



ISSUE BRIEF

State Task Forces and Interest Groups: Organized Group Participation on Advisory Commissions

James W. Endersby*

Professor, Harry S Truman School of Government and Public Affairs,
University of Missouri

Mark L. Ritchey

Research Manager, Administrative Services Division, Missouri Office of State
Courts Administrator

Nicholas L. Brothers

M.A., Harry S Truman School of Government and Public Affairs, University of
Missouri

December 2024

*For more information, contact James W. Endersby at endersby@missouri.edu

Executive Summary

Policy task forces help politicians develop or publicize solutions for tackling governmental and societal problems. Task forces also offer organized group representatives an opportunity for direct articulation of interests with government representatives. This research looks at the establishment of statewide task forces through executive order. The term task force is used for any temporary or ad hoc committee created for investigation, research, awareness, or recommendations regarding a policy issue. These quasi-governmental organizations go by many names such as blue-ribbon commissions, advisory councils, and boards. States have no consistent or formal definition of a task force (or other advisory monikers); various terminology is used interchangeably.

Governors frequently create advisory committees through an executive order. Many directives include membership with interest group representation. Over a ten-year span, from 2000 to 2009, over a thousand policy task forces were created by Governors in the 36 states for which data are available. Task force establishment by executive order varies across states and over time. A content analysis of gubernatorial task forces enhances our knowledge of this potentially powerful and overlooked institution in the field of state politics. These advisory commissions are created to deal with many policy problems, particularly those involving issues of government operations, law and crime, and health care. Following the review of executive orders, seven motivations for establishing a policy-oriented task force are suggested. Further research on advisory councils and interest group participation is warranted.

**“
Governors frequently
create task forces through
an executive order (EO),
a gubernatorial directive
that carries the force of
law.”**

Widespread use of policy task forces is a relatively new phenomenon in American political history. Prominence of advisory councils, and scholarly attention to them, arose in the mid-20th Century. Existing research about policy task forces concentrates on the federal level, particularly on presidential advisory commissions.¹ Governors appear to follow the path laid out by presidential administrations. This report analyzes state use of gubernatorial policy task forces, their policy domains, and motivations.

Executives, Interest Groups, and Advisory Commissions

Federal use of presidential advisory commissions arguably extends back to the founding of the Republic.² They were unusual, however, until the 1960s.³ These task forces continued to occupy a central role in policy formation for recent presidential administrations.⁴ Although the effects are often considered symbolic only, they may be effective at promoting policy change.⁵ The custom of creating task forces for public policy is not limited to the federal executive. Congress frequently establishes task forces to gather information and plan policies.⁶

State Task Force Experience

At the state level, governors and legislatures routinely establish task forces to tackle certain policy issues, but less is known about the history and practice concerning these advisory bodies. Task forces may be an important tool for advocacy groups to articulate their interests. One survey of groups found that 76% of active organizations list service on state-level advisory commissions as a means through which they pursue policy goals.⁷ This participation rate corresponds with that of national interest groups.⁸ The lobbying tactic of commission participation is roughly as frequent across trade/industry and public interest groups. Lobbyists may participate on advisory boards, but they do so at a somewhat lower rate (58%) than organizational leadership, allowing group leaders more direct access to 'inside' politics. Studies of state-level interest groups demonstrate that they engage in a wide range of political activities in order to influence public policy.⁹

The policy domain of task forces is an important precursor to understanding the motivation behind the creation of task forces, their

recommendations, and the effect on legislation and policy development. Without a systematic study focusing on state policy task forces, it is important to gather rudimentary information concerning these ad-hoc advisory organizations.¹⁰ Important pieces of missing information include the frequency of task force creation and their policy areas.

Executive Orders and Task Force Creation

Governors frequently create task forces through an executive order (EO), a gubernatorial directive that carries the force of law.¹¹ A study of North Carolina and Texas notes that executive orders are both understudied and the subjects of "considerable confusion" regarding their authority and practice.¹² Issuing an executive order allows for influence over policymaking and the legislative process.¹³ Goals also may be to manage the bureaucracy, comply with federal regulations, or fulfill other important obligations. Membership of state advisory commissions often includes key leaders in the bureaucracy as well as representatives of organized interests.

An executive order to create a policy task force allows a governor to reach out to important constituencies to bolster support for a political agenda. Interest groups provide valuable



Downloaded from Governor Kehoe at:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/201979855@N03/albums/72177720323433795/>

and relevant information for state policy construction and implementation, offering a perspective that might otherwise be missed. Executive orders creating task forces allow an interest group to influence policy through inside access to decision-makers.¹⁴ A seat on a task force constitutes an important part of an interest group's ability to influence any recommendations produced.¹⁵ Organized interest membership on a task force thus provides advantages to the government as well as to group leaders.

