Political Trust and Promise Keeping

in the United States 1977-2000

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Abstract

Americans do not have much trust in their government, and statistics show that trust has declined significantly since the late nineteen sixties. One argument is that declining trust has come to have profound negative consequences for government. First, it is not a passing trend. Second, declining political trust threatens to undermine social contract theory, one of the central tenets of democratic governance.

Previous research suggests that many indicators can measure trust. It does not, however, pose an explanation on how public officials may attempt to raise public trust in government. The goal of this design is to examine indicators of trust, specifically focusing on its relationship with political promise keeping. If a positive relationship exists it would offer the possibility that elected officials, with determined efforts, would be able to increase trust in government.

For analysis, promise keeping was measured by identifying presidential promises made during prominent public statements and determining if they were fulfilled. A multiple regression analysis was then used to determine if a significant relationship existed. Other variables such as the economy and periods of high conflict were added into the equation. The final analysis found a significant relationship between the economy and trust but not promise keeping. This finding is significant for its implications on American democratic tradition.
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Appendix

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1. Introduction

American government often serves as the butt of jokes and “comedians on late-night talk shows have no more reliable target of ridicule than government and its leaders” (Orren, 1997:78). In one sense, an American’s ability to speak freely concerning government, even if it is ridicule, is one of our country’s most cherished liberties. Not every exercise of a right is a social good, however. The reality of the situation is sobering. Americans do not have much trust in their government, and statistics show that trust has declined significantly since the late nineteen sixties.

There are two distinct camps concerning the relevance of declining political trust. The first point of view holds that declining trust has had no impact on governance. Distrust stems from a “suspicion of government (that) is a time-honored strain of American culture” (Orren, 1997:78). Political mistrust is, then, beneficial to democracy by serving as a check on governmental powers. The second view is that in the last thirty years, governmental mistrust has become more than a check on power. It is representative of dissatisfaction with performance, a lack of confidence that government represents the interests of its citizens, and suspicion concerning the moral integrity of public officials.

I will argue here that declining trust has come to have profound negative consequences for government. First, declining trust is not a passing trend. Trust has declined almost steadily over the last thirty years and cuts across identifications such as party lines, economic status, and gender (NES, 1998).
Second, social contract theory has always assumed or argued that the functioning of a representative democracy relies on political trust in order to function. Marc Hetherington (1998) addresses the relevance of declining political trust in his work, stating “Rather than simply reflecting dissatisfaction with incumbents and institutions, declining political trust contributes to this dissatisfaction, creating an environment in which it is difficult for those in government to succeed” (792). Declining political trust threatens to undermine one of the central tenets of democratic governance.

A large amount of research has been performed on why political trust began to decline in the mid 1970’s. Previous research suggests that many indicators can measure public trust. It does not, however, pose an explanation on how government and public officials may attempt to raise public trust in government.


![Graph of Trust in Government Index 1958-1998](image)

**Figure 1**
When looking at this data, an important question is “What factors affect public trust in government and to what extent?” The goal of this design is to examine indicators of trust, specifically focusing on the relationship between political promise keeping and trust. If a positive relationship exists it would offer the possibility that elected officials, with determined efforts, would be able increase trust in government. That, in turn, would build more trust and increase the performance of government.

The two periods of increased trust featured in Figure 1 have not been given enough attention to determine their causes. A study by Pew Research Center (1997) suggests that performance, as shown in approval ratings, is closely correlated with trust. Nonetheless, they have not looked at performance as a function of promise keeping.

II. Literature Review

Concept of Political Trust

Trust is a difficult concept to define because it entails so many things. Webster’s New World Dictionary and Thesaurus (1996) defines trust as a “firm belief in honesty, reliability”, “responsibility resulting from confidence placed in one” and “care; custody” (657). From these definitions political trust can be seen as faith that government will reliably and honesty act for their citizens care.

Researchers have looked at political trust and its measures in various terms. Gary Orren (1997) uses public satisfaction as a measure of public trust. Another term that coincides with satisfaction when examining trust is confidence. Moral integrity and “personal authenticity” also play a part in the concept of trust (Pew, 1997). By exploring the works of John Locke one can find an theoretical explanation of political trust.
The theoretical basis for political trust has ancient roots, but in republican governments may be best expressed in the social contract theory of John Locke. The philosophy of Locke greatly influenced the founders of the United States, and it is reasonable to assume that his theories have contributed to how Americans perceive the relationship between government and society. Garry Wills (1999) states “The view that government is a necessary evil is assumed by many Americans because our dominant rationale for government in general has been a faded version of John Locke’s theory of the social contract” (299).

The social contract is a collective agreement between the members of society who, in the interest of social stability pool their individual authority to protect. This government is entrusted to rule without violating those rights. In Locke’s Second Treatise on Civil Government, civil society is defined as “wherever any number of men, in the state of nature, enter into society to make one people, one body politic under one supreme government” (para. 89). In this contract, society places their rights in the hands of government in a fiduciary manner, trusting that government will rule according to the terms of the contract, which in Locke’s theory was natural law. Sir Ernest Barker (1960) states in his introduction to Locke’s Second Treatise that “If there was Natural Law, there must also be natural rights; if there were any limitations imposed on natural rights, those limitations must be due to a voluntary contract made by the possessors of such rights” (x). This relationship requires that there be a contractual trust between society and government. If government violates this trust, it is only likely that trust would diminish. Locke agrees:

For all power given with trust for the attaining an end being limited by that end, when ever that end is manifestly neglected or opposed, the trust must
necessarily be forfeited and the power devolve into the hands of those that
gave it, who may place it anew where they shall think best for their safety
and security (149).

Trust has a strong relation with political power, and the conditions of trust are established
before the contract is made. If society finds that government has violated the contract, it
has the right to remove the governing officials or parties from office or control.

John Simmons (1999) brings out the same issues in Locke’s theory while
highlighting some key points that will become useful later. Simmons distinguishes
between the unanimous consent that is needed to enter into a civil society initially and
majority rule, which is sufficient for decisions from that point on. Simmons argues that
promising, contracting, and entrusting are all types of consent. Stating that “We can
describe as acts of consent any acts that deliberately and suitably communicate to others
the agent’s intention to undertake obligations toward and/or convey rights (or
permissions) to those others” (128).

Margaret Conway, Alfonso J. Damico, and Sandra Bowman Damico (2000) offer
a similar argument, saying the American understanding of trust stems from the
philosophy of Locke. The article continues to draw upon this relationship and correlates
the social contract with promise keeping: “The social contract is an ideal that imagines
the creation of a political and moral community out of mutual promise keeping” (377).
Promise keeping offers a new view of the relationship between citizens and government.

One could argue that the fiduciary responsibility of government has grown since
Locke beyond merely keeping the peace, fighting enemies, and avoiding interfering with
natural rights. The scope of government and popular expectations placed on it in
constitutional democracies grew enormously during the 20th Century. Richard Neustadt
(1990) states that social programs of the sixties “meant a quantum jump of federal oversight and funding for public services that have the most direct effects on private lives, services that traditionally left in state and local or in private hands, now subsidized and supervised from Washington” (200). The expectations of government have risen alongside its responsibilities and increased public accountability. Perhaps this growth of government requires that a new order must be established in order to place limitations on the abuse of government power to relieve suspicion. But since 1966, popular suspicion of public servants seems more the norm.

