Chapter 4

Going Re“public”an: How Donald Trump Uses Speeches to Target Audiences and Mask Reality

Abstract This chapter explores the speechmaking patterns of Donald Trump at midterm. Most important, it found that the Trump administration has systematically omitted almost every one of his public rallies from inclusion in the Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents. The omission of these speeches raises troubling questions about the public record of this administration. Donald Trump uses Twitter aggressively with the lowest average daily speech totals in 30 years. Through an examination of speeches via media markets and Electoral College results, he is a president who primarily only focuses on places with his strongest support. As a result, he has also regularly gone to some of the smallest cities for rallies in decades when compared to other presidents.

Keywords Midterms · Electoral College · Media markets · Speechmaking · Going public

When a president speaks, people listen. People like to place faith in their leaders for accurate information. Their words are powerful and carry weight with their constituencies. In March 2020, a woman was hospitalized and her husband died after ingesting chloroquine phosphate because, in her words, “Trump kept saying it was basically pretty much a cure”
(Associated Press 2020) and they trusted him. They used a version typically used to clean pools and not a medical-grade formulation of the drug. While extremely tragic, it highlights the power the president’s words have over people. Decisions over what they say, endorse, rebuke, or even acknowledge gives an audience to ideas. Each administration has unique speechmaking fingerprints. Their patterns of location choices often tell us about constituencies they value more than others.

The presidency of Donald J. Trump displays complications never previously encountered in the modern presidency era going back to 1945. The data presented here is collected from the Public Papers of the President as well as the Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents. According to the National Archives, their official bound copies contain “the papers and speeches of the President of the United States that were issued by the Office of the Press Secretary during the specified time period” (Public Papers, n.d.). In addition, the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents and its successor, the Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents, have been available since 1965 to provide material on “a more timely basis” (Public Papers, n.d.). The numbers for the Trump administration do not accurately reflect his public speaking events throughout his administration. All 2017 public speeches are accurately recorded in the Daily Compilation with the exception of a March 20 rally in Louisville, Kentucky. Any record, proof of existence, or transcription of this speech is missing in the public papers though readily available on multiple news outlets in its entirety. All other 2017 rallies are documented in the papers. The real concern emerges with the accounting of rallies 2018 onwards. In 2018, 45 public speeches out of a known total of 426 are not documented in the Daily Compilation. Every Trump rally from March–December 2018 is missing in the Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents with the exception of one on June 20th in Duluth, Minnesota. These are public presidential events with multiple print and video news outlet coverage of the president’s speech. There does exist within the Daily Compilation short references of these upcoming speeches during reporter exchanges (often en route to Air Force One), but the actual speeches themselves are missing as if they never occurred. It is not a case of slow recording on behalf of the Press Secretary’s office. All other events within these time frames are documented by the administration, including impromptu White House exchanges. These are notable because without them, the administration appears to travel significantly less and conduct mostly routine daily business of a presidency. Missing
speeches place research using governmental records in a quandary. The public speaking record of the American president should be available for all to read, review, and examine. The Trump administration provides only a partial public papers record with a significant chunk of his speechmaking missing. In an attempt to be fully accurate, both numbers in this chapter are presented to show the official record as well as the actual one. The records with “adj” indicate adjusted records which include the speeches missing in the Press Secretary’s reporting of the president’s public speechmaking. Their existence was ascertained by cross-referencing them on multiple media outlets to confirm them. It is unclear why the Trump administration has decided to remove these speeches given the Public Papers should include every public incident of presidential speaking from formal speeches to spontaneous press exchanges. The analysis in this chapter just goes through the midterm. Even though this chapter does not include it, it is important to note all 21 rallies in 2019 are missing as well as the 11 rallies through March 2, 2020. Each and every one of these missing events has multiple print, video, and online news sources documenting the occurrence with transcriptions. It is possible these are mere oversights, but given specific missing typologies, it is also possible the administration may be attempting to cultivate a specific vision of its legacy. It raises serious questions of intentional manipulation of public records to nurture a particular image of an administration. These speeches are where the president uses his more colorful analogies and language. Their removal makes the overall speeches of the administration appear more neutral, less confrontational, and not as stridently partisan. It suggests they are attempting to discriminate between the candidate as a private citizen and the president as a public one. However, it is nonsensical for a sitting president to assert the difference. The elected president is an active government official and his public campaign activity should be included within the official public record. Their omission suggests the Trump administration has tried to establish a dichotomous identity for the president. The public president and the private candidate concurrently existing as different entities. Their activities, while happening simultaneously are distinctly separate and need to be handled in an unconnected manner. Any attempt to realistically make this assumption about a current American president is absurd. All public activity while president is a matter of public record. Intentional overt manipulation of the record to promote a different reality is dangerous and unethical. To date, the administration
has been quiet on the exclusion of these speeches and their absence has not been publicly noted.