“
... Missouri has one of the most accessible lists of EOs among all states. ”

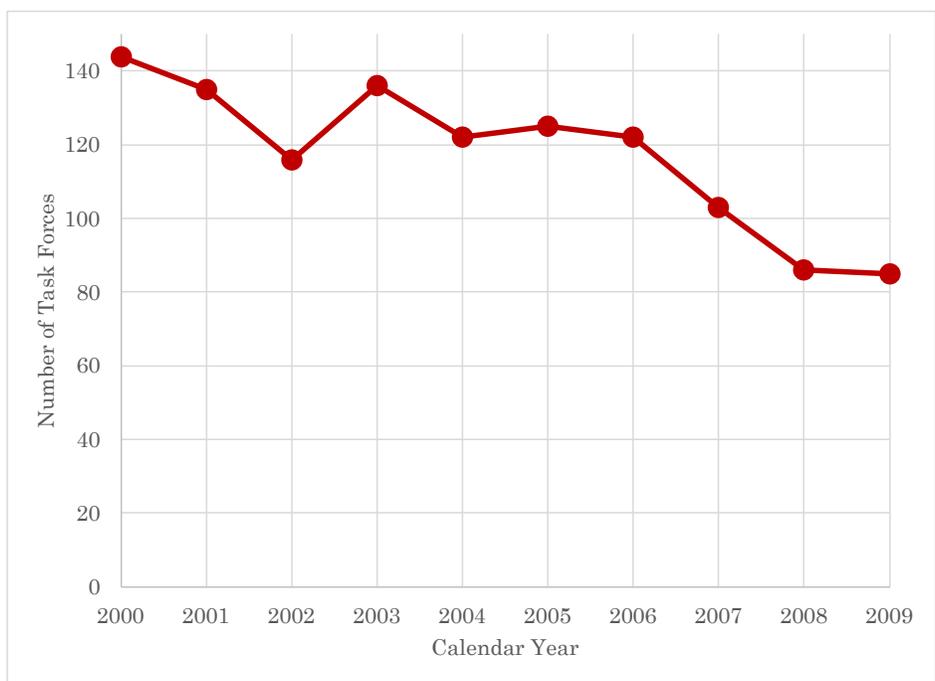
The Current Report

A decade of gubernatorial executive orders from a broad section of states are collected and classified. The motivation for this research is to discover the range and frequency of policies for which task forces are created. From the content of those executive orders, motivations behind executive creation of task forces can be determined.

Data Collection from Executive Orders

State authorization for executive orders (EOs), both generally and for the creation of advisory committees specifically, varies by state.¹⁶ Locating information on the scope of gubernatorial task forces is difficult as there is no national archive of EOs. Indeed, many states cannot even identify the number and scope of currently existing task forces. Some governors or state libraries release some or all EOs, permitting this collection of a

Figure 1
Gubernatorial Task Force Creation by Year
(n= 36 states)



consistent sample of gubernatorial task force information. Yet, state agencies releasing executive orders may impose a time lag on availability.¹⁷ It is worth noting that Missouri has one of the most accessible lists of EOs among all states.¹⁸ The states investigated here have comprehensive archives of executive orders for a ten-year period.¹⁹ This research examines only executive orders establishing a task force that includes at least one non-governmental actor. Governors in 36 states created 1,174 such task forces through executive orders between January 1, 2000, to December 31, 2009 (see Figure 1 and Table 1).²⁰

Task Force Definition

A task force is a temporary institution created to investigate a policy with members serving for a limited time, with quasi-governmental or advisory functions.²¹ Governors used a variety of names to describe these ad hoc policy panels in their executive orders. In the sample, the descriptor “task force” was most common (23% in the sample), but terminology included commission (17%), council (14%), advisory council (11%), board, committee, partnership, team, consortium, working group, and a wide variety of other terms. Individual governors were often inconsistent in terminology. Yet, the identified purpose of each was to gather information within a policy area and make recommendations for action.

