Let the Buyer Beware: Governors, Career Paths and Public Corruption in Ten States

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Despite extensive research into state government corruption, little is known about when or why governors engage in corruption. This article presents a study of ten states and examines the previously unexplored possibility that career path plays an important role. It finds that state government insiders are more likely than outsiders to engage in corruption as governor. This is an important issue, since many governors will continue to have been socialized in the state legislature before assuming office.

Since 2000, several major state government financial and political scandals have involved the conviction of two Illinois governors, the resignation of New Jersey’s governor, the conviction of Alabama’s governor, and a guilty plea by Connecticut’s chief executive. While corruption by governors is not the norm, neither is it rare. Sabato (1978) found that scandal accounted for 25 percent of incumbent governor’s defeats from 1950 and 1975. Since 1970, as Ferguson (2013) noted, “twenty-three governors have been removed from office by criminal court decision or impeachment, or they chose to resign in the face of scandals” (p. 240).

Yet little is known about when or why governors engage in corruption. One possibility is the political culture of the state, but this factor leaves much to be explained (Elazar, 1994). For example, Illinois and Pennsylvania are both individualistic states reputed to be among the most corrupt, but gubernatorial corruption is not a problem in Pennsylvania. Party affiliation does not seem important either (Holbrook & La Raja, 2013), because leaders from both parties have engaged in corrupt practices. Does this mean that corruption is purely idiosyncratic? One unexplored possibility is that career paths may play an important role, with state government insiders more likely than outsiders to become corrupt.

Looking at the potential for corruption among governors is important for several reasons. First, corruption is far more likely in some states than others. Second, governors are important political actors, and their corruption can disrupt state governance for years. Third, it may be possible to reduce the potential for corruption. This article examines the literature on governmental corruption in the states, presents a research plan, explores the relationship between career paths and corruption, and assesses the findings.
A seminal essay on corruption in state government by James Q. Wilson (1966) identifies three major theories of government corruption. First, a particular political style or ethos with a high regard for “favors, personal loyalty, and private gain” dominates some states at the expense of “probity” and “efficiency.” Second, politicians face “extraordinary temptations”; stated simply, “Politicians are corrupt because businessmen bribe them” (Wilson, 1966, p. 31). Third, highly fragmented governments create opportunities for corruption because trading favors is necessary to expedite governmental action. While Wilson’s insights may explain general levels of state corruption, he does not address variations between states.

In the 1970s, students of state politics began examining factors accounting for variations in state and local corruption and identified socio-economic, demographic and political variables linked to higher levels of corruption. Relevant factors related to state corruption included per capita income and education (Alt & Lassen, 2008; Meier & Holbrook, 1992), inequality (Uslaner, 2008), the scale of government and presence of divided government (Alt & Lassen, 2008), and political culture (Johnston, 1983). However, these studies contain several limitations when it comes to understanding state government.

First, they are based on Department of Justice data that combine state and local convictions (Simpson et al., 2012). This often results in placing states with large numbers of local governments near the top of the resulting list of corrupt states. The standard correction for variation in the number of governments is to create a per capita measure of convictions, but a relatively small number of convictions in less populous states can greatly skew the ratings. Additionally, since the majority of public corruption convictions are at the local government level, there is a level-of-analysis problem when it comes to state government. Another weakness is that all convictions are given the same weight, even though corruption that involves small local governments is less significant than gubernatorial corruption. Finally, the literature focuses on differences across states without explaining variations in corruption within individual states over time.

