Not Ready for Prime Time Players: Majority of Biden Appointees have Zero Years of Business Experience

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Executive Summary

Based on our survey of the top 68 officials in the Biden administration, starting with the president himself, and including cabinet members, regulatory officials, and White House advisers, this study finds:

- 62% of Biden appointees who deal with economic policy, regulation, commerce, energy and finance have virtually no business experience.
- Only one in eight has extensive business experience.
- Average business experience of Biden appointees is only 2.4 years.
- Median years of business experience is zero.
- The vast majority of the Biden economic/commerce team members are professional politicians, lawyers, community organizers, lobbyists, or government employees.

We also compared the Biden administration's business experience to President Trump's cabinet officials during his last year in office. We found that the average Trump cabinet member had 13 years of business experience, and the median years of experience was 8. A breakdown of this analysis is available on our website.

Scope of Study

As the United States battles the highest inflation rate in four decades; a stock market sell-off that has liquidated some $10 trillion of wealth and retirement savings; and fast-declining consumer, small business, and investor confidence; and there is widespread concern that America is in a recession or teetering on the verge of recession. For the first half of 2022, the economic growth rate has been negative, according to the latest forecast from the Atlanta Federal Reserve Board.

Americans are deeply divided on the Biden administration's progressive economic policy priorities: the focus on redistribution of income, higher tax rates on the rich, more social welfare programs, pro-union policies, a heavier hand of regulation of business, government-directed investment, and climate change remedies aimed at a dramatic altering of America's energy mix.

But putting ideology and partisan leanings aside, a new concern of voters has emerged: Do the top decision makers in Congress and the Biden administration have the basic skill sets and business/management experience and acumen to oversee a $6 trillion federal government and to regulate our multi-trillion dollar industries?

Polls show Americans are generally unhappy with the economic direction of the country today. One recent poll found that roughly three of four Americans believe the economy is headed in the right direction.
The economic problems that have emerged over the past year are multifold:

- Rising inflation rates;
- The southern border out of control;
- Higher energy prices and shortages;
- The threat of new restrictions;
- Supply chain disruptions;
- A low labor force participation rate at a time when large and small businesses desperately need workers;
- A rapidly rising federal debt burden;
- A stock market rout that has depleted family savings and retirement accounts.

This study examines the business and management experience and qualifications of 68 top Democrats in the administration and in Congress who are now either making key policy decisions that affect our economy, or the people who are in charge of managing the agencies of government that influence business, banking, finance, transportation and the overall performance of our economic institutions.

Do they have the management experience and core competency to make the right policy decisions and to manage a massive federal bureaucracy with some agencies employing hundreds of thousands of workers and $100 billion budgets?

This issue of competency has been amplified by the mistakes and gaffes made by key members of the Biden administration.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, for example, was the mayor of South Bend, a small Indiana college town. He now has oversight over a $1 trillion industry and is in charge of dealing with intricate supply chain issues at our ports and other vital parts of our transportation infrastructure. Yet he has virtually no experience in transportation or logistics.

Former Michigan governor Jennifer Granholm was chosen to be Energy Secretary during the current energy crisis. She says that she doesn't have a magic wand to deal with rising gasoline and home heating costs, even though her department has helped kill vital pipelines and energy production and drilling facilities that could be increasing the supply of oil and gas and helping alleviate the crisis. She has had a hard time with reporters even citing very basic energy statistics that calls into question her familiarity with the critical national energy issues she is overseeing.

Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra is a lawyer with little business or health care experience. He has botched the billion-dollar program for free testing kits and has deemphasized treatments for what could have saved lives.

These are exceptions. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo served many years in business as a successful venture capitalist.
There is also a growing suspicion that the Biden officials are more interested in pursuing social policy objectives than expanding the economy and ensuring prosperity of our citizens. For example, Biden's choice to be vice-chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, Lail Brainard, wants climate change and gender equity issues to be concerns and priorities of the nation's central bank. Biden's nominee for top bank regulator at the Fed has said she wants bank to stop lending to oil and gas companies.

