viewed as constitutionally limited.

SCOPE OF THE ARTICLE AND THEORY-BUILDING

This article is purposefully exploratory, drawing on diverse theoretical approaches and from various subfields within public administration. It follows in the spirit of other work, classic and contemporary, that has sought new directions and asked new questions. It identifies major themes that appear to be especially suitable for future research. It consciously lays the foundation for future research by raising topics and questions for study, but does not contend that these are the only areas that might be worth examination. This approach is consistent with other foundational works that open new areas of inquiry but do not necessarily contain a "perfect fit" between theory and data (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994, p. 13). Hypothesis-testing is typically ill-suited to exploratory research. The concluding section of the article also addresses general theoretical implications.

EXISTING LITERATURE ON ELECTIONS AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Election administration, campaigns, and campaign finance are not the same thing. Because election administration is the closest modern relative to campaign finance in the public administration literature, however, a brief review will help ground the inquiry. Despite public administration's traditional emphasis on "managerialism" rather than democratic values (Rosenbloom, 1983), even administrative topics related to elections have received little attention.

More than a decade ago, C. R. Wise observed that "public administration has not devoted attention to election administration with anything like the priority it has given to other areas of public policy" (Wise, 2001, p. 138). Seven years later, Montjoy (2008, p. 788) lamented that Wise's call had gone "unheeded." Montjoy speculated that "unfamiliarity with the seemingly

arcane structure and procedures of [election administration] and uncertainty over how the knowledge of public administration might apply” explain the literature’s silence.

A small body of work allows that administrative efficiency can be applied to running elections through principal-agent theory (Alvarez & Hall, 2006), systems theory (Moynihan, 2004), or representative bureaucracy (Kropf, Vercellotti, & Kimball, 2012). Public administration’s emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness are clear in some of the early work on mail balloting (Hamilton, 1988) and through recent research on voting technology (Burden, Canon, Mayer, & Moynihan, 2011; Herrnson et al., 2008; Kropf & Kimball, 2012; Stein, Vonnahme, Byrne, & Wallach, 2008). The early 2000s featured brief attention to election administration following controversies over ballot design and equipment (Herrnson et al., 2008; Montjoy & Slaton, 2002), the 2000 presidential contest (Hasen, 2012; Tokaji, 2012; Wise, 2001), and implementation of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA; 52 U.S.C. § 20901 *et seq.*; (Kimball, Kropf, Moynihan, Silva, & Baybeck, 2013; Moynihan & Lavertu, 2012; Moynihan & Silva, 2008).¹

Nonetheless, even in general areas of administrative law, the practical attention to agency functioning found in public administration is often “missing” (Shapiro, 2013). Research on public administration and campaigns is even rarer (Garrett, Thurber, Fritschler, & Rosenbloom, 2006), and attention to public administration and campaign finance appears to be essentially nonexistent. Even meta-analyses of public administration work on ethics have little to say about campaign finance (Menzel, 2005). In contrast to this, contemporary public administration research that is confined to administering elections (but not campaigns), political science, and legal scholarship are beginning to seriously grapple with the role of campaign finance, not simply as a matter of financial winning and losing, but also as complex and consequential public policy. Contemporary campaign finance literature has emphasized two areas. First and by far most prominently, existing scholarship addresses quantitative outcomes, such as the effect of campaign finance on election results and agenda-setting (Jacobson, 1990; Magleby, 2014; Powell, 2012; Stratmann, 2005). Second, but less comprehensively and frequently, the literature has explored the development of campaign finance policy, particularly statutory provisions regarding contributions, expenditures, and disclosure (Baker, 2012; Corrado, 2005; La Raja, 2008; Mutch, 1988; Mutch, 2014).² Campaign finance literature has not squarely addressed the connections to public administration. Yet, as will be seen below, just as public administration continues to search for its own theoretical identity (Bingham & Bowen, 1994; Durant & Ali, 2013; McCurdy, 1986; Meier, 2015; Shafritz & Hyde, 1997; Sherwood, 1990; Van Der Wal, Nabatchi, & de Graaf, 2015), constitutional school public administration suggests possibilities for alleviating the general lack of theory in scholarship on campaign finance policy (notwithstanding Samples’s [2006] work on regulation and deregulation, or more recent work, such as Boatright’s [2015], on the current “deregulatory moment”).