Career paths may explain why some leaders are more likely than others to become corrupt. Generally, it is thought that career paths are important. As Ferguson (2013) notes, “where you have been makes a difference,” and experience as a state lawmaker or in law enforcement is the most common career path (p. 210). Yet little research exists on the relationship between career path and job performance. One exception is Rosenthal’s (2013) qualitative study of governors, which argues that “the best preparation for their policy making role is having served in the legislature” (p. 62), and “perhaps one of the least useful avenues of preparation is law enforcement” (p. 60). Students of organizational leadership also suggest that career paths are significant. For example, Mukunda (2012) studied performance differences between “filtered” leaders (or insiders) and “unfiltered” leaders (or outsiders) and argues that filtered leaders act in more predictable ways than outsiders. Other research suggests that long tenure within an organizational culture can produce leaders who become ethically compromised through a slow, step-by-step process of “ethical fading” whereby each unethical act is incrementally more serious than previous violations (Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011).
This investigation examines the relationship between gubernatorial career paths and governmental corruption in ten states between 1980 and 2010. While Thompson (2000) identifies sex, political and power scandals as three types of political scandals, this research focuses on the latter two types—financial and political—because sex scandals are different. Thompson (2000) notes that “many sexual-political scandals (and the vast majority today) do not involve criminal offenses” (p. 120). Thompson (2000) defines financial scandals as involving “the misuse of money or other financial irregularities” (p. 159) and power scandals as “activities which contravene or seek to circumvent the rules, laws and established procedures that govern the exercise of political power” (p. 196).

The study of political corruption is obviously complicated by the fact that the behavior is designed to remain secret. Given that limitation, the focus is on financial and political corruption that triggers an official action, such as an indictment, conviction, or sanction by an ethics panel, and/or a response such as impeachment or resignation. The study looks at corrupt activities undertaken by governors or their alter egos, the chiefs of staff. Corruption elsewhere in the executive branch is not considered unless it is clearly linked to the governor.

The potential linkage between career paths and wrongdoing is examined in states where corruption is more common. The most widely available data on official corruption are a compilation of federal convictions of state and local officials by the Public Integrity Section of the U.S. Department of Justice. While this data set has limitations, such as not including convictions in state courts and not separating state and local convictions, it covers an extended period since 1976. Another source is a survey of state political reporters (Boylan & Long, 2003). Comparing the two lists helps to eliminate some states where the evidence is contradictory. For example, state and local government convictions per capita are high in South Dakota and North Dakota, but expert observers place them at the bottom of Boylan and Long’s list of corrupt states. Given the goal of explaining gubernatorial corruption by looking at high-corruption states, this preliminary study examines ten of these states: Illinois, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, Alabama, Louisiana, West Virginia, Oklahoma, and Arizona. This sample is large enough to include urban and rural states and states in several regions of the nation.

Governors were classified as insiders or outsiders in a manner similar to Mukunda’s (2012) categories of filtered and unfiltered leaders. The career paths of all governors serving at least two years in the years from 1980 to 2010 are examined. Rosenthal (2013) refers to this period as the era of “contemporary governorship” after the modernization of state legislatures (p. 11). Mukunda suggests eight to ten years of national experience as a threshold test for filtered leaders. Similarly, governors were classified as insiders if they had ten or more years of elected public service that started as a state legislator or over ten years in statewide elective office. Typically, the insiders started as state lawmakers and advanced to such posts as secretary of state, lieutenant governor, or congressman. The outsiders included governors who were new or relatively new to statewide elective office. Many came from law enforcement careers, and some had moved into politics after business careers. Former officials who were elected governor after ten or more years out of office were also classified as outsiders.
Illinois and New Jersey: Trouble on the Inside

The long history of political corruption in Illinois often centers on the governor. For example, Governor Otto Kerner accepted stock options from a racetrack owner in the 1960s in return for awarding favorable racing dates. While serving as a federal judge, the former governor was convicted on 17 counts of mail fraud, conspiracy, perjury and income-tax charges for receiving stock options (Barnhart & Schlickman, 1999). In 1976, voters elected Kerner’s prosecutor, former U.S. attorney Republican James Thompson, as governor.

After Thompson’s 14 clean years as governor, Illinois entered an era of questionable ethics by several governors. Citizens elected Republican James Edgar in 1990. An insider, Edgar served two terms in the legislature before his appointment to a vacancy as secretary of state. Edgar twice won that post before becoming governor in 1990. One major scandal tainted Edgar’s legacy. Management Services of Illinois Inc. won a state contract that eventually cost the state $12.9 million in inflated costs. The original contract for $409,000 exploded in cost after lobbying produced a contract rewritten on terms more favorable to the company. MSI and its employees donated over $270,000 in cash and services to Edgar’s campaign and provided gifts to several of Edgar’s appointees. Prosecutors convicted company and state agency officials, and named Edgar’s deputy chief of staff and patronage chief as unindicted co-conspirators (Long, 2000). While not personally implicated, Edgar chose not to seek reelection in 1998.