**Indicators of Political Trust**

Research addressing declining political trust concentrates on a variety of indicators. We might suspect that the causes of the decline are complex, and evidence agrees. Research allows exploration of what is known about indicators of political trust. In order to devise possible explanations for the increase in political trust in 1980-84 and 1994-98, this study will explore economic, sociocultural, and political factors of trust.

**Economy and Trust**

Robert Z. Lawrence (1997) looks at the argument that levels of trust are directly affected by economical conditions: “throughout the developed world, by most measures, economic performance has deteriorated significantly since the early 1970’s--the period during which dissatisfaction has increased” (111).

Historical evidence supports this argument. Research shows that after WWII economic growth was unprecedented and exceeded all expectations. The increasing prosperity led the government to increase its obligations as a “welfare state”. Gary Orren (1997) argues that economic issues are at the root of rising public expectations of
government. In addition, government also assumed increasing obligations for economic outcomes during this period. Others would add the demands of hot and cold wars, which, of course, had economic effects.

The increase in government economic involvement during the prosperous period of the 1950’s and 1960’s negatively affected government when the economy stagnated in 1973. Growth between 1973 and 1990 was one-third slower than 1950-1960. This trend has continued into the early 1990s as well. During this period U.S. “employment has increased but average earnings have grown very slowly” (Lawrence, 1997:115). As economic growth slowed 1973-1990, it has became increasingly difficult for governments to honor commitments that were made during previous periods of high growth.

In sum, the argument states that economic slowdown inhibits the ability of “governments to address problems of slow growth, structural unemployment, and increasing inequality” and, therefore, distrust increases (122). According to this argument it should also be correct that levels of political trust would increase as the economy recovers, but Lawrence concludes the timetable between economic conditions and levels of trust do not coincide sufficiently to support a direct relationship between the two. Since Lawrence’s study economic growth increased dramatically in the late nineties and NES data shows that trust has also risen since 1996. This more recent data does not support Lawrence’s conclusions and requires further analysis.

A second argument for economic indicators of political trust states that the declining level of political trust is correlated with the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor (Lawrence, 1997). If this argument were in fact true, it would mean
that levels of political trust would be lower among individuals of low income and increases in trust would parallel increases in income. This relationship did not exist 1976-1998, because NES survey data show that levels of trust are generally the same regardless of income distribution (1998). These finding indicate that one may need to look further to explain distrust in government. This leads to a second indicator, sociocultural indicators of trust.

*Social and Cultural Phenomenon and Trust*

Jane Mansbridge (1997) distinguishes between indirect and direct effects of sociocultural factors on political trust,

...indirectly by affecting government performance (that is, making it harder for governmental institutions to act in ways that satisfy its citizens), and directly (holding performance constant), by affecting citizen attitudes, as a society becoming more cynical overall directs part of its anger at the government (133).

In the past thirty years, new social and political problems have placed high demands on government and created an “overload principle”: Government may be expected to solve problems, do more things, and provide more services than it is capable of doing (Mansbridge, 1997). In a similar argument, Mancur Olsen (1971) says “organizations or associations exist to further the interests of their members” (6). Members share common interests that they wish advanced, but they also have individual interests that may conflict. Olsen found that as organizations grow, as in government, it becomes harder to meet the interests of all members involved (1971). The hypothesis follows that “...most of the explanation for declining levels of trust in U.S. government derives indirectly from increased government overload, caused in part by new sociocultural problems, rising
expectations, and declining willingness to pay for partial solutions to these problems” (Mansbridge, 1997:152).

Mansbridge looks at the social problems of crime as an example of phenomena that indirectly affect public trust (1997). A study performed by the National Center for Health Statistics indicates that homicide rates increased from 1960 to 1975, and Mansbridge alleges that it was precisely during this period that political trust declined (135). If the social contract means anything, it requires government to keep the domestic peace. Inability to do that may lead to the deepest possible mistrust of government.

Mansbridge recognizes these problems have deeper sociocultural roots but, nevertheless, are expected to be addressed by government. Governmental overload results because, “Any realistic governmental attempt to address the problems was therefore unlikely to affect their underlying causes. And any governmental attempt to address either their causes or their effects was bound to alienate large numbers of citizens, whose diagnosis of the problem produced the opposite solution” (141). Under this argument, this cyclical cycle attributes to declining political trust.

Sociocultural changes also directly affect perceptions of government. Mansbridge cites a variety of sociocultural events that have this effect:

...decline from postwar moment of self-congratulation and expanding economy, the recent end of the cold war...a widespread decrease in deference to authority with a noncomitant upswing in cynicism, a decrease in interpersonal trust, a decrease in optimism, increasing negative coverage of governments in media, greater publicity regarding corruption, and the major social fissures that began in the 1960’s (149).

One can speculate that, even though these sociocultural phenomenons have arisen during a period of declining trust in government, different sociocultural factors were most likely present at other points in history and did not have the same effect. In this research, broad
sociocultural theories of declining trust base their argument on varied causes and in the end propose no prospect for possible solutions to work towards raising trust.

**Scandal**

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press (1997) contends, "discontent with the honesty of elected officials is a leading cause of distrust of government" (1). Politicians have frequently been accused of violations in ethics, such as dishonesty. Awareness of scandals within government, however, has clearly risen in the past thirty years. The American public has been faced with Watergate, Iran-Contra, and Clinton/Lewinsky revelations. One would assume that periods of intense scandal would coincide with low levels of trust, yet the Pew Research Center found that "trust declined only modestly, in a follow-up survey conducted in the midst of the scandal (allegations against President Bill Clinton)" (1). Neustadt points out "One should never underestimate the public’s power to acquiesce, and to forget, especially when the proceedings seem incalculable or remote from private life" (1990:82).

Data from NES documents that the initial decline in political trust occurred at the time of Vietnam and Watergate. These two events can be labeled as scandals because both reflected poorly on government. I will argue that since these two events, scandal has not had the same effect on political trust by lowering the ban for succeeding periods.

**Political Ideology, Political Partisanship and Trust**

The basis of this argument is represented well by David C. King (1997) who argues that the electorate has remained ideological stable while political parties have polarized. This phenomenon in turn “widens the gap between citizens and government”
and has been “filled in with mistrust and with a newfound habit of splitting tickets between the increasingly polarized parties.” (1997:156)

The majority of the American electorate is not fond of labeling itself as either conservative or liberal, but prefers to be placed on a scale somewhere between the two extremes. In light of this trend, in order to assess whether the American public as a whole has become increasing liberal or conservative, King looked at public opinion data on six key issues in order to determine whether responses showed ideological tendencies (1997). The data showed “Americans are becoming more conservative, gradually, but on core issues--such as the role and powers of federal government--they are about as conservative today as 25 years ago” (162). This evidence reinforces the point of this argument that the electorate has remained relatively ideologically stable.