POLITICS, ADMINISTRATION, AND ELECTIONS: ORTHODOXY AND ITS SKEPTICS

Public administration’s relative silence on elections takes root in the politics-administration dichotomy (Goodnow, 1900; Wilson, 1887). Public administration’s founding ideology presumes that there should be an outright separation between administration and politics.³ Although the dichotomy is familiar to most readers, to understand why renewed attention to

elections can benefit the field, it is worth briefly reexamining what the field's founders meant when they treated politics as a taboo subject.

Most of the existing literature holds that "politics" means partisan or electoral politics, as opposed to bureaucratic politics (Allison, 1969; Allison & Halperin, 1972), which emphasizes factionalism within organizations rather than among political adversaries, and which has been more influential in public administration scholarship than partisan models. Perhaps ironically for a future politician, Wilson regarded elections as guideposts to public sentiment but programmatically inefficient: "Wherever regard for public opinion is a first principle of government, practical reform must be slow and all reform must be full of compromises" (1887, p. 208). He also cautioned that "administrative questions are not political questions. Although politics sets the tasks for administration, it should not be suffered to manipulate its offices" (Wilson, 1886/1966, p. 371). His campaign speeches also included attacks on the "special privilege" that divided American society (Cook, 2002, p. 491)—a common Progressive Era sentiment about the regulation of political money.⁴

More recent work has criticized Wilson for "muddled" and "not very original" thinking (Cook, 2002, p. 487) on the distinction between politics and administration; questions the dichotomy's lineage (Van Riper, 1990); and contends that his methodical separation between politics and administration is impractical, for which "Wilson has paid a high historical price" (Marion, 1990, p. 48; see also Walker, 1990). Indeed, orthodoxy's "lore" might never have been as significant as classic work suggests (Lynn, 2001, 2009; Van Riper, 1997), but there is little doubt that orthodoxy and its limited tolerance for partisan politics, and elections, represents a foundational pillar of public administration. Goodnow (1900), too, notes that administration must derive its authority from the electorate. Like Wilson, Goodnow urged caution: political control should not "extend further than is necessary to insure the execution of state will" (1900, p. 72). In sum, tracing its roots from, at least, Wilson (1887) to White (1926/1939), Gulick and Urwick (1937), and others (Van Riper, 1984), orthodoxy solidified the divide between anything resembling political influence and government management (Rosenbloom & O'Leary, 1997).

Various critiques of orthodoxy followed the early 1900s, beginning, at least, with Herring (1936/1967) and gaining momentum in the 1940s. The literature eventually, if sparingly, recognized that elections provided a check on administrative behavior by holding policymakers rather than bureaucrats accountable to the public will. White (1926/1939, p. 563) explains that because elected officials campaign on broad policy platforms rather than managerial competence, elections "are not an adequate means of administrative control." In a nod to campaign finance, White also notes (as did Schattschneider (1960)) that citizens are more likely to hold administrators accountable when people band together through interest groups.

Appleby (1945) offered one of the first detailed challenges to orthodoxy's premium on efficiency in the modern administrative state and at the expense of explicit attention to "public interest." Waldo's *Administrative State* (1948) was among the most enduring criticisms: "Waldo gave academic credence to reforms promoting an infusion of democratic values and processes into actual public administration" (Rosenbloom & McCurdy, 2007, p. 4). This included attention to transparency, representative bureaucracy, public deliberation, and stakeholder participation in the administrative process. Nonetheless, the field's most influential mid-century critiques of orthodoxy, such as Simon's (1946, 1947), continued to emphasize efficiency and effectiveness, even if they did so through new themes (Barnard, 1938; Downs,

1967; Katz & Kahn, 1966; Perrow, 1972). More generally, by the mid-twentieth century, a strict separation between politics and administration was viewed as impractical, but neutral administration continued to be favored (Overeem, 2005).