Things soon got worse. Insider Governor George Ryan was convicted in a corruption scandal after he advanced on the political ladder: state legislator, speaker of the house, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, and governor. While Ryan was secretary of state, his subordinates solicited bribes to issue commercial truck-driving licenses by selling tickets to fundraisers. Following a family’s death in an accident caused by an improperly licensed driver, scandal spread, resulting in convictions of over 80 individuals during the 1990s (Hammer, 2010). Ryan denied involvement or knowledge, won reelection as secretary of state in 1994, and captured the governorship in 1998. However, an ongoing federal investigation followed him and uncovered evidence that Governor Ryan also steered contracts to friends and allies in return for campaign contributions, cash, and vacations (Merriner, 2008). Ryan did not stand for reelection in 2002. Convicted in 2006 on 18 counts of corruption, Ryan was sentenced by the judge to six and one half years in federal prison.

In 2002, another insider, Democrat Rudy Blagojevich, took office. A three-term congressman, Blagojevich started as a state representative after marrying the daughter of a powerful Chicago council member. Almost immediately, close associates hatched plans to enrich themselves, the campaign fund, and the governor (Brackett, 2009). For instance, a gubernatorial appointment might cost up to $25,000. A Blagojevich appointee to the Teachers Retirement System and Health Facilities planning boards steered contracts to favored consultants in return for campaign contributions. He also coerced hospitals seeking approval for expansion plans to “pay to play” (Brackett, 2009). Three out of every four of the 235 members of the $25,000 “Governor’s Club” received “something from the state in return—state contracts, board appointments, a favorable action on policy or regulatory issues” (Brackett, 2009, p. 157). Additionally, Blagojevich fundraiser Tony Resko arranged for Patti Blagojevich to receive over $700,000 in real estate commissions on transactions involving donors or state contractors.
(Brackett, 2009, p. 137). Resko also employed Mrs. Blagojevich as a $12,000-a-month real estate consultant (Coen & Chase, 2012, pp. 327–328).

Things began to fall apart soon after a federal investigation, Operation Board Games, produced Resko’s 2008 conviction for extortion. After losing Resko’s subsidies, Blagojevich sought a job for himself or his wife in return for appointing a Senate replacement for President-elect Obama. Following his indictment, Blagojevich was impeached and removed from office. In 2010, he was convicted on only one of 24 counts, lying to the FBI, but a 2011 retrial produced a guilty verdict on 17 charges. The judge sentenced Blagojevich to 14 years in prison.

Following Blagojevich’s removal, Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn, a former elected state treasurer with eight years of experience in the two posts, became governor and was elected in 2010. Quinn appears to have broken a decade-long streak of executive corruption. Thus, only the two outsiders, Thompson and Quinn, remained free of scandal. The insiders left a different legacy; the Ryan and Blagojevich scandals amounted to large systematic enterprises.

New Jersey also show the risks associated with the insider career path. When outsiders win election in New Jersey, gubernatorial impropriety has not been an issue. For example, Salmore and Salmore (1993) conclude that Governor Brendan Byrne (1974–1982), a former state judge, campaigned and served with “uncompromising rectitude” (p. 305). Similarly, Governors Christie Todd Whitman, a former local elected official, and Jon Corzine, a Wall Street executive and U.S. senator, both avoided scandals during their gubernatorial tenures, and so has the present incumbent, former U.S. attorney Chris Christie.