These missing speeches lend credence to the concept the administration employs a tremendous amount of dramatic license over the perception of the Trump presidency. It fits within the larger context of theatrical narrative because if you control the message, you can control the story. It also couples well with the overall concept of the president’s kayfabe presidency albeit flipped a bit. Within kayfabe, wrestlers maintain the fantastical is reality and utterly believable, even when it strains the seams of authenticity. By removing the speeches from the public record, the administration takes reality and morphs it into a fabricated image. They bend the factual reality into a more professionally palatable narrative for the record while continuing the carnival atmosphere of the rallies.

**Presidential Speechmaking**

The natural breakpoint of any administration is the midterm. Through an exploration of the Trump administration speeches up to this point, it is possible to see their emergent patterns and locational speech strategies. Midterm elections occur toward the end of the second year of a presidential term. Between 1946 and 2018, there have been thirteen first-term midterm elections. Four administrations saw their party gain Senate seats at midterm (Kennedy, Nixon, George W. Bush, Trump) and only one (George W. Bush) in the House of Representatives. People expect the president’s party to falter at midterm. This critical halfway point affects the composition of Congress for the next two years. Presidents can use midterm campaign speeches as a way to cultivate a Congress favorable to his policies (Cohen et al. 1991; Keele et al. 2004). Congressional seats won or lost alter the effectiveness for a president to develop policy and give incentive to encourage favorable midterm election outcomes. The ability of the president’s party to control Congress has long-term impacts upon policy agendas (Edwards 1989; Bond and Fleisher 1990; Peterson 1990). Hoddie and Routh (2004) find predictable patterns with presidential midterms not unlike presidential campaign behavior (p. 264). Strategies employed in a presidential election are mimicked at midterm for their own party. Presidential popularity and competitive races are strong indicators (Hoddie and Routh 2004) that drive midterm campaign stops. Does Donald Trump behave in a similar manner compared to previous administrations? When looking at his speeches through the lenses of
media markets and the Electoral College, are his patterns unique or do they look like other presidencies?

Presidents often act differently when comparing their overall patterns to campaigning periods. Most presidents function as base reinforcers while a few (notably George W. Bush) attempt base outreach during campaigning periods right before an election. In 2002, George W. Bush was very active in supporting candidates at midterm with great success. Between inauguration and midterm elections, he “spent 241 days in 43 different states” (Sellers and Denton 2006, p. 411) supporting other Republicans. Presidential attention to states has importance beyond the candidate. According to Sellers and Denton (2006), Bush used these speeches to “strengthen his electoral coalition” and “bolster his supporter’s commitment in others” (p. 429). Bush utilized Senate midterm campaigning trips as a way to reinforce his own bases for reelection “in states with numerous electoral votes, regardless of their chances of winning” (Sellers and Denton 2006, p. 429). For the 2010 midterms, Barack Obama had very different results. He referred to it as a “shell-lacking” (Berman 2014) with the Republican Party gaining 64 seats in the House of Representatives. Scholars have attributed several reasons for Obama’s lack of 2010 electoral success including, but not limited to, high levels of partisanship (Aldrich et al. 2014; Nyhan et al. 2012; Koger and Lebo 2012), the Tea Party (Jacobson 2011) and backlash from Congress in general (Jones and McDermott 2011). Donald Trump’s first-term 2018 midterms appear to be somewhat in between the success of Bush and the losses of Obama. The Republican Party lost at least 41 seats in the House of Representatives but gained two seats in the Senate. Turnout was high for the 2018 midterms with the Democrats winning with the largest difference between the two parties in four decades (Price 2018; Misra 2019).

**Daily Speeches**

Presidents want to communicate with the public. It helps provide support and allows them to see an administration is responsive to their general concerns. One way to explore an administration involves looking at its speech totals. The number of speeches by the president on an annual

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1 North Carolina’s 9th District’s election was voided. A special election to fill it occurred in September 2019.
basis has increased over the last several decades. The best way to assess a president’s dialogue with the public requires the entirety of it to be catalogued. Most presidents give more speeches in year 2 over year 1 though these numbers are not absolutes and have exceptions. Barack Obama gave 36 fewer speeches in 2010 than in 2009 and Donald Trump gave 46 less in his second year. The only comparable modern era president with any significant speech decline between first-term year 1 and 2 is Richard Nixon. Nixon had a decrease of about 40 speeches between these two years. Bill Clinton gave 3 fewer speeches in year 1 over year 2 but that is essentially negligible. The Trump and Obama significant decrease of total speeches runs counter to a trend that has been in place since 1945 with the Nixon exception of 1969–1970. Donald Trump’s first- and second-year total speech levels closely resemble those of the George H. W. Bush administration. Both gave over 400 but less than 500 speeches for each of their first two years if you use the adjusted numbers that account for the missing Trump rallies. Specifically, George H. W. Bush gave around 443 speeches in year one and 483 in year two, while Donald Trump had 471 in the first years and 426 in the second. If you use the official Trump year two numbers, his second-year speeches drop precipitously to 381. In comparison, Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama all had annual speech totals for their first two years in the 500s or 600s.