Most recently, scholars have debated whether public administration needs to give more explicit attention to constitutional and other statutory limitations on administrative power, either by civil servants or elected officials.⁵ Some call this approach the “constitutional school” of public administration (Newbold, 2010; Spicer & Terry, 1993). The constitutional school and mid-twentieth-century “political” critiques of orthodoxy reveal two major points that are important for considering connections to campaign finance. First, these works stand in stark contrast to traditional notions that efficiency, effectiveness, and hierarchy are public administration’s most important values. Second, although these perspectives rarely explicitly address elections or campaign finance—as they do not in some other public administration research in which constitutional principles are nonetheless evident (Potter, 2012)—they suggest that related concepts of participatory democracy, accountability, and transparency are firmly rooted in public administration theory and practice. The following sections provide two sample research frameworks, relying on American political development and the constitutional school, that present options for further inquiry. Both can shed new light on the familiar but still relevant topic of agency behavior. They can also push the modern boundaries of the discipline to consider the staying power of the politics-administration dichotomy and transparency.

Sample Research Framework: American Political Development, Disclosure, and Transparency

Durant (2009) suggests that the American political development (APD) subfield can serve as a useful tool for exploring public administration. APD is particularly appropriate for studying “administrative reform movements” because the subfield “focuses on big questions” and policy evolution over long time periods. For Durant, APD offers an antidote to the strict separation between politics and administration because “no matter how much proponents frame administrative reform movements as mere technical efforts to improve management, they inherently involve philosophical views of the appropriate authority relationship between the citizen and the state” (Durant, 2009, p. 330). Campaign finance appears to be particularly well suited to testing APD’s relevance for public administration. This is especially so because campaign finance policy features prominent examples of the interaction between political forces and policy change—a hallmark of the APD approach, but generally lacking in public administration.

As Durant notes, the Progressive Era is a prime example of an “administrative reform” period. Yet political science, history, and law typically frame campaign finance as a matter of political reform. Although not addressing campaign finance, Durant’s analysis suggests that there is ample room to consider whether, from a public administration perspective, campaign finance policy might also be considered a series of administrative reforms. This article does not attempt a comprehensive APD analysis, but even the brief overview below shows that this subfield is a good candidate for further research on campaign finance and public administration. The APD literature appears not to have substantially addressed campaign finance, making any such efforts, including those that rely on public administration concepts, groundbreaking for both fields.

The Wilsonian “Progressive vision” of campaign finance came to dominate the nascent debate over campaign finance policy (Samples, 2006, p. 9).⁶ At least as early as Theodore Roosevelt’s administration, members of Congress and presidents raised concerns about the alleged dangers of private campaign money distorting the policy process (Baker, 2012; Garrett, 2011; Hohenstein, 2007; Mutch, 1988). Work on the politics of the period explicitly draws connections between campaign finance, elections, and public administration. Often, relevant literature refers to the alleged pitfalls of “political money” (George, 1883) to justify neutral public administration. Foreshadowing public administration themes, Progressive Era sentiments typically criticized entrenched urban political machines sustained by kickbacks from job-seekers, officeholders, and those involved in constructing infrastructure (Corrado, 2005; George, 1883; Hofstadter, 1955; Overacker, 1932).

Significantly, public personnel administration motivated the first federal campaign finance statute. In 1867, Congress prohibited navy yard workers from being forced to make political contributions and guarded them from the workplace solicitations that had become common during the Civil War and earlier (Act of March 2, 1867, 39th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 439; see Corrado, 2005; Mutch, 2002; Rosenbloom, 1971). The 1883 Pendleton Act (22 Stat. 403) extended these protections to the entire federal workforce.