When legislative insiders rose to the governorship, the record was mixed. Republican Thomas Kean became governor in 1982 following ten years as a lawmaker. While Kean avoided scandal, major cases of official corruption followed the election of two other former state lawmakers as governor. Governor James Florio served four years in the legislature and in Congress before serving one term as governor starting in 1990. Two top advisors, including chief of staff Joe Salema, profited from investments in nursing homes by encouraging state decisions limiting the construction of new nursing homes (Ingle & McClure, 2008, p. 21). Additionally, tax-exempt bonds became a center of pay-to-play practices. Salema selected underwriting firms for state bond sales and hid his stake in a small financial services firm. He encouraged underwriters to include his firm in sales syndicates, and it received over $1 million in underwriting fees from the firms handpicked by Salema. After this scandal broke, he resigned and later pled guilty to accepting over $200,000 in kickbacks.

In 2001, New Jersey elected James McGreevey, a veteran state senator and township mayor. He resigned in November 2004 after acknowledging his homosexuality and admitting an extramarital affair with his homeland security advisor, an Israeli citizen, who lacked the security clearance needed for the post. The media feeding frenzy surrounding his resignation overshadowed other scandals. Two McGreevey advisors, “the Billboard Boys,” created an outdoor advertising business that profited from state approval of prime locations on the Atlantic City Expressway. They sold the business for a $2.2 million profit days before joining the state payroll as, respectively, his chief of staff and legal counsel (Ingle & McClure, 2008, pp. 37–38). They later resigned following disclosure of the scheme. McGreevey’s commerce secretary also resigned following reports of transferring state funds to family and personal businesses. Finally, the governor’s top fundraiser was convicted for demanding $40,000 in cash and contributions to influence McGreevey to increase the state’s offer to purchase development rights from a farmer.
Three Northeastern States: Outsiders Avoid Corruption

In three other northeastern states, outsider governors avoided corruption scandals despite the prevalence of corruption within the state legislatures. For example, since 1978 outsider governors have avoided any hint of official corruption in Pennsylvania despite a history of corruption by state lawmakers that dates from the 1840s (Bowers, 1983). After the Civil War, reform produced a new constitution in 1874 designed to curb legislative corruption, but throughout the Gilded Age corruption flourished. Indeed, as late as the 1960s, the governor presided over a patronage army of 50,000. Moreover, in the 1970s, Governor Milton Shapp saw three cabinet members, the Pennsylvania Turnpike chairman, and the state police commissioner convicted for corruption.

Dick Thornburgh’s 1978 election started a long run of anti-corruption governors. A former U.S. attorney and assistant attorney general who prosecuted public corruption cases, Thornburgh (2003) recalled that “the most potent argument for [his] prospective candidacy derived from genuine public concern about corruption and mismanagement in state government” (p. 74). Other outsiders followed. In 1986, Robert P. Casey became governor after a decade outside of state government. Earlier, as the elected auditor general, Casey established a strong record for honesty (Beers, 1980, p. 411). The next three governors presented law enforcement credentials: Congressman Tom Ridge, a former assistant district attorney; Ed Rendell, a former district attorney and mayor; and state attorney general Tom Corbett. Two long-time observers (Madonna & Young, 2007) wrote, “Gubernatorial leadership has been consistently anti-corruption since the scandals of the Shapp administration. Beginning with Dick Thornburgh in 1979, Pennsylvania has elected a series of governors who would not tolerate corruption” (p. 1).

The New York governorship is a big prize that regularly attracts big names and they have avoided the taint of corruption that surrounds the legislature. As outsiders to Albany, both Congressman, Hugh Carey and his one-term lieutenant governor, Mario Cuomo, served without scandal during a combined 20 years in office. As McElvaine (1988) noted, “Cuomo has demonstrated on a couple of occasions that anyone who is shown to have engaged in corruption will be ousted immediately” (p. 319). In 1994, Cuomo lost to George Pataki, a ten-year veteran state legislator, who served 12 years and was not linked to corruption. Eliot Spitzer, New York’s high-profile attorney general, won the governorship in 2006 after prosecuting white-collar crime and securities fraud. He resigned after 14 months in office over a sex scandal involving prostitutes (Elkind, 2010), and is excluded from this analysis.