Interest Group Representation

Typically, an executive order sets the number of members for an advisory commission and provides an institution or a qualification needed for each appointed member.²² In a few cases, membership composition was vague, and the representation by organized interests was merely implied. For example, an Alaska EO establishing membership for an advisory council noted “members will include...representatives from the general business community, health care providers, philanthropic agencies, faith-based organizations, and

Table 1
Gubernatorial Task Force Creation by State
(January 1, 2000 to December 31, 2009)

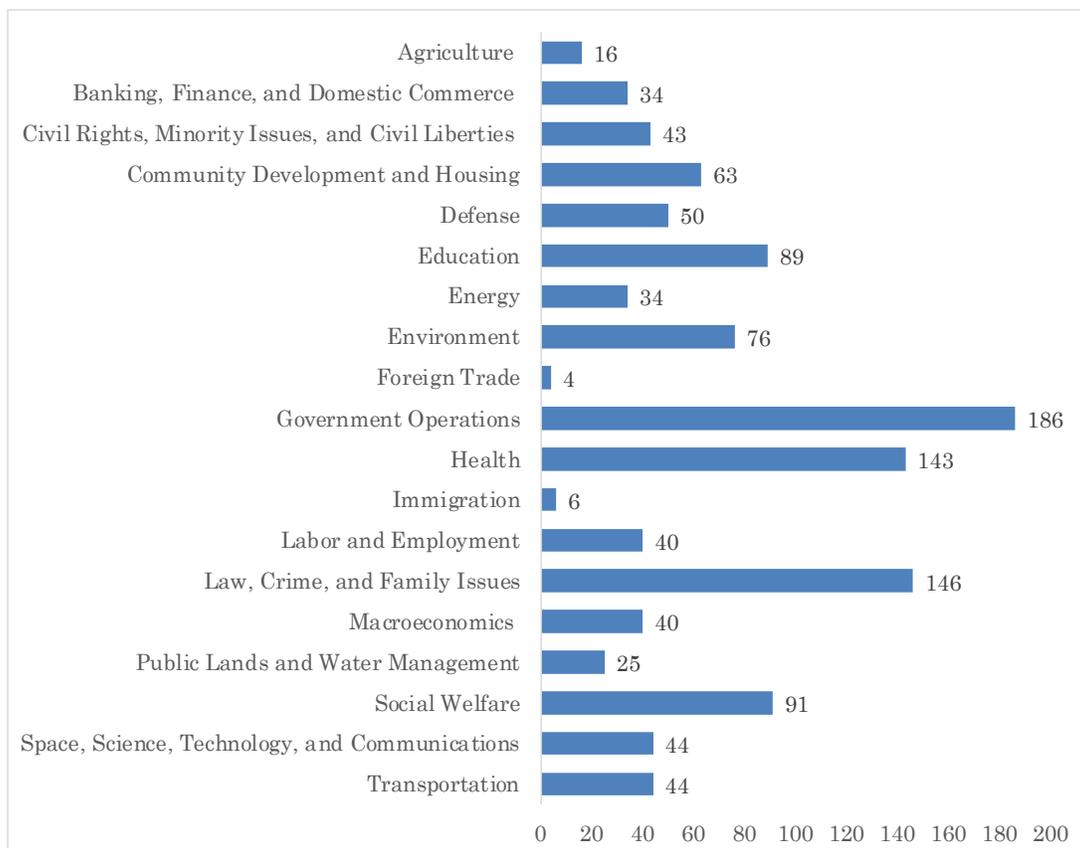
State	Task Forces	State	Task Forces
Alabama	61	Missouri	57
Alaska	20	Montana	57
Arizona	70	Nebraska	2
California	17	New Hampshire	22
Colorado	38	New Jersey	76
Connecticut	20	North Dakota	5
Delaware	45	Oklahoma	10
Florida	42	Oregon	28
Georgia	41	Pennsylvania	20
Hawaii	9	South Carolina	25
Idaho	47	Tennessee	22
Illinois	33	Texas	21
Iowa	25	Utah	22
Kansas	21	Virginia	48
Louisiana	68	Washington	11
Massachusetts	42	West Virginia	27
Michigan	54	Wisconsin	42
Minnesota	12	Wyoming	14

n=36 states and 1,174 total task forces

other community leaders.” Another task force identified “a member representing labor unions of employees of the Alaska Marine Highway System,” while a third specified one member from “the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium or a similar non-profit health organization.”²³ Many state EOs identified membership (or delegates) from specifically defined interest groups; others required members from unions, chambers of commerce, or organized occupational groups broadly.