Existing public administration literature typically emphasizes the Pendleton Act’s role in formalizing the politics-administration dichotomy through merit-based hiring and neutral competence as cornerstones of the American civil service system (Van Riper, 1958; Weber, 1922/1946). Nonetheless, these early efforts to regulate campaign finance embodied themes that would later be central to the politics-administration dichotomy generally *and* to federal hiring policy. In restricting contributions and solicitations surrounding civil servants, Congress sought to limit potential corruption—the prime justification surrounding federal campaign finance law—in both the giving and receiving of campaign contributions. Today, although federal employees are generally free to make political contributions, the legacy of these early statutes remains. It includes restrictions in law, regulation, and House and Senate rules on contributions from government contractors, fundraising on federal property, and contributions by congressional staff to their employing members of Congress.⁷

The roots of modern campaign finance policy also feature theoretical connections to public administration. Perhaps most prominently, although Watergate is remembered today primarily for abuse of presidential power, campaign finance was central to the episode and subsequent law. A National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) report (Mosher et al., 1974) commissioned by the Senate Watergate Committee (Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities) identified campaign finance as both a contributor to the scandal and a challenge for administrative reform. Even before Watergate fully emerged, Congress first required modern disclosure of campaign finance reports in the 1971 Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA; 52 U.S.C. § 30101 *et seq.*). Many implementation questions surrounding FECA concerned how to process the thousands of newly required reports, given limited data-processing technology. Reflecting classic questions about neutral competence, debate also ensued about whether the comptroller general, initially responsible for executive branch compliance, could or should be tasked with handling, and possibly referring for criminal investigation, politically sensitive presidential campaign reports (Staats, 1976).⁸ Amid Watergate and FECA, the 1970s laid the foundation for campaign finance to be an enduring federal policy issue.

Although the field was relatively stable throughout the 1980s and 1990s, major changes occurred in the 2000s. In the most recent major legal development, in 2010, the Supreme Court in *Citizens United* held unconstitutional a long-standing federal prohibition on corporations using their treasury funds to make independent expenditures in federal elections (Garrett, 2014). Another prominent decision, *SpeechNow v. FEC*, issued a few months later by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, facilitated the birth of what have become known as “super” political action committees (super PACs). These entities provided a new avenue for unlimited “express advocacy,” explicit calls for the election or defeat of federal candidates. As will be seen below, these developments accompanied renewed debate over modern transparency. This topic, too, suggests potential for public administration.

Sample Research Framework: Agencies, Disclosure, and the Constitutional School

Given public administration’s typical focus on agencies as the “unit of analysis” (Ostrom, 1973, p. 34), studying the Federal Election Commission (FEC) is an obvious option for uniting campaign finance and public administration, and especially for studying topics related to how Congress delegates administrative and regulatory authority. Public administration need not reinvent the wheel. Although scholarship on the FEC is sparse regardless of discipline, some historical and political science work explores the agency’s development and organization (Hohenstein, 2007; Jackson, 1990; Mann, 2005; Mutch, 1988). Research appearing in law journals (although sometimes written by political scientists), and by commissioners and staff, focuses on the enforcement process and the agency’s statutory authority (Butrymowicz, 2009; Gross, 1991; Hayward & Smith, 2005; Lochner & Cain, 2000; Oldaker, 1986; Thomas & Bowman, 2000; Wagner, 2005). Statistical analyses of “deadlocked” votes among commissioners and considerations of policy implications typically come from political scientists, either in scholarly settings (Franz, 2009, 2013) or policy-focused work (Public Citizen, 2015).

Political science and legal scholarship explain recent deadlocked votes and controversies over commissioner and staff relations by critiquing factors such as the agency’s bipartisan structure and legislative history. The politics-administration dichotomy may shortchange some important policy contexts, but it and other public administration concepts at least provide a more or less neutral starting point for understanding what the FEC does and why it does so. This article does not suggest that the FEC deserves *special* scrutiny, but seeks to remind scholars that public administration should not ignore the agency or campaign finance policy simply because it regulates politics.