The next two governors showed the differences between insiders and outsiders. Lieutenant Governor David Paterson replaced Spitzer, and his short tenure demonstrated the risks associated with an insider career path. A 20-year state senator, he stumbled into repeated controversies. One involved a slot machine operating contract at Aqueduct Race Track, where the last-minute inclusion of affirmative action requirements favored the governor’s associates. Paterson also may have encouraged state police witness-tampering in a domestic abuse case involving a top staffer. Finally, the Commission on Public Integrity fined him $62,125 for lying about soliciting free World Series tickets. More recently, another Albany outsider, Attorney General Andrew Cuomo, won election in 2010 and established a strong reputation on governmental integrity. This reinforces the pattern of outsiders avoiding corruption scandals while serving as New York’s governor.
Recent Massachusetts governors have also avoided financial and political scandal despite the state’s long history of governmental corruption. For example, in the 1960s the attorney general indicted two dozen state officials (Wilson, 1966, p. 29). Moreover, since 1996 prosecutors have convicted three speakers of the House of Representatives. More recently, governors have avoided political and financial scandal. After serving eight years in the legislature (followed by four years out of office) reformer Michael Dukakis became governor in 1974 and tackled government corruption. Gaines and Segal (1987) quote one political fixer testifying before a state commission on corruption who exclaimed: “When he came in there were no open hands, and the game was over” (p. 173).

Thereafter, voters regularly selected outsiders. Democrat Edward King, a former Massachusetts Port Authority executive, unseated Dukakis in a 1978 primary, and Dukakis returned for two more terms in the 1980s. Republican U.S. Attorney William Weld won twice in the 1990s. Lieutenant Governor Paul Cellucci, a 14-year legislative veteran, became governor following Weld’s 1997 resignation. Mitt Romney followed, and in 2006 voters elected Democrat Deval Patrick, a former assistant U.S. attorney general. All six governors—one insider, Cellucci, and five outsiders—avoided corruption scandals.

Three Southern States: Insiders Do the Most Damage

In three southern states, Alabama, Louisiana, and West Virginia, four governors—three insiders and one outsider—were convicted during these years. In Alabama, five men served as governor and two were convicted of official corruption. One outsider, Guy Hunt, the first Republican governor since Reconstruction, resigned in 1993 following conviction for theft and conspiracy involving misuse of $200,000 in campaign funds. The other outsider, former congressman Bob Riley, served from 2002 to 2010. Two insiders also served as governor without an issue of corruption arising: Democrat Fob James, a businessperson, and former governor and presidential candidate George Wallace, who served a third gubernatorial term in the 1980s. However, another insider, Don Siegelman, was convicted of official corruption in 2006. A former secretary of state, attorney general, and lieutenant governor, Democrat Siegelman narrowly lost a 2002 reelection bid. In 2004, he was indicted on federal charges that were dropped immediately prior to trial. He was indicted again in 2005, and convicted on seven charges relating to bribery, mail fraud, and obstruction of justice for trading favors with Richard Scrushy, CEO of Health South, who contributed $500,000 to Siegelman’s campaign to create a state lottery in return for a seat on a health regulatory board.

In Louisiana, the flamboyant insider governor Edwin Edwards, who served four terms as governor between 1972 and 1996, overshadowed the four outsiders who avoided corruption: Congressmen David Treen and Charles (Buddy) Roemer; Republican Mike Foster, a wealthy businessman and eight-year state senator; and current governor and former two-term congressman Bobby Jindal. Insider Kathleen Blanco, a former state lawmaker and elected public service commissioner, also avoided corruption issues during one term notable for a weak response to Hurricane Katrina.

By the time Edwards became governor in 1984, he was a state legislative veteran, a former congressman, and a two-term governor from 1972 to 1980. As early as the 1970s, he was linked to questionable campaign contributions. In the 1980s, a jury acquitted Governor Edwards on charges involving bribes of almost $2 million from state hospital vendors. After losing a
reelection bid, Edwards secured a fourth term in 1991. A high-flyer with a gambling habit, Edwards was convicted in 2000 on 17 counts involving bribes linked to granting riverboat casino-gambling licenses (Bridges, 2001).