The second part of the argument is based on the logical assumption that “citizens are more trusting of politicians who share their concerns, and citizens are more accepting of political institutions that advance citizen interests” (173) Based on political action, King asserts that “With the demise of the New Deal Coalition, the electoral bases of the two parties changed in ways that have made the parties both more ideologically cohesive and more ideologically extreme” (170). The widening of the gap coincided with decreasing political trust. As a result, as the polarization of political elites and public interests has increased, the public has felt alienated from these officials and trusted them less.

In order to gain votes candidates may retreat from extremist positions and center themselves ideologically. Once in office, officials may return to their previous ideological positions, creating a discrepancy between promise and conduct, possibly
reducing public trust. This argument also provides support for and serves as an introduction to political promise keeping and political trust.

*Political Promise-keeping and Trust*

When political trust began to decline during the Vietnam conflict, the resulting social turmoil, and Watergate, “large masses of people shared the conclusion that government was handling problems poorly and failing to deliver on its promises” (Orren, 1997:90). The public has assumed the role of judge of government. This role begins very early in the public’s introduction to potential public officials, “candidates and their aides work hard to establish what the audience and new media “expect” - that is, anticipate - the contestants will do, thereby setting standards against which they will be judged” (100). This can extend into the argument that policy promises create expectations that establish an electoral trust when elected. Wills (1999) argues, “The necessary good is betrayed by those who work against its very nature as a representative system, who deny accountability” (316). When these expectations are met, then trust in the public official shall remain. Yet, when expectations are violated it can be reasonably presumed that trust will decrease.

Larry Gerston (1997), states “A very large portion of any president’s leadership stems from the ability to establish priorities and define policy commitments” (9). Throughout their campaigns, presidents set expectations by demonstrating their abilities to set agendas and subsequently courses for fulfillment. When an agenda is set, the president must take action to “direct them through the policy making maze” (Gerston, 1997:53). Throughout an administration the media publicizes the national agenda and the progress-to-date on fulfillment, therefore, agenda setting and policy responses may be an
important guide on how a president is performing. It may also be noted that the media’s opinion may affect reports on agenda and presidential performance.

Richard Neustadt (1990) states, “Presidential power is the power to persuade” (11). A president must persuade the public, media, and governing establishment of his or her ability to perform and to influence. Neustadt continues to say, “…a President’s own choices are the only means in his own hands of guarding his own prospects for effective influence” (49). Presidential choice can include executive action, legislative policy-making, and other aspects of presidential performance.

Public expectations of a president may be set by the agenda that he or she pursues. Gerston (1997) states, “Some observers suggest that the public agenda has become hopelessly complex. As various factions define problems and approach government for solutions, the public agenda becomes so crowded that it results in political impotence” (1997:71). The “impotence” that results from an overloaded and varied agenda might contribute to declining trust. A president might be able to reverse this trend by both narrowing the public agenda and accomplishing more. This assumes that the president knows the issues closest to the heart of the electorate.

III. Methodology

The hypothesis is that there is a positive relationship between political trust and political promise keeping. Political trust will be higher during periods, therefore, when promise keeping is also high. This relationship exists because a citizen chooses a candidate by vote, therefore, placing trust in the official to function in government as they
have promised. An alternate hypothesis is that the relationship between the two variables is related, but negative; that the public does not reward kept promises, but holds grudges against broken ones. The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between political promise keeping and political trust, and we must look elsewhere to see why public trust has varied.

Political trust, the dependent variable, was measured by presidential approval ratings taken by the Gallup Organization. The Gallup Organization has conducted polls for many decades, and is widely used by political researchers. This particular measure was chosen because it is conducted numerous times throughout the year, thus, allowing the study to look at trust in the middle of the year and at the end of the year. The approval rating that used was the first poll taken in January and the first poll taken in July.

The independent variable in this design is political promise keeping. The project hypothesis suggests that there is a positive relationship between political promise keeping and political trust. Political promise keeping was measured by the annual ratio of promises that were completed during an administration ÷ promises offered. Public opinion of presidential performance can change throughout any given year in response to policy. As a result, two ratios were calculated. The first measures promise keeping at mid-year, defined as June 30th. The second ratio was calculated year’s end, defined as December 31st. Past performance can also affect current perception. Consequently, promise-keeping ratios were added to the previous years’ measure in order to obtain a cumulative measure.
In this study a promise was defined as personal commitment to action made in a public statement by the president. Promises were considered to imply action when the words “must”, “need”, “pledge” or other specific action words were used rather than passive and more vague words such as “ought” or “should.” The key words used to determine if a commitment was personal were “I”, “we”, “America.” In other words nouns in which the president identified himself or something which he represents. Promises were not considered personal if the subject of the action was “Congress” or used phrasing such as “let us,” used in reference to the legislative and executive branches of government.

State of the Union messages, inaugural speeches, and acceptance of party nomination speeches were the public statements considered in the study. These statements were chosen because they are very important and also receive intense media coverage. From these statements, the number of promises were calculated once for each year from 1977 until 2000. Promises made in State of the Union messages and Inaugural speeches were represented in the year they were given and acceptance of party nomination speeches the year after which they were given. All kept promises are weighted the same. Distinctions between “important” promises and “unimportant” ones seemed too subjective to be made.

Historical accounts of a president’s administration and legislative records of a given year will be used to determine whether or not these promises were fulfilled.

Political trust increased during the administrations of President Ronald Reagan and President Bill Clinton. In order to determine if political promise keeping is a cause
of this increase, this study examines the presidential administrations of Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George Bush and Bill Clinton.

As the preceding literature review suggested, fluctuations of political trust correlate with economic conditions. The state of the economy will be examined from 1977-2000 (corresponding with the aforementioned presidential administrations) in order to account for the effect this variable may have on political trust. Measures of Gross Domestic Product (U.S. Department of Commerce) will be used in order to measure the state of the economy. Gross Domestic Product is calculated from government expenditures, private investment, inventory growth, and trade balance. It is accepted as a good calculation for the state of the economy, because it is very broad (USA Today: 2001)

It can take a while for improvement in the economy to be felt by consumers. In order to measure this, the GDP measures in this study will be lagged one-quarter year. For example the health of the economy at the end of the year will be measured by Gross Domestic Product for the first quarter of the following year.

Presidential approval ratings can also increase at times of war when feelings of nationalism are very high. This study defined a time of conflict beginning with a declaration of war. Desert Storm was the only war that took place during study. A dummy variable will be used when calculating trust during this time period.

Multiple regression is a method of analyzing data that may be affected by more than one factor simultaneously. Regression analysis uses an equation in order to describe the relationship between the variables at hand. Linear regression follows the model of $Y = a + bX$, where $Y$ is the dependent variable, $X$ is the independent variable, $b$ represents
the slope of the line or the effect that the independent variable has on the dependent variable and \( a \) represents the value of \( Y \) when \( X = 0 \). In multiple regression more than one independent variable is considered at the same time.

In this design the variable \( Y \) represents political trust as measured by presidential approval ratings. The variable \( X1 \) is the ratio that measures political promise keeping. The variable \( X2 \) represents Gross Domestic Product, which is the measure of the state of the economy. Finally, \( a0 \) and \( a1 \) equal one, which show, respectively the absence or presence of scandal. Thus the equation would follow, \( Y = a0 + b1X1 + a1 + b2X2 + e \).