Indeed, some of the most persistent practical challenges in disclosure policy have major administrative components. These include, for example: whether donors should be assigned unique identification numbers to reduce ambiguity in campaign finance reports; whether Senate campaign committees should be required to file their reports electronically to increase timely public access to the data; what accounting should be required for campaigns to reduce embezzlement; and how the FEC should maintain its massive data caches. These questions often are complex and can be controversial, but they are not necessarily as divisive as more fundamental issues, such as whether independent spending is protected political speech. In fact, a bipartisan group of lawyers petitioned the FEC in 2015 to clarify various reporting forms

(Federal Election Commission, 2015) and suggested that doing so could win consensus while making daily compliance easier even as other policy decisions remain divisive.

Public administration and campaign finance can also find mutual benefit in topics beyond the former's traditional emphasis on studying agencies. Transparency has challenged researchers (and policymakers) in both fields. Other work drawing on public administration and policy analysis has considered the value of public disclosure generally (Weil, Fung, Graham, & Fagotto, 2006) and related data-management challenges (Landsbergen, 2004). For the most part, however, public administration has increasingly left broad questions of transparency—particularly those related to public accountability through elections—to relatively narrow subfields, other fields entirely (e.g., law or information policy), or both.

In the public administration literature, transparency is the closest modern relative to the ongoing campaign finance debate over disclosure. Yet governmental transparency is a relatively new subfield. Even some key terms remain in flux (Hollyer, Rosendorff, & Vreeland, 2011; Piotrowski, 2014). Adding campaign finance topics to the discussion responds to Piotrowski's call (2014, p. 182) for greater scholarly attention to “spend[ing] time considering ... concepts... to build the field.” Definitional questions notwithstanding, transparency is a “regime value” of open government (Piotrowski, 2014, p. 183; see also Piotrowski, 2009; Rohr, 1989; Rourke, 1960). In the United States, a public “right” to information, while not necessarily recognized as a constitutional guarantee, “is an important part of the fabric of democracy, as demonstrated by ... extensive codification” (Mayer, 2014, p. 140).

Given its basis in law, campaign finance disclosure is arguably more specific than the theoretical work on public administration transparency, but given recent major changes in policy and law, disclosure research, too, lacks theoretical consensus. The ongoing debate over campaign finance disclosure—reporting information about campaign transactions to the FEC and, ultimately, to the public—remains one of the most bitterly divisive topics in the policy arena. In fact, in debating disclosure, practitioners and scholars in other fields are continuing a conversation that public administration began a century ago but subsequently abandoned.

Public administration could provide ways to understand campaign finance when policy debates accompanying analyses in fields such as law and political science have become familiar. Before 2000, for example, public reporting of contribution and expenditure information was typically deemed “effective but inoffensive” (Bauer, 2007, p. 54). The consensus began to break down in the early 2000s, amid debate in Congress and at the FEC about whether tax-exempt organizations operating under Section 527 of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) should be treated as “political committees” under FECA and, therefore, subject to the act's contribution limits and reporting requirements. Particularly after *Citizens United*, disclosure took on new prominence as policymakers and advocates debated whether publicly reporting political contributions—and, especially, donations to tax-exempt advocacy organizations (e.g., 501(c)(4) social welfare groups)—could chill political speech.

Regardless of the kinds of groups that were subject to various disclosure proposals throughout the early 2000s, the ongoing debate emphasized how or whether disclosure requirements could inform the public and help regulators monitor contribution limits while not simultaneously creating an administrative burden and privacy invasion (Aprill, 2011; Briffault, 2010, 2011; Gilbert & Aiken, 2015; Heerwig & Shaw, 2014; Mayer, 2012). Despite previous consensus on disclosure, over time, some came to view extending reporting requirements to

politically active 527s and 501(c) groups as “a challenge to privacy but also the gateway to entanglement with the legal process” (Bauer, 2007, p. 55). Bradley Smith (2013, p. 2081; omitting internal notes), a legal scholar and former FEC commissioner, echoed and expanded on this theme post-*Citizens United*:

Beginning with legislation in 2000 to require more disclosure of issue advocacy [among 527 groups] there has been a steady effort, accelerating since *Citizens United* [in 2010] ... to increase mandatory disclosure. These efforts have only been tentatively tested in the courts, but have the potential to eat into hard-won constitutional rights to protect the privacy of donors. These efforts to increase compulsory disclosure ultimately threaten to lead to greater regulation of the political activity of nonprofit membership organizations [e.g., 501(c) groups] as well.