In West Virginia, three outsiders avoided corruption scandals: Jay Rockefeller, who served as governor after six years in elective office; Gaston Caperton, an insurance executive; and former governor Cecil Underwood, who returned to office over 30 years after his first term ended. Additionally, two insiders were not involved in official corruption: veteran state lawmaker and congressman Bob Wise, and Joe Manchin a former state legislator and secretary.

Another insider, Republican Arch Moore, joined the state legislature in 1952 and Congress in 1957. He also served as governor from 1969 until 1977. A jury acquitted Moore in 1977 on federal charges of extorting $25,000 from a firm seeking a state bank charter. After losing a 1978 Senate bid and another governor’s race, Moore reclaimed the governorship in 1984. Moore pled guilty in 1990 to five federal charges of accepting illegal payments during his 1984 and 1988 campaigns, extortion, and obstruction of justice. Later he tried unsuccessfully to withdraw his guilty plea and served over two years in federal prison (Crouser, 2008).

Two Western States: Businesspersons Cause Trouble

Unlike the other states in the study, in Oklahoma and Arizona outsiders engaged in corrupt activities. Between 1980 and 2010, of five Oklahoma governors, only one was linked to corruption. Insider Governor George Nigh (1979–1987) entered office after serving in the legislature and as lieutenant governor. Democrat Brad Henry was elected governor in 2002 after a decade in the state senate. Both served without being touched by scandal. Two Republican outsiders also avoided ethical challenges. Henry Bellmon served only two years in the legislature years before becoming governor in the 1960. He also was a U.S. senator from 1969 to 1981. Bellmon won a second term as governor in 1986. Frank Keating served in the legislature and held a variety of federal law enforcement posts before his 1994 election. However, one outsider elected during this era became involved in a campaign finance scandal. David Walters worked as a real estate executive prior to winning the governorship in 1990. Following a three-year federal investigation into campaign finance irregularities, Walters pled guilty to misdemeanor charges and did not run for reelection in 1994.

Seven individuals have served as Arizona’s governor since 1980. All three Arizona insiders were scandal free. They were women who had moved up from secretary of state upon a governor’s removal or resignation: Rose Mofford, Jane Hull, and Jan Brewer. Additionally, two outsiders, Bruce Babbitt and Janet Napolitano, both former state attorneys general, did not tolerate corruption.

On the other hand, corruption scandals consumed two outsiders who became governor after business careers. Evan Mecham’s 1986 election as governor followed only one term in the state senate in the 1960s and six unsuccessful bids for higher office. After capturing 40 percent of the vote in a three-way race, he soon became engulfed in controversy following cancellation of the Martin Luther King holiday and racially offensive remarks. After barely one year in office, the state house impeached him on a 46–14 vote on charges of concealing a $350,000 campaign contribution, misusing state funds for his Pontiac dealership, and obstructing justice. In April 1988, the senate convicted him, thereby removing him from office (Johnson, 2002).
In 1997, another Republican outsider, the former real estate developer Fife Symington, resigned from office following conviction on federal charges related to questionable loans in his earlier business career. In 1997, Symington was convicted of seven counts of fraud after lengthy jury deliberations. In 1999 the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals overturned the conviction because the trial judge had dismissed a sympathetic juror in the middle of deliberations. In 2001, President Clinton pardoned Symington, who, as a college student in the 1960s, had pulled the future president from a riptide in the Atlantic Ocean.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

These ten states illustrate the persistence of scandal. Excluding Symington’s conviction for his private business affairs before becoming governor, almost 20 percent (or 11 of 57) of the governors were touched by corruption scandals. Nonetheless, when voters selected an outsider as governor, the risk of corruption was much lower (see Table 1). Only three of the 35 outsiders, or 8 percent, faced political or financial corruption scandals. Significantly, not one of the 13 outsiders who served in a legal post like attorney general or U.S. attorney was involved in corruption. The only state attorney general involved in corruption was Alabama’s Siegelman, an insider who had spent 16 of 20 years in other elective positions.