In the equation \( b1 \) and \( b2 \) represent the variance of the respective independent variable on \( Y \), which would be approval ratings. The multiple-correlation coefficient (\( b1 \) multiplied by \( b2 \)) indicates the extent to which both variables predict \( Y \), approval ratings. The extent to which the variables predict the \( Y \) is represented by a capital \( R \). \( R^2 \) is the coefficient of determination, which indicates the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by variation in the independent variables. The final variable of \( e \) is a constant, representing the change in \( Y \) that is not accounted for by the \( X \) variables that are being tested.

In addition to the final equation, multiple regression will calculate the significance of the equation and also the significance of the independent variables in respect to the dependent variable. In order for a finding to be significant the value must be less than .05.
IV. Analysis

Figure 2

Figure 2 demonstrates the number of promises that were found during each administration. Clinton’s second term registered the most promises with ninety, while Regan’s second term registered the least with fifty-one. It is interesting that promises declined during Reagan’s second term, while they increased under Clinton. This may be explained by political parties, as the two Democrats promised more than did the two Republicans. Reagan’s promise keeping ratio was only slightly higher than Clinton’s. This might mean that Reagan had less that he wanted to accomplish in a second term than did Clinton, but the difference between the two was very small.

The following four graphs show the number of promises that were fulfilled between each measure point for each administration. Neustadt argued that the third, fifth, and seventh years were the most influential for the presidency (1990:169). However, this point does not seem to apply to promise keeping. Carter’s second and third year both peaked at eight promises fulfilled, which were the highest of his administration.
Reagan’s best year for promises fulfilled, by far, was his fourth, which registered eleven. Bush’s first year proved to be his most productive at six promises fulfilled. Clinton, like Reagan, fulfilled his peak of fourteen promises in his fourth year as president.

Figure 3-A (top) & B (bottom)
Figure 3-C (top) & D (bottom)
Figure 4 shows the final ratio of promises kept to promises made for each administration. Jimmy Carter's cumulative ratio resulted in 32.1% promise keeping, while Reagan scored 39.7%, Bush 25.8%, and Clinton 38.6%.

An appendix is attached that lists all the promises. The appendix also shows whether a promise was fulfilled and if so whether it was early or late in the year.

A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict trust based on promise keeping, Gross Domestic Product, and Conflict. A significant positive equation was found (F(3, 44) = 4.025, p < .014), with a $R^2$ of .215. Predicted trust is equal to .377 + .241(PROMISES) + 1.388E-05(ECONOMY) + .199(CONFLICT), when promise keeping is measured as a percentage, economy is measured by Gross Domestic Product, and Conflict is coded as 0 = No conflict, 1 = Conflict. Economy was a significant predictor at .038, but Conflict (.053) and Promise-keeping (.184) were not significant predictors. The dummy variable of scandal did not affect the equation at all and was left out of the analysis by the data processing system. An $R^2$ of .215 signifies that 21.5% of trust can be explained by this equation. Since the economy was the only significant
variable, it is credited with the 21.5 % predictability, while promise keeping and conflict are not predicative measures.

V. Conclusions

The multiple regression analysis rejected the hypothesis by not finding a significant positive relationship between political trust and political promise keeping. This rejection is significant in many ways, especially for insights it provides into the American political system. Earlier the point of view was offered that distrust “is a time honored strain of American culture” (Orren, 1997:78). As NES data showed in Figure 1, trust in government has fluctuated throughout the last few decades, thereby not supporting the claim that distrust is a constant American tradition. It was true, however, that there was more distrust than trust and that both often fluctuated.

These findings raise more questions. Almost 80% of trust remained unaccounted for by the variables used in this study. The economy was a successful predictor and it would seem that a successful economy could lead to increasing trust, but only one-fifth of the trust. This might help to explain why Gore failed to cash in on the economic success of the Clinton administration in 2000. Obviously, there are other factors that come into play, but what are those remaining factors? Suppose sociocultural factors were significant in predicting trust, they would be hard to control in order to raise trust.

If the relationship between promise keeping and trust were significant it would have offered a way for government to improve political trust. If this were true,
opportunities for improvement would exist for public officials. As the findings were not significant it does not seem that government will have this opportunity.

Although promise keeping was not significant, there still may be a different relationship between political performance and trust. What it could mean is that politicians may need to look to multiple factors: cumulative promise keeping, prestige, influence, and ability to handle the unexpected, to gauge performance. Clearly it is difficult to increase trust. They cannot rely on kept promises alone to do the job. Increasing political trust through performance might be multi-faceted. Yet, this causes dilemmas for democratic contract theories of accountability and for those who think that the main job of a president is to produce policy: that issues should matter.

This study was conducted on the federal government and, as such, maintains low-to-no generalizability to state and local governments. NES data on political trust was based on the public’s perception of the federal government and promise keeping was based on the office of the president. Future researchers might look at whether these results apply to state and local governments as well. It would be interesting to see if promise keeping there is more significant because local governance seems less remote.

This study was also limited because there are so many components to promise keeping besides fulfillment. Perhaps a promise was not kept, but was perceived as being kept by the public. Another difficulty would be if fulfilling a promise were actually detrimental for the nation as was speculated of Reagan’s tax cuts of 1981. Some promises may also be more important than others. A good example of this is Bush’s broken “no new taxes” promise. David Mervin (1996) states,

There are very few pledges that have been made in American politics that have been made so clearly and with such obvious intent that it be taken as much more
than a typical political promise...To renege on that after only a year and a half, no matter what the rationale, was fated to divide the party and alienate the American people, and that is exactly the effect that it had (140).

Bush’s mishap on taxes has been brought up repeatedly and remains a part of the lasting image of his presidency. Neustadt (1990) raises a similar point when looking at presidential performance. He says,

The greatest danger to a President’s potential influence with them is not the show of incapacity he makes today, but its apparent kinship to what happened yesterday, last month, last year. For if his failures seem to form a pattern, the consequence is bound to be a loss of faith in his effectiveness next time (53).

A president must be cognizant of many variables that may factor into performance. One event, regardless of whether it is negative or positive, may be the public’s lasting impression of the presidency or government itself in that period.

What do these findings mean for citizens and elections? Politicians routinely make promises during campaigns and while in office, but are they aware that the public might not hold them accountable? Bush was not elected to a second term with a twenty five percent promise keeping ratio, but neither was Carter and his ratios were much closer to Clinton’s and Reagan’s, who in fact did win reelection. It is hard to imagine a campaign where promises were not made, but perhaps this is in the future.

Possibly the public is not voting on what a candidate has promised but rather on how the promises were communicated; voting on the image that the politician portrays. Is this good or bad? One can say that both Reagan and Clinton communicated very effectively with the public and they are remembered more favorably and were successful in winning second terms, in contrast to Carter and Bush. Perhaps the public sees candidate’s promises as being vacuous and made because it is what they are supposed to want to hear.
Promise keeping ratios were low during this study, ranging from 25% to almost 40%. If citizens have not realized, they must now, that presidential promise keeping is not high. It also must be realized that this statistic is not important to the American public in terms of presidential approval ratings and political trust. Possibly, promise keeping ratios have been low for decades and consequently the public does not expect for them to be kept. Perhaps we might just like to be promised to.

