



The Evolution of the Civil Service System in the United States

NCGG Webinar Series

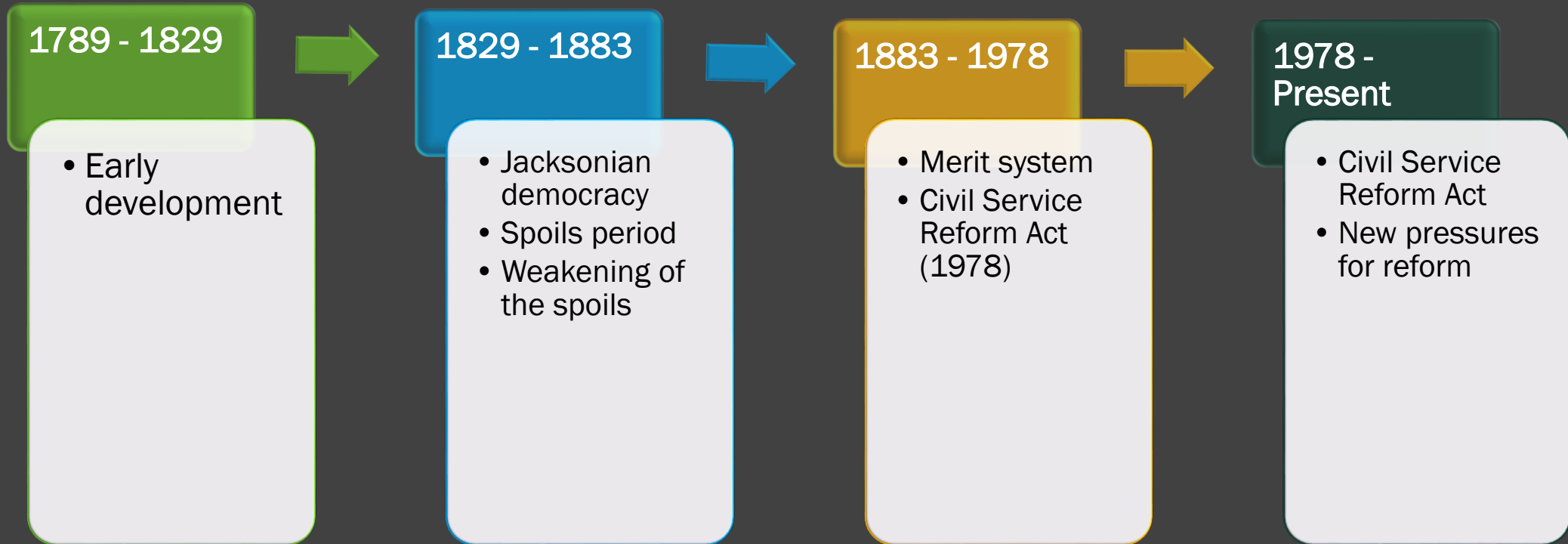
Dr. Meghna Sabharwal

**Professor and Department Head, Public and Nonprofit
Management Program, The University of Texas at Dallas**

Meghna.Sabharwal@utdallas.edu



The Evolution of the Public Personnel System in the US





The Early Roots (1789-1829)

President George Washington is usually credited with developing a competent public service



Jefferson wanted to reward his followers with appointments

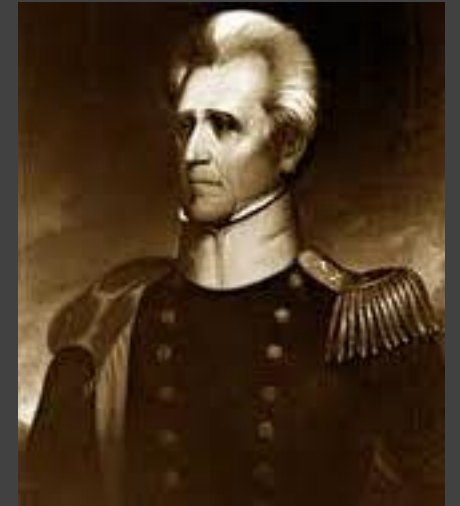




Jacksonian Democracy (1829-1883)

From 1800 to 1829, the U. S. political system became more democratic because new groups in society gained the opportunity to participate in politics

Establishment of the spoils system: patronage was extensively used to build parties and fill public service positions





Weakening of Spoils (1829-1883)

The election of Lincoln in 1860 represents both the high point and the onset of the demise of the spoils system.