Each executive order was included in the sample if a task force included membership from at least one organized, private group.²⁴ For inclusion in the study’s sample, the EO must have established a new task force with organized group representation.²⁵ Each task force was coded for its primary policy within a standard list of 19 categories (see figure 2).²⁶ Policy coding was limited to a single category, although task forces may operate within multiple policy arenas. On several occasions, a governor created a task force to study economic policies, such as job growth, tax policies, home mortgages, or a combination of the three. If the primary goal of the task force was on job growth, then it was coded as labor and employment. If the purpose was to investigate the mortgage crisis, then it was assigned to community and housing development. If the task force was charged with examining multiple economic issues, then it was placed in the macroeconomics category since the purview was the state economy as a whole. For instance, in 2009, Delaware established the “Governor’s Stimulus Solution Group” to examine ways the state could spur the economy in areas from job growth to mortgage relief.

Figure 2
Gubernatorial Task Force Creation by Policy Arena
(January 1, 2000 to December 31, 2009)



The identification and coding of gubernatorial executive orders appears reliable. A statistical check of intercoder reliability produced a frequency of agreement of 77.0%.²⁷ This reliability measure underestimates concordance as it does not take into account the vast number of EOs reviewed that do not create commissions with organized group members. Nearly all the inconsistencies fell within the overlapping categories discussed above.

Findings from Gubernatorial Task Force Executive Orders

Governors frequently created task forces with interest group participation for policy recommendations. Figure 1 displays the number of new task forces created annually by governors through executive orders. Over the decade of the 2000s, new task force creation experienced a steady, slow decline. New task forces peaked in 2000 with 144 (averaging 4.0 per state-year) and fell to 85 in 2009 (2.4), a 41% decline.²⁸

State Variation

The number of task forces created by states—and their administrations—varies considerably. Table 1 provides the number of group-represented task forces in EOs per state over the decade analyzed. Governors in New Jersey, Arizona, and Louisiana created seven or more per year. Missouri Governors established just less than six per year. Executives in Nebraska, North Dakota, and Hawaii averaged less than one new commission per year. Although beyond the scope of this discussion, partisanship of incumbents was not strongly associated with task force creation.

Policy Domains

Figure 2 shows the policy arenas and the number of task forces created. The most frequent categories were government operations (16%), law, crime, and family issues (12½%), and health (12%). Government operations included policies regarding state employee pay, interagency cooperation, elections and voting, and historical and commemorative task forces. The broad category for law included crime, domestic abuse, foster care, and corrections. State governments traditionally have greater policy jurisdiction and discretion than the federal government within these policy domains. Popular pressure may encourage a governor to create a task force to examine certain subjects such as crimes against children. For instance, in 2003, New Hampshire Governor Craig Benson created a task force assigned to examine ways to protect children from abuse.

**“
Governors frequently
created task forces
with interest group
participation for policy
recommendations. ”**

Health related policy task forces ranked third. Health care issues are prominent in both state and national policy agendas. This category included task forces devoted to policy information about a specific disease or condition, hospital related problems, medical care employment matters, elder care, and mental health. Mental health was included in this category only if the goal of the task force was to seek information concerning a condition or disorder. If a task force examined ways to improve services for those with physical, emotional, or cognitive disabilities, it was coded within the social welfare category.²⁹



Downloaded photo by Shelby Cohron from Unsplash

<https://unsplash.com/photos/green-trees-on-brown-rocky-mountain-under-cloudy-sky-during-daytime-RGwI9xfZqOg>

Other policy arenas were difficult to disentangle. Policies relating to the environment, energy, and public lands and water management proved burdensome to code because of substantial overlap. A task force examining forest preservation might be classified in either the environment or the public lands and water management category. If the task force was assigned several competing issues concerning forest preservation, it was coded within the environment category. On the other hand, if the task force charged with forest preservation focused primarily on park land, then it fell under public lands management policy. Similarly, distinguishing energy and the environment was problematic because energy task forces often examined the impact of policies on the environment. Ultimately, if the main goal of the task force was in energy, it was coded as an energy task force. If energy was a secondary focus, as part of a long list of environmental concerns, the commission was coded in the environment category. Given the intractable problems in distinguishing these similar policy categories, prudence suggested merging them. Combined, these three categories accounted for 11.5 % of newly established task forces.

Another interesting feature concerned the economic policy task forces. Macroeconomics advisory panels accounted for less than 4% of the sample. These task forces reviewed general economic issues such as taxation and inflation. This seemed surprisingly low given states' economic and budget crises. Likewise, given the constant political emphasis on local job creation, less than 4% were devoted to labor and employment.³⁰ The community development and housing category exceeded the previous two economic policy categories, at over 5%. Merging these three policy arenas accounted for over 12% of task force creation. Governors expressed concern with the state economy, but tailored their task forces to address particularistic economic problems. Social welfare (8%) and education (8%) were similar state priorities that may fit within a general economic category. Governors and legislators prioritized broader state economic policy.