These findings do not correspond with the views represented earlier concerning social contract theory and political trust. Although our government has foundations in Locke’s theories, over time trust is not found in the same precepts. In theory, many people do subscribe to these views, but as found in this study, possibly reality does not match with theory concerning political trust.
Appendix A

1977 Promises (This Nation)
1. Give government back to the people.................................No
2. Honor and strengthen families-------------------------------No
3. Honor and strengthen neighborhoods------------------------No
4. Honor and strengthen diverse cultures and customs----------No
5. Efficient, economical, purposeful and manageable government---No
6. Complete tax reform----------------------------------------No
7. Universal voter registration--------------------------------No (CQWR)
8. Nationwide comprehensive health program-------------------No
9. Enforce the law---------------------------------------------No
10. End justice double standard for gvt. leaders----------------Yes-early
11. End racial and sexual discrimination by involvement in government--Yes-early (Fink, 1998:9)
12. Absolute commitment to human rights------------------------Yes-early (Kaufman, 1993:40)
13. Laws fair---------------------------------------------------No
15. Will not violate our rules and standards of home while abroad--Yes-early
16. Perseverance and wisdom in arms reduction------------------No
17. Democratic president and Congress work in harmony and mutual respect------------------------Yes/early (Kaufman, 1993:32)
18. Strengthen government closest to the people----------------No
19. Move toward eliminating all nuclear weapons----------------No
20. Powerful not persecute the weak-----------------------------No
21. Enhance human dignity--------------------------------------No
Midyear 5/21=23.8%                                           End-year 5/21=23.8%

1978 Promises (This Nation)
1. Energy crisis-----------------------------------------------Yes-late (Kaufman, 1993:105)
2. Cut unemployment------------------------------------------Yes/early (FRB)
3. Reduce inflation-------------------------------------------No (FRB)
4. Fairer and simpler tax system-------------------------------No
5. Expansion led by private business---------------------------Yes-early (CQWR)
6. Contribute to strength of world economy--------------------No
7. Reduce taxes by 25 billion----------------------------------Yes-late (Kaufman, 1993:109)
8. Incentive for business investment---------------------------Yes-late (CQWR)
9. Cuts in corporate tax rates----------------------------------Yes-late (CQWR)
10. Improve the investment tax credit---------------------------Yes-late (CQWR)
11. Head toward balanced budget------------------------------No
12. Reduce government regulation-------------------------------Yes-late (CQWR)
13. Government for people--------------------------------------No
14. Create Department of Education-----------------------------No-Yes/79 (Jones, 1988)
15. Demonstrate commitment to Europe’s defense----------------No (Kaufman, 1993:94)
16. Soviet agreement to maintain and enhance stability of world's strategic balance and U.S. security-------------------No
17. Cut arms transfers abroad-----------------------------------No
18. Protect integrity of Am. dollar----------------------------No (FRB) (Kaufman, 1993:80)
Midyear 6/39=15.4%                                           End-year 12/39=30.8%

1979 Promises (This Nation)
1. Stop excessive government growth---------------------------Yes/late (CQWR)
2. Control government spending-------------------------------No (CQWR)
3. Reduce trade deficit substantially-------------------------No (IMF)
4. Maintain strength of dollar-------------------------------Yes/early (FRB)
5. Develop national health plan-------------------------------No
6. Control skyrocketing hospital costs — No (FRB)
7. Fight inflation — No (CQWR)
8. Reform regulatory process RR, bus & trucking — No; Yes/late 80
9. Make good programs more effective — No
10. Reorganization of education — Yes/late (Fink, 1998; 8)
11. Reorganization of economic development — No (CQWR)
12. Reorganization of natural resource management — No (CQWR)
13. Sunshine law — No (CQWR)
14. Restore public faith — No
15. Maintain strategic capability — Yes/late
16. Continue NATO progress — No
17. Multilateral trade negotiations top priority — Yes/late
18. Lasting peace between Israel and Egypt — Yes/early (Kaufman, 1993; 121-2)
19. Maintain trust and confidence of Israel — Yes/early (Kaufman, 1993; 121-2)
20. Maintain trust and confidence of Arab nations — No (Kaufman, 1993; 121-2)
21. SALT — No
22. Equal opportunity — No (CQWR)
23. Affirmative action — No (CQWR)
24. Improve labor laws — No (CQWR)
25. Equal rights amendment — No (CQWR)

Midyear 15/64 = 23.4%  End-year 20/64 = 31.6%

1980 Promises (This Nation)
1. State gasoline conservation goals — No
2. Reduce overall petroleum consumption — Yes/late
3. Clear, comprehensive energy policy — Yes/early (Jones, 1988)
4. Support growth of democracy — No
5. Protection of human rights — No
6. Build ties with developing nations — No
7. Peace in the Middle East — No (Kaufman, 1993: 181)
8. Peace in Southern Africa — No
9. Guarantee against abuses of intelligence agencies — No (CQWR)
10. Selective service system revitalized — Yes/early (CQWR)
11. Reduce inflation — No (FRB)
12. Reduce dependence on foreign oil — No
13. Energy conservation — No
14. Restrain pay increases — No (CQA)
15. Cut paperwork — Yes/late (CQA)
16. Reduce unnecessary government regulation — No (CQA)
17. Just and decent society — No

Midyear 22/81 = 27.2%  End-year 26/81 = 32.1%

1981 Promises (This Nation)
1. Eliminate discrimination against women — No
2. Commitment to care for needy — No (CQWR)
3. Teach children values — No
4. Government effectiveness without domination — No (CQWR)
5. Maintain forward economic growth — Yes/early-no/late-yes/early 83 (BEA)
6. Preserve integrity of social security — Yes/82
7. Freeze federal hiring and conduct review — Yes/early (Meese, 1992: 72)
8. Reduce taxes — Yes/late (Meese, 1992: 131)
9. Maintain safety of America against hostile foreign powers — Yes/early
10. Preserve world peace and freedom — Yes/early
11. Recognize states powers, people powers, distinguished from federal powers — No (Hill, 1990: 45)
12. Burb size and influence of federal government — Yes/late (Karanagac, 2000: 140)
13. Strengthen ties with historic allies------------------------Yes/early
Midyear 4/13=30.8%  End-year 5/13=38.5%

Promises 1982 (This Nation)
1. Prosperity and stable economic growth by latter half of year----No-Yes/early 83 (BEA)
2. Reduce growth of federal spending---------------------------No (Meese, 1992;150)
3. Preserve individual and business tax deductions--------------No (CQWR)
4. Remove unnecessary federal regulations---------------------No (CQWR)
5. Reduce deficit---------------------------------------------No
6. No tax increases--------------------------------------------No (CQWR)
7. Tax relief---------------------------------------------------No
8. Cut nonessential government spending and waste-------------No (CQWR)
9. Preserve and strengthen equal rights for women------------No
10. Act firmly against terrorism-----------------------------Yes/early
11. Redirect resources to defense and social programs--------Yes/early (CQWR)
12. Will not forget elderly or poor---------------------------No
13. Restore federalism (make it work)--------------------------No (Hill, 1990;45)
Midyear 7/26=26.9%  End-year 8/26=30.8%