Lisa Golen economist at Michigan State University has been nominated to the Fed board with no experience in monetary policy, whose area of expertise is in the area of racial and gender equity issues - which have nothing to do with how the Fed does its primary job. The Fed's mission is managing the nation's money supply and trying to combat financial crises, not saving the planet from global warming or making sure that bank boards of directors have enough women, minorities, on their boards of directors. If these may be worthy goals, but they are not the purpose of the Fed.

Biden nominated Cornell professor Saule Omarova to be the Comptroller of the Currency at the Treasury Department. Ms. Omarova is a graduate of Moscow State University, with no business or banking experience. She believes that the government could and should take over the role of private banks and investment firms - both trillion dollar industries. She also has endorsed the bankruptcy of America's oil, gas, and coal industries. The Wall Street Journal, among many others, called into question whether she has any credentials to make her qualified to be overseeing America's banking system. She was blocked from that position and the White House withdrew her nomination.

But her nomination was emblematic of what has happened throughout the Biden administration. How does someone so lacking in professional experience and with such views so way outside the mainstream of American opinion get tapped for such a powerful position?

Then there is plenty of anecdotal evidence that many do not. Lina Khan, the chairman of the Federal Trade Commission - an agency that has oversight of trillion dollar companies, is a 32-year-old university professor who appears to have zero business experience. She will determine how much profits a business can make even though she has never earned a profit for a business in her life.

The chairman of the House Budget Committee John Yarmuth - whose primary responsibility is to try to balance the revenues and expenditures of our $6 trillion federal ledger - has said that the government can afford to spend and borrow whatever it wants and that Congress can spend like they are the banker in the board game Monopoly.

How can we ever achieve a balanced budget when the person in charge of that function doesn't want to achieve that goal?

This report finds that these examples are all too commonplace in the Biden administration.
Methodology and Results

The list of Biden administration officials that we compile in this report starts at the top with the resumes of the President and the Vice President. We also examine 68 of the top political appointees of the Biden administration, including his cabinet officers (who deal with domestic policy issues), the commissioners of the major influential regulatory agencies, and other high-ranking White House policy-making personnel.

We don't believe that everyone in a president's administration should necessarily come with experience as a CEO, as a top management official, or in banking and finance. And there is no assurance that top business executives will always make sound decisions that benefit the country. One of the most disgraced and incompetent cabinet officials in American history was Robert McNamara who had served as president of Ford Motor company and was one heralded as one of JFK and LBJ's "Best and the Brightest," when he served as Defense Secretary in the 1960s. His decision making when it came to execution of the Vietnam War was disastrous.

But certainly some of the president's men and women should have management or business experience, if we want a well-functioning government that spends taxpayer dollars wisely and is responsive to the needs of citizens and roots out inefficiency, waste, undue bureaucracy, duplication and just plain poor performance. That's needed now more than ever given that the federal government is now a $6 trillion-plus super-sized operation that is larger than the entire economy of all but 14 countries. The government now manages seemingly every micro-activity of our economy, from what kinds of light bulbs we use, to setting rules on workplace safety, to monitoring billions of financial transactions, to delivering the mail on time, to running the railroads, to building the roads and highways, to subsidizing everything from child care to burial services, to determining how big companies can get, to auctioning the tens of billions of dollars of electromagnetic spectrum, to regulating the content of social media platforms.

It is imperative that the people chosen for these positions have private sector and management/logistics experience to know what they are doing in public administration.

How does the Biden administration stack up?

We have analyzed the work histories, resumes and bios of the top 68 Democrats with oversight over the U.S. economy. This analysis may not include every job or position they have held throughout their entire careers, but measures the major career-building positions they have held and their primary areas of expertise and experience. How does the Biden administration fare?

To answer that question, we have analyzed the work histories, resumes and bios of the top 68 Democrats with oversight over the U.S. economy and our businesses. This was our best faith effort to review these officials' backgrounds, and in some cases it wasn't easy to determine precisely the years of business experience, so we made estimates based on the available information.
Key Findings

- The total number of years of business experience of these top 68 policymakers is 161. This means the average number of years of business experience for these policymakers is 2.4 years. The median years of business experience is closer to one year of experience.