Uncharacteristic Task Forces

Categories with lower frequency were policy arenas traditionally under the purview of the federal government. For example, immigration and foreign trade accounted for less than 1% of all task forces created. New Jersey established two task forces investigating

“

...the creation of a task force may serve as a response to these state or constituency demands. ”

matters related to Cuba. In the years since 2009, immigration policy task forces may have increased in numbers, given the recent amount of media attention and policy focus on immigration in Arizona, California, and other states. A surprisingly infrequent policy category concerned agriculture, comprising only 1% of new task forces. Given entrenched organized interests and the importance of farm policy for many states, governors may perceive little need to establish a task force to draw attention to agricultural affairs.

States exhibited diversity in terms of the policy arenas covered by advisory boards. First, governors may tailor task forces to fit the special needs of the states, as in the realm of economic policy. Second, governors might respond to a crisis or event occurring within their state. For example, in Missouri, several severe school bus accidents occurred in 2005, including one that resulted in multiple injuries and the deaths of two students, and then-Governor Matt Blunt formed a school bus safety task force.³¹ This task force did not produce a wave of school bus safety boards across America, presumably because other states experienced no fatal bus crashes.

Motivations for Task Forces and Group Representation

The content of the EOs suggest several motivations for a Governor to establish a task force. The executive order typically outlines a problem to be addressed, without the strategic rationale behind task force creation. But there are some clues about the justification behind establishment of a task force. The following list covers motivations that emerged from the EO data.³²

Development of new initiatives

In response to a perceived crisis, an event, or a growing problem, a Governor may solicit ideas for new executive or legislative proposals. The task force is then a true advisory body, making suggestions for future policy. A common directive for an advisory commission is information gathering. Likewise, planning and coordination are found in the calls for the establishment of advisory boards.

Agenda support and consensus

A task force may encourage stakeholders to adopt a proposed or modified proposal already preferred by the Governor. The advisory body may be established to pressure decisionmakers and interest groups to support and publicize a Governor's pet project. The emphasis here is on the Governor's agenda. Similarly, the commission may be formed to counter legislative, popular, or other directives for policy in order to assert the Governor's perspective.

Reactions to events and crisis

While public or media attention may raise awareness, other structural factors produce task force development. Task force creation may occur in the midst or the aftermath of crises such as storms, flooding, or drought.³³ Moreover, periodic events produce demand for advisory commissions regarding the decennial census, redistricting, and fair election

administration.

Responsiveness to constituent demands

In some cases, a Governor may want to be perceived as responsive and as addressing an intractable problem, whether or not there is actual policy change. The public may call for action, and the creation of a task force may serve as a response to these state or constituency demands. Sometimes this representation function may lead to proposed legislation or further executive activity, although raising awareness may be sufficient to satisfy public desire. This function may produce policy debate without implementation. Budgetary constraints, the need for market intervention, and/or the scope of the problem (such as poverty) may leave a Governor without the tools to resolve the problem, but establishing a task force shows concern and sensitivity. For example, a broadband initiative may be important for rural communities, but there is little direct action available for a Governor.³⁴

“

Participation of non-governmental interest groups seems to correspond to more productive advisory councils. ”

Responsiveness to national movements

Within the federal structure, national organizations may seek to pursue policy goals through coordinated, multi-state efforts. Although similar to the previous category, the stimulus here often originates from a national movement rather than from state activity alone. For example, task force creation regarding autism, human trafficking, and health care initiatives may result from a combination of internal state pressure and external national efforts.³⁵

Response to federal or external initiative

Congressional or other mandates and incentives may require the creation of a task force. For instance, certain post-9/11 federal funds were available only on the condition of establishment of an advisory commission or related action. Within the decade examined, states created task forces to select the

design for state commemorative quarters and to clean up Superfund sites.

Promotion of cooperation among stakeholders

Governors may also use task forces to alleviate conflict among agencies, groups, factions, and members of the public. The intent may be to persuade diverse interests to reduce conflict among themselves and to work together. For example, a crime task force may allow law enforcement and citizen groups that distrust one another to find common ground. Although policy recommendations may result, the motivation may be a sincere effort to bring disparate groups together to reduce discord and tension. Some boards are attempts to overcome the collective action problem by joint efforts to promote tourism, preserve historic sites, or guard against invasive species.