Promises 1983 (This Nation)
1. Preserve integrity of social security------------------------Yes/early (Berman, 1990;6)
2. Reduce no social security payments-------------------------Yes/early (Berman, 1990;6)
3. Bipartisan, fair and realistic deficit reduction plan-------No (CQWR)
4. Oppose undoing tax reforms--------------------------------Yes/late (CQWR)
5. Short-term and long-term hope for unemployed-------------Yes/early (CQWR)
6. Strengthen the organization of trade agencies------------No (CQWR)
7. Promote free trade------------------------------------------Yes/late (CQA)
8. Promote increased flow of Am. goods, services and investments---No
9. Revitalize Am. education-----------------------------------No (CQWR)
10. Assure legal and economic equity for women---------------No
11. Strengthen enforcement of child support laws-------------No (CQWR)
12. Remedy pension inequities--------------------------------No-Yes/late 84 (CQWR)
13. Strengthen enforcement of hair housing laws--------------No
14. Reform CJ statutes----------------------------------------No-Yes/late 84 (CQWR)
15. War on organized crime-----------------------------------No-Yes/late 84 (CQA)
16. War on drug racketeers-----------------------------------No-Yes/late 84 (CQA)
17. Implement Task Force on Victims of crime recommendations---No
18. Restore health and vitality to rural America-------------No (CQWR)
19. Curb costs of health care---------------------------------No
20. Restore state and local gvt’s to their roles-------------No
21. Develop infrastructure of democracy worldwide----------Yes/late
22. Healthy economy-------------------------------------------Yes/late (BEA)
23. Healthy world economy------------------------------------No
24. Pursue arms reduction-------------------------------------No
Midyear 13/50=26%  End-year 17/50=34%

1984 Promises (This Nation, Facts on File)
1. Ensure steady economic growth----------------------------Yes/early (BEA)
2. Build meaningful peace-------------------------------------Yes/early
3. Bipartisan plan to bring deficit down---------------------Yes/early
4. Build next frontier in space (space station)--------------Yes/late (CQA)
5. Preserve earth’s resources--------------------------------No
6. Tuition tax credits-----------------------------------------No
7. Rededication to values-faith, work, family, freedom, peace, neighborhood-------------------------------No
8. Drive against crime----------------------------------------Yes/late (CQWR) (CQA)
9. Drive against child pornography…………………………No (CQA)
10. Drive against abduction…………………………………………Yes/late (CQA)
11. Drive against sexual abuse………………………………………No (CQA)
12. Drive against family violence……………………………………Yes/late (CQA)
13. Freer world trade…………………………………………………Yes/late (CQA)
14. Greater world competition………………………………………Yes/late (CQA)
15. Increase world open markets……………………………………Yes/late (CQA)

Midyear 17/65=26.2%  End-year 28/65=43.1%

1985 Promises (This Nation)
1. Never sell out Israel………………………………………………Yes/early (CQWR)
2. Not betray friend, not reward enemies of freedom and not allow fear and retreat to be our policy…………………………Yes/early
3. Fight for balanced budget amendment…………………………No (CQWR)
4. Line-item veto………………………………………………………..No (CQWR)
5. No tax increases……………………………………………………..Yes/early (CQWR)
6. Tax reform…………………………………………………………..No-Yes/86 late (Berman, 1990;22)
7. Reduce number of nuclear arms…………………………………No (CQWR)
8. Decrease economic barriers………………………………………..No (CQWR)
9. Liberate spirit of enterprise………………………………………..No (CQWR)
10. Balanced budget…………………………………………………..No
11. Reduce national debt……………………………………………..No
12. Remain free, secure and at peace…………………………………Yes/early
13. Pass free enterprise zones………………………………………..No
14. Freeze spending at current level…………………………………No (CQWR)
15. Social safety net left intact………………………………………Yes/early
16. Restore military strength………………………………………..Yes/early
17. Reduce/eliminate government subsidies…………………………No (CQWR)
18. Superfund……………………………………………………………No (CQWR)
19. Commitment to educational basic………………………………No (CQWR)
20. Restore domestic tranquility……………………………………….No
21. Stronger, simpler approach to trade policy……………………….No (CQWR)
22. Stand by democratic allies…………………………………………No
23. Not break faith with freedom fighters everywhere……………..No (Cannon, 2000, 321)

Midyear 34/88=38.3%  End-year 34/88=38.3%

1986 Promises (This Nation)
1. Grace commission reforms…………………………………………No
2. Real growth in defense spending at bare minimum………………Yes/late (CQWR)
3. No new tax increases………………………………………………Yes/early (CQWR)
4. Freer and fairer trade………………………………………………No
5. Support discipline in schools……………………………………..No (CQWR)
6. Back to basics in education………………………………………..No (CQWR)
7. Support vouchers-parental choice………………………………No (CQWR)
8. Prayer in classrooms………………………………………………No
9. Fight against abortion………………………………………………No
10. Go forward with shuttle…………………………………………Yes/early (CQWR)
11. Build space station………………………………………………Yes/early (CQWR)
12. Research new orient express………………………………………No

Midyear 37/101=36.6%  End-year 39/101=38.6%

1987 Promises (This Nation)
1. Resolve Iran-Contra…………………………………………………..No
2. Protect Middle East interests………………………………………..No
3. Will not yield to terrorist blackmail……………………………..Yes/early
4. Historic commitment to a safe W. hemisphere…………………..No
5. SDI will go forward------------------------yes/late (CQWR)
6. Veto anything that undermines national security and negotiating leverage---N/A
7. Welfare reform------------------------No (CQWR)
8. America must be competitive------------------------No (CQWR)
9. Expand opportunities and global markets------------------------No-yes/88 (CQWR)
10. Raise literacy levels------------------------No
Midyear 40/110=36.4% End-year 41/110=37.3%

1988 Promises (This Nation, Facts on File)
1. Protect peace and deter war------------------------Yes/early
2. Veto if budget is not in line with budget agreement------------------------N/A
3. Adoption more accessible------------------------Yes/early (CQWR)
4. Expand free trade south-NAFTA------------------------No
5. Reduce danger nuclear war------------------------Yes/early
6. Never jeopardize security for a START agreement with Soviets-Yes/early
7. Fully funded and technologically advanced national defense------------------------No (CQWR)
Midyear 46/116=39.7 End-year 46/116=39.7