- 42 of the policymakers have virtually no business experience whatsoever.

- Only one in six top Biden appointees has extensive business experience.

- The table below shows that the Biden team has over 1.5 times more experience in law, over 1.25 times more experience in politics/government, and only slightly less experience in academia/policy than they do in business.

Table I. Number of individuals within the Biden administration (right column) who belong to each primary field listed (left column)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Field</th>
<th>Number of Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics/Government</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academia/Policy</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting/public relations</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venture Capital/investments</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous Business</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education/Health</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Some Business Experience 26%
Extensive Business Experience 12%
Virtually No Business Experience 62%
Conclusion

What is the takeaway from these findings? Surely we want our political class to have a diversity of backgrounds. We want lawyers, grassroots activists, those with political and policy experience, scientists, health experts, and academics with required specialties.

But we also want people who have experience running large operations with hundreds and thousands of employees and who understand logistics. We want people who know how to cut costs, manage logistics, increase productivity, meet payroll, and make a profit (or in the case of the government, avoid large losses). We need people at the top rungs of government who have experience dealing with large-scale crises (as we experienced during COVID), and also at least some familiarity with the everyday struggles that businesses have with the government.

The Biden administration has made “diversity” a major goal of its administration. But the one area that is sorely missing in this diversity goal is in attracting talented and experienced men and women from the field of small business, commerce, and finance.

When it comes to the government: Ignorance is not bliss. These skills are sorely lacking in the Biden administration. The cascade of policy and management mistakes that are piling up in the Biden government are at least in part a consequence of this lack of basic skills and competency. Biden should fix the problem by replacing those chosen for their ideology, not the skills and talents our government needs and taxpayers rightly demand.
Appendix

A Review of the Business Experience in the Biden Administration

Joe Biden – President
0 Years
Law/Politics

Lloyd Austin – Secretary of Defense
5 Years
Military/Business

Kamala Harris – Vice President
0 Years
Law/Politics

Merrick Garland – Attorney General
0 Years
Law

Ron Klain – White House Chief of Staff
16 Years
Venture Capital/Politics

Deb Haaland – Secretary of Interior
11 Years
Small Business/Politics

Antony Blinken – Secretary of State
4 Years
Law

Tom Vilsack – Secretary of Agriculture
0 Years
Law/Government
Janet Yellen – Secretary of Treasury
0 Years
Academia/Government

Gina Raimondo – Secretary of Commerce
11 Years
Venture Capital/Politics

Marty Walsh – Secretary of Labor
0 Years
Labor/Politics

Denis McDonough – Secretary of Veterans Affairs
0 Years
Politics/Government

Xavier Becerra – Secretary of Health and Human Services
0 Years
Law/Politics

Alejandro Mayorkas – Secretary of Homeland Security
0 Years
Law/Government

Marcia Fudge – Secretary of Housing and Urban Development
0 Years
Law/Government

John Kerry – Ambassador for Climate Change
0 Years
Politics

Pete Buttigieg – Secretary of Transportation
4 Years
Consulting/Government

Shalanda Young – Office of Management and Budget Director
0 Years
Government/Congressional Staffer
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Previous Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Granholm</td>
<td>Secretary of Energy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Law/Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine Tai</td>
<td>U.S. Trade Representative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Politics/Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miguel Cardona</td>
<td>Secretary of Education</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Education/Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda Greenfield</td>
<td>Ambassador to the United Nations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Politics/Diplomat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cecilia Rouse</td>
<td>Chair Council of Economic Advisors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Academia/Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Rice</td>
<td>Director of Domestic Policy Council</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Politics/Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jen O’Malley</td>
<td>Deputy Chief of Staff</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Politics/Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Deese</td>
<td>Director National Economic Council</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Investment Business/Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Anderson</td>
<td>Director of Economic Policy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Politics/Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan Apper</td>
<td>Council of Economic Advisers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Politics/Government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Heather Boushey – Member Council of Economic Advisers
0 Years
Government/Nonprofit