Conclusions and Future Directions for Research

Many task forces seem not to produce final reports or recommendations, at least not made available for public release. With little or no funding, the purpose of many gubernatorial advisory commissions seems to be articulation of interests as a key objective. Task forces

traditionally are seen by scholars as ceremonial fixes to a problem, offering no real policy solutions. Yet in practical terms, this view appears incorrect. Interest group participation suggests that these task forces are an effective form of inside lobbying, useful to advance their policy goals. Indeed, as group representatives move closer to government decision-making, they are likely to influence public policy in important ways.³⁶

This analysis does not consider what makes some task forces effective and others not. The group dynamics within the advisory body are worthy of deeper investigation. It may be that mandatory service and attendance for all members of a task force enhances a non-profit association's ability to compel meaningful interaction with state agencies.³⁷ Access to key government decisionmakers and a regular forum on policy implementation are central for group representation.

Participation of non-governmental interest groups seems to correspond to more productive advisory councils.³⁸ The Governor as task force creator sets the parameters of membership, which in turn determines the likelihood of policy recommendation success or failure. In an executive order, most advisory groups are given a directive without a specific mission statement or a manifesto. Many, perhaps most, state task forces are formed and never heard from again. What distinguishes influential and inconsequential task forces remains a question for future research.

References

1 The academic literature on presidential commissions is large. See Mirra Komarovsky, ed., *Sociology and Public Policy: The Case of Presidential Commissions*, 1975, New York: Elsevier; T. R. Tutchings, *Rhetoric and Reality: Presidential Commissions and the Making of Public Policy*, 1979, Boulder, CO: Westview Press; David Flitner, Jr., *The Politics of Presidential Commissions*, 1986, Dobbs Ferry, NY: Transnational Publishers; Janet Rogers-Clarke Johnson, and Laurence R. Marcus, *Blue Ribbon Commissions and Higher Education: Changing Academe from the Outside*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 2, 1986, Washington DC: Association for the Study of Higher Education, Publications Department; Terrence Deal, "Summits, Task forces and Commissions as Ceremonial Dance," in Rick Ginsberg and David Plank, eds., *Commissions, Reports, Reforms and Educational Policy*, 1995, Westport, CT: Praeger, pp. 119-132; David F. Linowes, *Creating Public Policy: The Chairman's Memoirs of Four Presidential Commissions*, 1998, Westport: Praeger; and Amy B. Zegert, "Blue Ribbons, Black Boxes: Toward a Better Understanding of Presidential Commissions," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 2004, 34(2): 366-393.

2 The first may be George Washington's delegation of a commission to investigate means for a peaceful resolution to the Whiskey Rebellion in western Pennsylvania in 1794.

3 Norman C. Thomas and Harold L. Wolman, "The Presidency and Policy Formulation: The Task Force Device," *Public Administration Review*, 1969, 29(5): 459. Frequent use of commission members outside government began as President-elect John Kennedy utilized policy task forces to provide information and recommendations on a range of domestic and foreign policies prior to his inauguration. Kennedy paved the way for Lyndon Johnson and his advisors to employ an even larger number of policy task forces. The Johnson Administration used policy task forces extensively to foster different solutions for a host of domestic policy problems from civil rights to housing.

4 For example, on taking office in 1993, Bill Clinton immediately formed a task force to develop a universal health care plan. George W. Bush established a task force on the delivery of health care services to veterans in 2001. Barack Obama established the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing to address rising concerns over questionable police conduct. Donald Trump created task forces on policies ranging from cryptocurrency to missing aboriginal women to the coronavirus. Joe Biden followed with task forces ranging from supply chain disruption during the pandemic to artificial intelligence to restoring salmon in the Columbia River.

5 Zegert, 2004.

6 Steven J. Balla and John R. Wright, "Interest Groups, Advisory Committees, and Congressional Control of the Bureaucracy," *American Journal of Political Science*, 2001, 45:799-812.

7 Anthony J. Nownes and Patricia Freeman, "Interest Group Activity in the States," *Journal of Politics*, 1998, 60(1): 86-112.

8 Kay Lehman Schlozman and John T. Tierney, *Organized Interests and American Democracy*, 1986, New York: Harper and Row. The estimate for groups at the federal level was likewise 76%.

9 Jay K. Dow and James W. Endersby, "Campaign Contributions and Legislative Voting in the California Assembly." *American Politics Quarterly*, 1994, 22(3): 334-353; Virginia Gray and David Lowery, *The Population Ecology of Interest Representation: Lobbying Communities in the American States*, 1996, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press; Jay K. Dow, James W. Endersby, and Charles E. Menifield, "The Industrial Structure of the California Assembly: Committee Assignments, Economic Interests, and Campaign Contributions," *Public Choice*, 1998, 94: 67-83; Nownes and Freeman 1998; Anthony Nownes, Clive S. Thomas, and Ronald J. Hrebennar, "Interest Groups in the States," in Virginia Gray and Russell L. Hanson, eds., *Politics in the American States*, 9th ed., 2008, Washington, DC: CQ Press.