Promises 1989 (This Nation)
1. Maintain women’s growing economic power------------------------No
2. Keep inflation stable------------------------No (FRB)
3. Keep social security out of big spenders hands------------------------Yes/late
4. Social Security will be maintained------------------------Yes/early
5. Produce 30 million jobs in next 8 years------------------------No (Mervin, 1996;110)
6. Country will not be weak------------------------Yes/early
7. No new taxes------------------------Yes-No/90 (Greene, 2000;80,84)
8. First-rate schools------------------------No (Greene, 2000;68)
9. Encourage merit schools------------------------No (Greene, 2000;69)
10. Expand Head Start------------------------Yes/late (Duffey, 1992;98)
11. Make it easier to save for college------------------------No (Greene, 2000;68)
12. Drug-free America------------------------No-Yes/late 90
13. Include disabled in mainstream------------------------Yes/late 90 (Greene, 2000;74)
14. Stop ocean dumping------------------------No
15. Clean the air------------------------No-Yes/late 90 (Greene, 2000;74)
16. Continue peace through strength in foreign affairs------------------------Yes/early
17. Decrease strategic and conventional arsenals of U.S. and Soviets, Eastern Bloc and NATO------------------------No—Yes/late91
18. Modernize and preserve technological edge------------------------No
19. Balance federal budget------------------------No
20. Always try to speak clearly------------------------No
21. Continue new closeness with Soviets------------------------Yes/early
Midyear 4/21=19% End-year 6/21=28.6%

Promises 1990 (This Nation)
1. Encourage creation of physical capital------------------------No
2. Encourage creation of intellectual capital------------------------No
3. Encourage creation of human capital------------------------Yes/late
4. Expand pool of capital for new investments------------------------No
5. Reduce capital gains tax------------------------No (Duffey, 1992;88)
6. Encourage economic risk takers------------------------No
7. Children start school ready to learn------------------------Yes/late (Mervin, 1996;205)
8. Graduation rate 90% by 2000------------------------No (Greene, 2000;68)
9. Assess performance in 4,8, and 12 grades------------------------No (Greene, 2000;68)
10. 1st in math and science by 2000------------------------No (Greene, 2000;68)
11. Every adult must be a skilled and literate worker------------------------Yes/late
12. EPA becomes cabinet rank------------------------No
13. Bring health care costs under control---------------------No
Midyear 5/34=14.7% End-year 9/34=26.5%

Promises 1991 (This Nation)
1. Growth in spending less than inflation---------------------No
2. Expand Am. exports-------------------------------------No
3. Continue enforcement of civil rights statues-------------Yes/late
4. Freedom from crime and fear in cities-------------No (Duffey, 1992;88)
5. Drug free America-------------------------------------No
6. Citizen politician-federalism-------------------------No
7. Will win Gulf War-------------------------------------Yes/early (Greene, 2000;130)
8. Put recession behind-return to growth-----------------No-Yes/late 92 (BEA)
9. Refocused SDI-----------------------------------------Yes/late
Midyear 11/43=25.6% End-year 14/43=32.6%

Promises 1992 (This Nation)
1. Cut defense spending/arsenals-------------------------Yes/late (CQA)
2. Set economy free-------------------------------------No (BEA)
3. Encourage investment---------------------------------No (CQWR)
4. Clear obstacles to growth-----------------------------No (CQWR)
5. Cut capital gains tax-maximum of 15.4%-----------------No (CQWR)
6. Break down world trade barriers----------------------No
7. Eliminate tariffs and subsidies------------------------No (CQWR)
8. More jobs in western hemisphere-----------------------No
9. Make investments to help compete in long-term---------No
10. Reduce crime-----------------------------------------No (Duffey, 1992;88)
11. Reduce drugs-----------------------------------------No
12. Health care reform-----------------------------------No (Duffey, 1992;98)
13. Maintain spending caps-----------------------------Yes/late (CQA)
14. End unfinanced federal mandates---------------------No
15. Strengthen family-------------------------------------No
16. Welfare reform--------------------------------------No
Midyear 14/66=21.2% End-year 15/66=25/66%

Promises 1993 (This Nation)
1. Comprehensive health care reform---------------------No
2. Implement Bush’s commission on AIDS recommendations---Yes/late (CQA)
3. Streamline government and change it works-------------No-Yes/late 94
4. Family medical leave----------------------------------Yes/early (Burns, 1999;98)
5. Family farms kept in the families----------------------No
6. Help front line wage war on drugs---------------------No
7. Protect environment and create jobs in enviro. technologies----No
8. Guarantee a woman’s right to choose-------------------No
9. Incentives to entrepreneurs and business for jobs-----No
10. College and loans available to working class---------No-Yes/late94
11. Not increase middle class taxes-----------------------Yes/late (CQWR)
12. Wealthy pay fair share in taxes-----------------------Yes/late (CQWR)
13. Welfare reform--------------------------------------No-Yes/late 96
14. World’s strongest defense-ready to use force---------No
15. Not coddle tyrants-----------------------------------No
16. Champion freedom and democracy----------------------No
17. Invest in jobs and future and cut national debt-----No
18. Social security reform will not make those who do not pay taxes pay them------------------------------Yes/late (CQWR)
19. No new cuts in Medicare benefits for beneficiaries---Yes/late (CQWR)
20. Sign Brady bill--------------------------------------Yes/late (CQWR)
21. World economy------------------------No (Int. Econ. Trends)
22. World environment-------------------No
23. World AIDS crisis--------------------No
24. World arms race----------------------No
Midyear 1/24=4% End-year 4/24=25%

Promises 1994 (This Nation)
1. Welfare reform------------------------No-Yes/late 96 (CQWR)
2. Health care reform--------------------No
3. Best-equipped, trained, and prepared military---Yes/early (CQA)
4. Summit of leaders of W. hemisphere---Yes/late (U.S. Trade Rep)
5. South African democracy---------------Yes/late (CQA)
6. Democracy in Haiti--------------------Yes/late (Hyland, 1999:63)
7. Crime bill-----------------------------Yes/late (CQA)
8. Education Goals 2000-------------------Yes/late (CQWR)
10. Campaign finance reform--------------No (Burns, 1999:127)
11. Lobby reform-------------------------No (Burns, 1999:127)
12. Not cut defense more than what is proposed---Yes/late (CQA)
13. Encourage Russian economic reform---Yes/late (CQA)
14. Cooperate with Russia to solve regional problems---No
15. Support democratic renewal, human rights and sustainable development worldwide-----No (Hyland, 1999)
16. Build on Brady bill--------------------Yes/late (CQA)
Midyear 7/40=17.5% End-year 17/40=42.5%

Promises 1995 (This Nation)
1. Strong lobby reform-------------------No (CQWR)
2. Change way government works (cheaper, smarter)---No
3. Shift programs to states and communities---No
4. Line-item veto------------------------No-Yes/96 early (CQWR)
5. Child immunizations--------------------No (CQWR)
6. School lunches everywhere---------------No (CQWR)
7. Head-Start---------------------------No (CQWR)
8. Medical care and nutrition for pregnant women and infants--No (CQWR)
9. Welfare reform------------------------No-Yes/late96
10. Provide child care and teach skills------No-Yes/late96
11. Will not allow repeal of assault weapon ban---Yes
12. Cut government spending----------------No
13. Reduce abuses of immigration laws-------No
14. Expand middle class and shrink underclass---No
15. Universal education and job training------No
16. Will not pay for tax cuts with Medicare cuts---Yes
17. Step-by-step health care reform----------No (CQWR)
18. Mexican stabilization program----------Yes/early (Hyland, 1999:72)
19. Extend Nuclear Non-proliferation treaty---Yes/early (Atomic Archive)
20. Comprehensive nuclear test ban----------No
21. Eliminate chemical weapons------------No-Yes/early 97
22. Bring deficit down---------------------Yes/late (Hyland, 1999:143)
23. National campaign against teen pregnancy---No-Yes/late96 (CQA)
Midyear 19/63=30.2% End-year 22/63=34.9%