So legal scholars and, to a lesser extent, political scientists, have grappled with the renewed controversy over disclosure. But what might this have to do with public administration? To take just one example, as disclosure became less universally accepted in the early 2000s, and especially after *Citizens United*, some policy advocates began to argue that separating politics and administration was necessary not only to protect the public from distorted policymaking, but also to protect the public from itself. Public administration is not explicitly involved in that debate, and scholars in other fields studying the topics do not use labels such as “politics-administration dichotomy,” but the struggle to reconcile politics and administration clearly lives on. In this more contemporary version of the debate, the neutral value of administration is a point of major contention—not necessarily because civil servants or policymakers are viewed as biased (although sometimes the charge is made), but because the effects of transparency are not universally accepted. What for some is a better-informed electorate, for others becomes a tool of oppression. If the classic vision of the dichotomy is essentially about who gets to do what—and who gets to decide what—the alternative in the disclosure debate is about who gets to know what—and who must tell what. Legal scholarship details particular concerns, such as potential donor harassment and privacy issues. Political science relies on disclosure data to analyze electoral competition and funding sources. More than a century ago, public administration laid the foundation for these questions.

More importantly, if contemporary scholars are willing to think creatively, they will see the foundations of future inquiry in their midst in the transparency literature and the constitutional school. Although transparency as a research concept remains “slippery,” two elements are central: “visibility” and “inferability.” The former refers to the availability of information. The latter entails “the ability to draw accurate conclusions” from that information (Michener & Bersch, 2013, p. 240). Still, transparency is not necessarily synonymous with campaign finance disclosure. The transparency literature emphasizes governmental openness. By contrast, disclosure emphasizes transactions between donors and candidates. The latter perspective assumes that public documentation of financial transactions reduces the chances of *quid pro quo* corruption in the course of official business, a paramount value in campaign finance policy. Both seek honest government through openness, but disclosure typically requires individual information—from contributors, spenders (e.g., candidates or parties), or both. Transparency, on the other hand, implies a more general availability of governmental information, often about specific decisions or actions, but not necessarily about specific transactions. Yet these are rather abstract concepts. The constitutional school could provide for a more orderly discussion of disparate disciplines that are exploring similar policy concepts, as discussed

below. Indeed, in one of the only works explicitly addressing campaign finance and public administration, Newbold (2011) notes that the Supreme Court's nearly unanimous support for disclosure in *Citizens United* reinforces transparency as a democratic value in the administrative state.

In work more squarely related to classic public administration, constitutional school literature considers topics such as legislative oversight in public administration (Rosenbloom, 2000), administrative law (Rosenbloom & O'Leary, 1997), organization theory (Newbold, 2008), and network governance (Nickel, 2007), but not whether or how the constitutional school can advance the study of administration in specific policy areas. Because campaign finance is so fundamentally linked to the Constitution, the constitutional school offers a unique subfield from which to examine how government and politics interact—the essence of the politics-administration dichotomy.

Rosenbloom's (2000) "legislative-centered" theory of public administration, a subset of the constitutional school, remains largely undeveloped but seems especially relevant for studying campaign finance. Evidence from campaign finance policy appears both to confirm Rosenbloom's foundational work and to present opportunities to expand this line of inquiry. On one hand, Rosenbloom (2000, p. 27) implicitly establishes that campaign finance is integral to the legislative-centered approach. Specifically, he notes that the landmark *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976) decision substantially constrained congressional appointment power. On the other hand, Rosenbloom does not extend his campaign finance analysis beyond the passing *Buckley* citation or even note that *Buckley* concerned campaign finance. In fact, the relevant portion of *Buckley* invalidated Congress' initial statutory decision to permit itself to name FEC commissioners.