10 Steven J. Tepper, "Setting Agendas and Designing Alternatives: Policymaking and the Strategic Role of Meetings," *Review of Policy Research*, 2004, 21(4): 523-542.

11 Margaret R. Ferguson and Cynthia J. Bowling, "Executive Orders and Administrative Control," *Public Administrative Review*, 2008, 68(Supp): S20-S28.

12 E. Lee Bernick and Charles W. Wiggins, "The Governor's Executive Order: An Unknown Power," *State and Local Government Review*, 1984, 16(1): 3-10.

13 Mark Ritchey and Sean Nicholson-Crotty, "Blue Ribbon' Commissions, Interest Groups, and the Formulation of Policy in the American States," *Policy Studies Journal*, 2015, 43(1): 70-92 and Mitchell Dylan Sellers, "Gubernatorial Use of Executive Orders: Unilateral Action and Policy Adoption," *Journal of Public Policy*, 2017, 37 (3): 315-339.

14 Maxim Gakh, Jon S. Vernick, and Lainie Rutkow, "Using Gubernatorial Executive Orders to Advance Public Health," *Public Health Reports*, 2013, 128(2): 127-130.

15 Steven J. Balla, "Administrative Procedures and Political Control of the Bureaucracy," *American Political Science Review*, 1998, 92(3): 663-673.

16 *The Book of the States* (2019, Lexington, KY: Council of State Governments, pp. 112-113) lists four states without specific authorization for establishment of these councils, but all four states (AK, ND, WA, WY) are in the sample and have governors that issue EOs.

17 Current Governors may publicize their EOs, but not those of their predecessors. States also vary regarding the authority of earlier EOs. In Oklahoma, for example, previous EOs terminate 90 days after the inauguration of a new Governor (75 O.S., Section 256). This may produce a gap between the term of a current Governor and the time state libraries or archives make historical documents publicly and easily available.

18 The comprehensive inventory of Missouri EOs is provided by the Office of the Secretary of State and the Missouri State Archives. EOs are listed chronologically with a link to the full text of each Order. See <https://www.sos.mo.gov/library/reference/orders/>. Overall, accessing executive orders remains tedious and cumbersome.

19 EO data are unavailable in a consistent form for 14 states. No relevant bias in terms of region, population, or partisanship is observable for states with public archives of gubernatorial executive orders.

20 How frequently state legislatures or administrative officers establish task forces is unclear, but some do. Legislative task forces may differ from those created by executives. Mark P. Petracca, "Federal Advisory Committees, Interest Groups, and the Administrative State," *Congress and the Presidency*, 2016, 13(1): 83-114, finds that congressional advisory commissions may emphasize representation of interest groups more than presidential commissions. This pattern may transfer to the states. Anecdotal evidence suggests that, like agency representation on gubernatorial committees, many state legislative task forces tend to be comprised of legislators and staff only. However, we are also aware of some legislative task forces with interest group membership. EOs, however, are official proclamations that are open and retained by state archives.

21 Of course, the term "task force" also applies to many other types of ad hoc and continuing working groups.

22 Not every EO was specific on membership composition; some simply allowed the Governor or another public official to select participants later. For inclusion in the data, the EO must have explicitly or implicitly identify representation from at least one organized group outside government.

23 Administrative Order Nos. 232 (February 15, 2007), 233 (March 28, 2007), and 241 (July 1, 2008). As the first example shows, the number of group representatives cannot be counted using the EO alone.

24 Some executive working groups were not coded as task forces. An order to promote coordination among existing executive agencies, to fashion a Cabinet committee to focus on a given policy agenda, or to reshuffle executive staff positions was excluded from the sample. In these cases, the working group involved no direct outreach to non-governmental groups, and the purpose of the EO was to improve executive branch coordination and communication. So, these

organizations have an internal focus only and they are not policy task forces in the traditional sense. For these governmental working groups, membership was often limited to the heads of various departments and agencies or their delegates. These governmental working groups were permanent, or at least semi-permanent, through the Governor's administration. In addition, a small number of commissions were composed of government officials along with public or partisan representation from geographic or other sectors or with a general acknowledgement of the need for expertise. These were excluded from the sample as no organized group is identified even in the most general terms.