Promises 1996 (This Nation, Facts on File)
1. Balance budget------------------------No
2. Provide child care----------------------Yes/late (CQA)
3. Bipartisan welfare bill------------------Yes/late (CQA)
4. Reduce teen pregnancy-----------------------------Yes/late (CQA)
5. Connect all classrooms to Internet by 2000---------------No
6. Health care universal/affordable------------------------No
7. Not abandon Medicare and Medicaid----------------Yes/early (CQA)
8. Target gangs, prosecute as adults----------------------No
9. Comprehensive Nuclear Test ban treaty----------------No (Hyland, 1999;194)
10. Increase border patrols by 50%------------------------Yes/late (CQA)
11. Increase inspections to prevent illegal hiring----------No
12. Executive order to deny fed contracts to those who hire illegally-Yes/early (Fried)
13. Reinvent government--------------------------------Yes/late
14. Leadership in freedom and peace around world---------Yes/early
15. Take streets back from crime gangs and drugs---------No
16. Economic security-------------------------------------No
17. Educational opportunities------------------------------No
18. Cherish children and strengthen families---------------No

Midyear 26/81=32.1%  End-year 36/81=44.4%

Promises 1997 (This Nation)
1. Balance budget--------------------------------------Yes/late
2. Campaign finance reform-----------------------------No (CQWR)
3. 2 million off welfare by 2000------------------------No/Yes/late 98
4. 2000, make 2 years of college universal-------------No (U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services)
5. Parents can choose public schools--------------------No (CQWR)
6. Keep schools open late-------------------------------No (CQWR)
7. Require tests to keep moving up in schools-----------No (CQWR)
8. Strong and growing economy-------------------------Yes/early (BEA)
9. Universal home ownership and protection--------------No
10. No cuts that hurt education, pollute, Medicaid/Medicare---Yes/late
11. End violence in children’s lives-guns, gangs and drugs--No
12. Enforce anti-racketeering laws on gangs--------------No
13. Strong communities----------------------------------No
14. Clean and safe environment--------------------------No
15. Worlds strongest defense-----------------------------Yes/early
16. World coalition-zero tolerance for terrorism--------No
17. Schools have highest standards in world-------------No (CQWR)
18. Every 8yr. Old can read, 12-log on to Internet and 18-go to college-No (CQWR)
19. Expand family leave--------------------------------No
20. Expand access to affordable health care--------------No
21. Ban advertising and marketing of cigarettes---------No (CQWR)
22. 100,000 police on the streets-----------------------No
23. Create 10 American Heritage rivers-------------------Yes/late
24. Expand NATO----------------------------------------No/Yes/early 98 (Hyland, 1999;104)
25. Strengthen NATO partnership for peace with non members-No (NATO, U.S. Embassy))
26. Stable partnership between Russia and NATO----------No
27. Expand exports--------------------------------------No
28. Promote peace---------------------------------------Yes/early
29. Ratify Chemical Weapons Convention----------------Yes/early (CQWR)
30. Pay debts to World Bank------------------------------No
31. Pay debts to U.N.-----------------------------------No/Yes/99 late (CQA)

Midyear 40/112=35.7%  End-year 43/112=38.4%

1998 Promises (This Nation)
1. Balanced budget---------------------------------------No
2. No unwise spending or untargeted tax cuts-------------Yes
3. Save social security---------------------------------No
4. Nonpartisan forums on social security----------------Yes/early (Miller, 1998)
5. White House conference on social security—Yes/late (Ornstein, 1998)
6. Raise education standards—Yes/late
7. Raise education expectations—No
8. Raise education accountability—No
9. Shape the global economy—No (Hyland, 1999:185-189)
10. Fight abusive child labor—No
11. New partnerships with Latin Am. And Asia—No
12. Fast-track negotiating authority—No (CQA)
13. Bipartisan tobacco legislation—No (CQWR)
14. Reduce teen smoking/raise cigarette prices—No (CQWR)
15. 100,000 police on the streets—Yes/late (CQA)
16. Combat terrorists, international criminals and drug traffickers—No (CQA)
17. Military, well trained, ready, improve quality of life, 21st century weapons—Yes/late (CQA)
18. Confront chemical and biological weapons—Yes/late (CQWR)
19. Pay debt to U.N.—No/Yes/1999 late
20. Changes in IRS—Yes/late (CQWR)
21. Racial and ethnic unity—No
22. Prevent use of genetic testing to discriminate—No (CQWR)
23. Ban human cloning—No (CQWR)
24. Protect commercial potential of the web—Yes/late (CQWR)

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<th>Midyear</th>
<th>End-year</th>
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<td>44/136=32.4</td>
<td>52/136=38.2</td>
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**Promises 1999 (This Nation)**

1. Save social security—No (CQWR)
2. Save and improve Medicare—No (CQWR)
3. Help Am. to save, invest and create wealth—No
4. Long term care for aged, ailing and disabled—Yes/late
5. Education Accountability Act—No (CQWR)
6. White House conference on mental health—Yes/early (Leavitt, 1999)
7. Community development banks—No
8. Empowerment zones—No—Yes/99 late (CQWR)
9. 100,000 vouchers for affordable housing—Yes/late (CQWR)
10. Farm safety net—Yes/late (CQWR)
11. Strengthen lead in technology—No (CQA)
12. Enforce trade laws on illegal quantities—No
13. Loan guarantees and incentives to increase exports—No (CQWR)
14. Raise labor standards—No (CQWR)
15. Defend security wherever threatened—Yes/early
16. Keep terrorist from disrupting computer networks—No (CQWR)
17. Prepare for biological and chemical emergencies—No (CQWR)
18. Inhibit spread of nuclear weapons—No
19. Reduce nuclear arsenals with Russia—No
20. Increase defense spending—Yes/late (CQWR)
21. Fortify African democracy—No
22. Deepen ties to Americas and Caribbean—No

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<th>Midyear</th>
<th>End-year</th>
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<td>54/158=34.2%</td>
<td>61/158=38.6</td>
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**Promises 2000 (This Nation)**

1. Benefits of debt reduction go to SS and Medicare—No (CQWR)
2. 21st century revolution in education—Yes/late (CQWR)
3. 21st century revolution to reward work and strengthen families—No
4. Expand access to mental health care—No
5. Tools to trace guns and fullets—No
6. 21st century revolution to open new markets, start new business, hire new workers—Yes/late (CQA)
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<td>7</td>
<td>Strengthen farm safety net</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Invest in land conservation</td>
<td>Yes/late (CQWR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Close digital divide</td>
<td>No (CQWR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Form new consensus on trade</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Encourage Russia and China to be stable, prosperous and democratic</td>
<td>Yes/early (CQWR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Protect against wide wars</td>
<td>Yes/early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Keep terrorism from using technology</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Midyear 63/171=36.8  End-year 66/171=38.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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