During late 1870s and 1880s, various associations favoring civil service reform put pressure on political leaders, and tried to educate the public about the evils of spoils

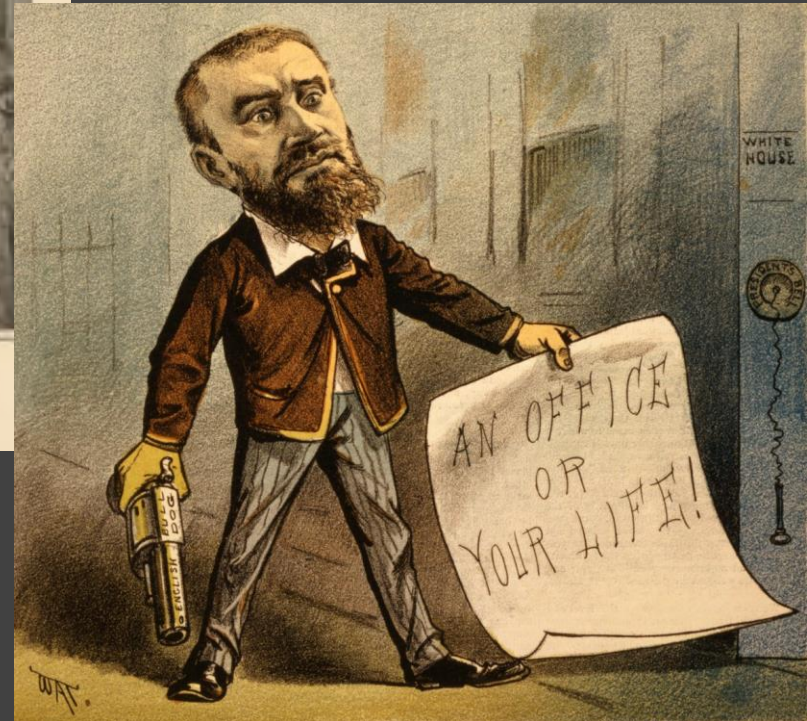




SCENE OF THE ASSASSINATION
PRES. JAMES A. GARFIELD, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.



What lead to reform?





Pendleton Act, 1883 – Start of Reform

*The Pendleton Civil Service Act became law on
January 16, 1883*

Created a personnel system based on merit

Civil Service Commission (CSC)

Competitive exams & educational criteria for employment

Lateral entry (entry at any level)

Neutrality



Centralized – Civil Service Commission

The Civil Service Commission (CSC) achieved authority over position classification, efficiency ratings, and retirement administration.

The CSC's "policing" role was proving incompatible with the "friendly cooperation" required by the more positive aspects of centralized personnel administration.

Focused heavily on technical details (rigid pay grades) at the expense of representativeness and equity



Scientific Management Era



- Frederick Taylor was the father of the scientific management era
- Emphasized one best way of achieving organizational and individual efficiency
- Helped streamline aspects of personnel management



Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA) of 1978 and beyond



**U.S. Merit Systems
Protection Board**



OPM.GOV



FLRA.GOV
Federal Labor Relations Authority

**Senior Executive Service
(SES)**

U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB):

Responsible for validating employee appeals and investigation of merit system violations

U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM):

Responsible for coordination of federal government's personnel program

Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA):

Federal sector authority responsible for enforcing labor-management relations

Includes most managerial, supervisory, and policy positions classified above General Schedule (GS) grade 15 or equivalent positions in the Executive Branch of the Federal Government



Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA) of 1978 and beyond

- ▶ **National Commission on Public Service (Volcker Commission) (1993):** recommendations for far-reaching changes to improve the effectiveness of the public service, at every government level
- ▶ **Commission on State and Local Public Service (Winter Commission) (1993):** improvement of state and local government performance
- ▶ **National Performance Review (NPR) (1993) Clinton** – chaired by Al Gore: recommendations for reinventing government – how government should work – “From red-tape to results”



Government by Reform: The Managerialist Period

PHRM Reform Themes

Decentralization

Performance-based Pay

Declassification (Broadbanding)

Deregulation (Employment at Will)

Privatization (Outsourcing)



State and Local Reform

Texas (1985)

No Central Personnel Authority
Mix of Civil Service and EAW

Georgia

Act 816 (1996)
GeorgiaGain

Florida

Service First Initiative (2001)
Privatization
Collective Bargaining



Future of Reforms

How are these reforms going to impact workplace culture, employee motivation and satisfaction levels?

Employment At Will might be attractive to younger workers? Impact of business-like practices on the government

Silver Tsunami

How to make government an attractive sector for newer generation of highly qualified workers? How to retain employees?

How to make the government work for the citizens?

Thank you

Dr. Meghna Sabharwal
Professor and Department Head,
Public and Nonprofit Management
Program, The University of Texas at
Dallas

Meghna.Sabharwal@utdallas.edu



THE UNIVERSITY
OF TEXAS AT DALLAS