Alternatively, electing insiders presented greater risks. Eight of the 22 insiders (or 36 percent) became embroiled in political or financial corruption scandals. Five were convicted (Ryan, Blagojevich, Moore, Siegelman, and Edwards) and three (Patterson, Florio, and McGreevey) were soiled by personal corruption or by their chief of staff.

Numerous factors can explain the potential for corruption. One is the pressure to build a multimillion-dollar campaign war chest. Further, recent reforms have given state governors

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Corruption</th>
<th>Insider career path</th>
<th>Outsider career path</th>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>IL – Edgar</td>
<td>PA – Thornburgh, Casey, Ridge, Rendell, Corbett</td>
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<td></td>
<td>NY – Pataki</td>
<td>IL – Thompson, Quinn</td>
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<td></td>
<td>MA – Cellucci</td>
<td>NY – Carey, M. Cuomo, A. Cuomo</td>
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<td></td>
<td>NJ – Kean</td>
<td>MA – King, Dukakis, Weld, Romney, Patrick</td>
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<td>WV – Wise, Manchin</td>
<td>NJ – Byrne, Whitman, Corzine, Christie</td>
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<td></td>
<td>AL – James, Wallace</td>
<td>WV – Rockefeller, Caperton, Underwood</td>
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<td>OK – Nigh, Henry</td>
<td>AL – Riley</td>
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<td></td>
<td>AZ – Mofford, Hull, Brewer</td>
<td>OK – Bellmon, Keating</td>
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<td></td>
<td>LA – Blanco</td>
<td>AZ – Babbitt, Symington, Napolitano</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>LA – Treen, Roemer, Foster, Jindal</td>
</tr>
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| Yes        | IL – Ryan, Blagojevich | AL – Hunt |
|            | NY – Paterson         | AZ – Mecham |
|            | NJ – Florio, McGreevey| OK – Walters |
|            | WV – Moore            | (3) |
|            | AL – Siegelman        | |
|            | LA – Edwards          | |

(8)
significant powers, and in some states they can expect to serve eight or more years. The growth of administrative discretion over issues involving huge sums of money vastly increases the temptations leaders face. In areas such as health facility expansion, awarding gaming licenses and contracts for bond underwriting or pension fund management, the prospects for large profits for favored firms creates an environment with the potential for large-scale corruption. Insiders may be more vulnerable to corruption because, as Wilson (1966) once remarked, “Corruption is the result of ordinary men facing extraordinary temptations” (p. 30). As insiders advance on the political career ladder, they steadily accumulate power and influence. Temptations can start small and grow over time.

On the positive side, in many states outsiders regularly contend for the governorship, and in some states this seems to have significantly reduced the likelihood for large-scale executive corruption. One key lesson seems to be that the career path of a potential governor can matter. While Rosenthal (2013) asserts that legislative service is “the best preparation” for a gubernatorial policymaking role (p. 62), governors play many roles. They are not just policymakers. As helpful as legislative experience can be in developing and selling policy, the downside may be the increased potential for ethically compromised leadership. On the other hand, outsiders from a law enforcement background may or may not lack broad experience in public policymaking, but they rarely engage in the ethical misconduct that triggers a conviction, a resignation, or a governmental crisis.

If state legislatures consistently produce high-quality leaders, as they surely do in some states, insiders may have advantages as gubernatorial contenders. Nonetheless, the candidacy of insiders needs to be evaluated carefully, since most lawmakers escape careful scrutiny of their ethics while serving in a large legislative body where so much happens off-stage. Each career path carries both risks and opportunities, and many exemplary leaders have risen from each route. Nonetheless, there does seem to be an enhanced risk of corruption associated with the insider career path that remains an incubator for many future governors. Since 1980, 39 percent of all governors have started their political careers in the state legislature (Ferguson, 2013, p. 211). If many future governors continue to be socialized in the legislature before becoming chief executive, the issue of official corruption may not be going away. With almost 20 percent of the governors in ten diverse states involved in corruption, clearly there is a need for a closer look at the forces at work.

REFERENCES


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