Campaign finance also suggests options for pushing the legislative-centered approach further. Examining the legislative history surrounding various mid-twentieth century statutes, Rosenbloom contends that Congress reasserted its administrative role as a counterbalance to New Deal executive power. Public administration has not meaningfully considered the FEC, but in his own extensive examination of the legislative record, the historian Robert Mutch (1988, pp. 84–88) shows that Congress, reluctant to cede enforcement authority to an independent body, considered a "supervisory officer" approach to campaign finance regulation before creating the FEC. Under this model, the clerk of the House and the secretary of the Senate were responsible for congressional-campaign compliance, as was the comptroller general for presidential campaigns. As Mutch demonstrates, it took Watergate to muster enough votes for an independent agency.

What does this suggest for the state of public administration theory? A pessimistic interpretation might argue that Mutch's work, which is widely recognized as the definitive scholarly history of the FEC, essentially "scooped" Rosenbloom's legislative-centered approach in a different discipline (history) and more than a decade earlier. More optimistically, however, the example suggests that legislative-centered inquiry is not a zero-sum game. A willingness to reexamine the FEC—or other agencies that historians have already covered but that public administrators have not—can reveal not simply how Congress might assert itself in overseeing agencies, but also what its preferences might be in designing them in the first place. Historians might provide valuable context, but public administrators are far more likely (and perhaps better equipped) to address questions of agency design, constitutional accountability, and delegation of authority.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE AND RECONSIDERING THE POLITICS-ADMINISTRATION DICHOTOMY

It is not news that administration can involve political concerns. The politics-administration dichotomy, in its idealized form, firmly separated public administration from politics. Nonetheless, even recently, although assuming a strict separation between politics and administration is increasingly viewed as antiquated, “many scholars” continue to “sidestep” the relationship between politics and administration, “opting to remain silent on politics and, thus, drain it from their accounts of administration” (Moynihan & Soss, 2014, p. 320).

Why might this be so? Part of the answer rests in Progressive Era ideals. Particularly at the municipal level, public administration and related fields attempted to reclaim power “from the clutches of the machine boss” by emphasizing apolitical professionalism (Stivers, 2000, p. 115). That separation was imperfect. More than 50 years later, reflecting on Charles Beard’s (1908) work, Borning (1962/1984, pp. 32–33) explained that “progressive era reformers had raised a theoretical and practical problem that is still with us: how to make expert rulership compatible with genuine democratic control.”

An insular focus is not unique to public administration. Although political science and law both address major topics within campaign finance, the two disciplines remain largely independent. Some have suggested that the lack of formal rules in campaign politics is opposed to the rule-driven assumptions of law.⁹ Consequently, “often we ignore how election law and electoral politics interact” (Streb, 2013, p. 2). Nonetheless, there are at least growing efforts to unite political science and law in studying campaign finance. As policymakers have searched for constitutionally viable but narrower policy options for regulating money in politics, questions of campaign disclosure now involve fields relating to political science and First Amendment law, tax law, administrative law, and more. Recent political science and legal scholarship highlighting the value of interdisciplinary inquiry (Cain, 2012; Gardner, 2012; Garrett, 2012; Gronke, 2012; Hill, 2012; Overton, 2013) suggests that there is much to be gained from considering diverse perspectives. Public administration is prepared to join the conversation if it is willing to do so.

CONCLUSION

Practitioners and scholars in other fields are continuing a conversation that public administration began a century ago but subsequently abandoned. When Wise called for more applied and scholarly attention to election administration more than a decade ago, he did so partially for fear that courts would fill the void if scholars and administrators did not (Wise, 2001, p. 138). This article does not propose policy action, but in the spirit of Wise’s admonition, it urges scholars and practitioners to consider that if they do not pay attention to elections, and particularly campaign finance, as a diverse field, they risk ceding this vital aspect of American government and politics solely to the political professionals, courts, and lawyers. The interdisciplinary literature cited here demonstrates that some important aspects of elections and campaign finance should and must be rooted in law, particularly the Constitution. Equally important, however, are questions of politics, policy, and administration not likely to be addressed by the courts or in legal scholarship. Political science has partially filled the void, although its increasing emphasis on

empiricism runs the risk of minimizing important questions of applied politics and political behavior that influence campaigns but that cannot or should not be reduced to modeling and theory.