25 Other EOs also modified, reauthorized, or abolished existing advisory boards, but those orders were excluded. These other cases modifying task forces appear to be nearly half the size of the original task force sample. These omitted EOs involved gubernatorial directives to extend an existing task force's work, modify membership or other parameters for the task force, or terminate a task force. Only the initial task force organization was counted, as extensions or modifications are redundant and may bias the sample due to extraneous factors (state law, change of governor or party). The objective here is to enumerate and categorize the variety of task forces created. A newly elected Governor may discontinue the previous incumbent's commissions, perhaps reorganizing or reauthorizing a few. Similarly, an incumbent Governor may redirect or terminate a task force later in the term. A few were authorized only for a narrow time period. Although a few governors were proactive at terminating advisory councils, most task forces seemed to wither away from political obsolescence. In our data collection, we did not encounter an addition of an organized group representative to a council where none previously existed. Of course, this remains a possibility for other EOs not in the sample. Only one EO created more than one task force, although several directives outside the sample modified or terminated the activities of multiple advisory councils.

26 An existing framework, the Policy Agendas Project provides a satisfactory guide for associating task forces with recognized policy domains, divided into 21 different policies ranging from agriculture to social welfare. Two of the subjects—international affairs and operations of federal government—are omitted, leaving 19 policy topics for state task forces. See Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, *The Politics of Information Problem Definition and the Course of Public Policy in America*, 2014, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

27 One of three individuals reviewed each state's executive orders over the decade, identified those establishing task forces, and coded for policy area. For six randomly selected states, two individuals created the sample and coded each task force executive order.

28 Anecdotal evidence suggests that numbers of executive orders and task force creations surged during and after the coronavirus pandemic. Those numbers are not included here. For EOs, see Carol Weissert, Matthew J. Uttermark, Kenneth R. Mackie, and Alexandra Artiles, "Governors in Control: Executive Orders, State-Local Preemption, and the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Publius*, 2021, 51(3): 396-428.

29 A task force focusing on veterans' care falls under defense policy instead of health. Thus, the coding mechanism may underestimate health policy as a priority for task force creation. This procedure follows Baumgartner and Jones (2014) to allow comparison with other studies.

30 This rate might be underestimated as the Policy Agendas Project classifies medical employment matters under the health category and public employment concerns under government operations.

31 Missouri Executive Order 05-14.

32 Governors are probably not unique among government officials regarding their reasons for establishing task forces. Although the data are from state executive orders, it might be reasonable to substitute a legislature, executive officer, or other political actors in this list of justification for task force creation. Of course, there may be multiple motivations for task force creation.

33 Although not found within this data, for EOs in 2020, we would add public health emergencies to the list.

34 We suspect Governors may also create a task force for public policy change they oppose. Groups and the public are represented at some level, interests are articulated, but no policy change is enacted. This may be why comparatively few produce recommendations, reports, and subsequent governmental action. Is it also consistent with the consensus of scholarship regarding presidential commissions.

35 Evidence is strong that task forces led to the likelihood of adoption of state laws in case studies of autism and human trafficking. See Ritchey and Nicholson-Crotty (2015) and James W. Endersby, Mark L. Ritchey, and Aime Hogue Rovelo, "Human Trafficking Task Forces: Interest Group Representation and Effectiveness," paper presented at the Southern Political Science Association, 2021. Maxim Gakh, "Made to Order: Using Gubernatorial Executive Orders to Promote Health in All Policies," *Chronicles of Health Impact Assessment*, 2019, 4(1): 1-15, reaches a similar conclusion regarding broad health care initiatives.

36 Sarah F. Anzia and Terry M. Moe, "Interest Groups on the Inside: The Governance of Public Pension Funds," *Perspectives on Politics*, 2019, 17(4): 1059-1078.

37 This is the case regarding successful passage and implementation of safe harbor laws to deal with human trafficking. Brandn Green, Stephen V. Gies, Eoin B. Healy, and Amanda Bobnis, “Safe Harbor Laws: Changing the Legal Response to Minors Involved in Commercial Sex, Phase 3. The Qualitative Analysis,” 2018, Bethesda, MD: Development Services Group.

38 For detail on this point, see Ritchey and Nicholson-Crotty 2015 and Endersby, Ritchey, and Rovelo 2021.



Institute of Public Policy
University of Missouri

137 Middlebush Hall
University of Missouri Columbia, MO 65211

The University of Missouri does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, protected veteran status, and any other status protected by applicable state or federal law.