Jessica Rosenworcel – Chair Federal Communications Commission
0 Years
Lawyer/podcast host

Isabel Guzman – Administrator Small Business Administration
20 Years
Consulting/business

Doug Parker – Director of OSHA
0 Years
Government/Labor Policy

Jose Fernandez – Undersecretary of State Economic Growth, Energy, and Environment
0 Years
Lawyer

Nadiya Beckwith-Stanley – National Economic Council Economic Policy
0 Years
Law

Zach Butterworth – White House Director of private Sector Engagement
0 Years
Law

Sameera Fazili – National Economic Council Manufacturing
1 Year
Academia/Government

Pronita Gupta – Special Assistant To The President for Labor and Workers at the Domestic Policy Council
0 Years
Politics/Government

Ben Harris – Assistant Secretary Economic Policy, Treasury
5 Years
Economist/academic
Wally Adeyemo – Deputy Secretary of Treasury
2 Years
Politics/Government

Don Graves – Deputy Secretary Department of Commerce
0 Years
Government/Nonprofits

Nellie Liang – Undersecretary Treasury Domestic Finance
3 Years
Academic/Economist

Seth Harris – Deputy Assistant to the President Labor and the Economy
0 Years
Law

Joelle Gamble – Special Assistant to the President for Economic Policy
3 Years
Investment

David Weil – Department of Labor Wage and Hour Administrator
Academic
0 Years

Daniel Hornung – Special Assistant to the President for Economic Policy
0 Years
Law

0 Years
Politics/Government

Samantha Silverberg – Special Assistant to the President For Transportation/Infrastructure
4 Years
Government/Transportation policy
David Kamin – Deputy Director National Economic Council
0 Years
Academia/Policy

Sam Berger – Director of Strategic Operations for Covid-19 Relief Team
0 Years
Health care/Nonprofits

Erika Poethig – Special Assistant to the President for Housing and Urban Policy
0 Years
Government/Nonprofits

Carmel Martin – Deputy Director for Economic Mobility Domestic Policy Council
2 Years
Law

Maureen Tracey-Mooney – Special Assistant to the President for Education
0 Years
Government/Nonprofits

Michael Negron – White House Senior Advisor for Small Business
0 Years
Politics/Government

Esther Olavarria – Deputy Director of Domestic Policy Council Immigration
0 Years
Non-Profits/Advocacy

Elisabeth Reynolds – Special Assistant to the President for Manufacturing
0 Years
Academia/Policy

Louisa Terrell – White House Office of legislative affairs
0 Years
Academia/Policy

Timothy Wu – White House advisor on Technology Policy
2 Years
Academia/Lawyer

Source: New America
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Current Role</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Background</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gina McCarthy</td>
<td>White House Climate Advisor</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Public health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brenda Mallory</td>
<td>Chair Council of Environmental Quality</td>
<td>0 Years</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lael Brainard</td>
<td>Federal Reserve Board Vice Chair</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>Academic/economics/government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lina Khan</td>
<td>Chair of Federal Trade Commission</td>
<td>0 Years</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Kanter</td>
<td>Assistant Attorney General for Antitrust</td>
<td>0 Years</td>
<td>Lawyer/Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Abruzzo</td>
<td>Chair National Labor Relations Board</td>
<td>0 Years</td>
<td>Labor Lawyer/Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary Gensler</td>
<td>Chair Securities and Exchange Commission</td>
<td>20 Years</td>
<td>Investment Banker/Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Glick</td>
<td>Chair of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission</td>
<td>14 Years</td>
<td>Senate energy staffer/Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiquita Brooks-Lasure</td>
<td>Administrator, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid</td>
<td>5 Years</td>
<td>Health Care/Consulting/Congressional staffer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Califf</td>
<td>Administrator, Food and Drug Administration</td>
<td>8 Years</td>
<td>Health Care/Academic</td>
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