Finally, readers of this journal, in particular, may wonder how the article informs broad theoretical and methodological questions, in addition to the more specific points addressed above. Challenging the existing construction of the politics-administration dichotomy, particularly through expanding the definition of politics to include campaign finance, is consistent with interpretive methods generally (Yanov & Schwartz-Shea, 2014). In addition, relying on interdisciplinary analysis to examine how language and public policy interact to shape major concepts is consistent with “evolutionary critical theory” (Abel & Sementelli, 2003). Importantly, this article does not take a position on policy issues. Scholars, policymakers, and average citizens are sufficiently divided on campaign finance that there is ample ground for normative research in other settings, as some critical theorists might be inclined (see, for example, Sementelli & Abel, 2000).

Beyond critical theory per se, “evolutionary” public administration theories may be of use to future researchers, given what some work suggests makes the approach particularly suited to studying “wicked” policy problems (Sementelli, 2007). In what could be both a challenge and an opportunity for future researchers, campaign finance policy does not present an agreed-upon “problem.” Both pro-regulatory and deregulatory observers (Madisonians and Progressives, to use Samples’s [2006] terms) might argue that the existing level of campaign finance regulation is “wicked,” but for different reasons and with different proposed recommendations. In either case, the Constitution dictates the path forward, reinforcing the relevance of the constitutional school.

Whatever theoretical or methodological approaches future scholars take, public administration, as a generally more applied field than modern political science, leaves ample room for practical questions about how administrative values might relate to regulating political money. Public administration has largely left those questions unanswered and unexplored. This article, the author hopes, will build on the small but important foundation of work showing that politics and administration are central to campaign finance. Put simply, it is too complicated to leave to one discipline alone.

NOTES

1. There is little scholarship on the Election Assistance Commission, which HAVA created, but some work provides initial assessments of the agency’s authority and duties (Montjoy & Chapin, 2005).
2. After political science helped shape legislative debate and litigation surrounding the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA; P.L. 107-155), some work explored the field’s role, and occasional controversy, in policy development (e.g., Cain, 2007).
3. Although the dichotomy is often attributed to Wilson, the origins are debatable (Rosenbloom, 2008).
4. Drawing connections between the Progressive Era and orthodoxy is well-established (Waldo, 1948), but explicit attention to elections is rare.
5. This article does not address the ongoing debate, which occupies much of the constitutional school literature (Lowi, 1993; Luton, 1994; Rohr, 1986; Rosenbloom, 1983; Spicer & Terry, 1993; Wise, 1993), about whether there is a “legitimacy” crisis in public administration, and, if so, whether it can be resolved through more attention to constitutional and legal principles.

6. Whereas the “Progressive vision” portrays private campaign money as a threat to honest government, Samples’s alternative, “Madisonianism,” favors free-market principles in which more political spending and speech should foster a more vigorous democracy.
7. See, e.g., 52 U.S.C. § 30119, 18 U.S.C. § 602, 18 U.S.C. § 603, 18 U.S.C. § 607, and the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct (2008, pp. 137–140).
8. Under the original FECA, the comptroller general, as head of the General Accounting Office (GAO, now the Government Accountability Office), was responsible for presidential campaign filings. The House clerk and the secretary of the Senate handled filings for their chambers.
9. The lack of formal rules here refers to the improvised campaign practices, not laws or regulations that political professionals and others are clearly obliged to follow. On the informal nature of the “strategic thinking” that influences campaign behavior, see Burton and Shea (2003).

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R. Sam Garrett serves as a specialist in American national government at the Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress. He is also an adjunct faculty member at the American University School of Public Affairs and a research fellow at American University's Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies. Before joining CRS in 2005, Sam was selected as a Presidential Management Fellow. He is the author of *Campaign Crises: Detours on the Road to Congress* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2010). He holds a Ph.D. in political science, M.P.A., and B.A. (summa cum laude), all from American University.

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