Starting with George H. W. Bush, the number of daily speeches goes up compared to Presidents Truman through Reagan. On average, Bush 41 gave 1.30 speeches a day which was an increase from Ronald Reagan’s 0.92. However, presidential daily speechmaking during the first two years peaked in the Clinton administration. Barack Obama’s speech-making averaged 1.48 speeches per day in his first two years with fewer speeches per day than George W. Bush and Bill Clinton. Bill Clinton was the most verbose at 1.93 speeches every day. George W. Bush gave fewer per day (1.61) than Clinton, but in truth, Clinton was a talker. He routinely would give short statements or quips to the media en route to other events. However, the Trump administration’s patterns look like they belong in an earlier era. The daily percentage with the Trump administration looks more like George H. W. Bush’s administration in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Trump’s numbers are even lower when examining a standard pattern for this administration. For the last 30+ years, most presidents give public speeches almost daily. President Trump breaks with this convention in a fairly dramatic fashion. March 2017 is a good exemplar of his regular behavior. He gave one speech on both the 2nd and 3rd of the
month, skipped 4 days, gave a speech on the 7th, skipped 1 day, spoke on the 9th and 10th, followed by no speeches on the 11th or 12th. There were 3 speeches on the 13th, skipped the 14th, followed by 2 speeches on both the 15th and 16th, followed by 4 speeches on the 17th. The remainder of the month follows a very similar pattern. Trump’s numbers are lower because he regularly does not hold any public events for days at a time. When looking at the actual calendar dates, the Trump administration appears to take long weekends off from speechmaking reminiscent of the Kennedy and Nixon presidencies. As a point of comparison, George W. Bush’s March 2001 numbers paint a very different picture. President Bush spoke every day from March 1–17th giving usually 2–3 speeches almost every day. President Obama’s March 2009 numbers are similar to President Bush, though Obama did skip speechmaking on every Sunday of that month.

If we omit Washington, DC speeches and international locations, these numbers reaffirm some patterns, but also raise some new observations. Barack Obama still gave fewer speeches in his first two years than either Clinton or George W. Bush. However, Obama’s speechmaking volume did increase, rather than decrease, during his second year in office. This suggests while Obama may have given fewer speeches, his generalized domestic pattern was not dramatically different from previous administrations. In fact, with the exception of Truman (controlling for Ford), every administration since 1945 has given more domestic speeches outside of Washington, DC in their second year when compared to their first. Truman actually had the same number, 7 speeches, in each year. The only quandary in this overall pattern involves the Trump administration. Their official numbers (99 in year 1 and 92 in year 2) show a decrease, the first in the modern presidency era. However, their actual numbers (100 and 137, respectively) conform to the generalized pattern of all previous administrations since Truman. Beginning with George H. W. Bush, presidents significantly increased overall speeches throughout the United States. For example, Ronald Reagan gave 35 speeches throughout the United States in his first year and 95 in his second. George H. W. Bush had 104 in the first year and 148 during the second. Midterm elections are important because the president needs to rally party support and a “campaign appearance mobilizes voters, rather than converting them” (Cohen et al. 1991). Personal contact and visits are an important key to election success (Mahew 1974; Fenno 1996; Shaw 1999; Jacobson 2001). Most presidents after Eisenhower gave approximately
30–60 more speeches in their midterm election year when compared to their first (assuming we are using Trump’s adjusted numbers). George W. Bush radically increased second-year speechmaking in ways unusual for other administrations. With a growth of 95 speeches, George W. Bush took midterm speeches seriously and “went public” on a regular basis. It is possible to contend Bush was attempting to change the way presidents communicate with America. The reversion of Obama to previous presidential patterns makes Bush look more like an outlier than a new trend. The Trump administration’s manipulation of public speeches creates a dilemma. If we believe their official numbers, it upends decades of expected behavior. However, if all the speeches are included, they conform to expectations.

Though President Trump has not been active giving public speeches, he has regularly employed the use of the social media platform Twitter to express his opinions. Trump tweeted 2227 original tweets as president in 2017 and 2843 in 2018 (Politico 2018) averaging just over 7 each day. These numbers also appear to be increasing. From January–December 2019, the president tweeted 7776 times with an average of 21.3 tweets a day (“Trump Twitter” 2020). During the impeachment process, his daily numbers averaged around “three dozen times a day” (Parker and Rucker 2019). He appears to prefer electronic over physical communication which likely contributes toward his lower daily public speech numbers. These tweets allow him to create or address topical concerns and often circle the discourse back onto him. Evidence suggests it may have value. A July 2019 study found 19% of American Twitter users follow President Trump and 26% follow former President Barack Obama (Wojcik et al. 2019). In a very real sense, Twitter has allowed the president to fully realize the idea of permanent campaigning. All events become fair game for his reactions. It creates a platform to push his point of views to help strengthen his presidency. Neustadt (1960) maintained a president is only as strong as his persuasion power. Donald Trump uses Twitter as a weapon of persuasion and media conversation. His words often create controversy, but also drive attention toward him. His actions and reactions become the center of attention while dominating most conversation. He uses Twitter as a weapon to compel abeyance from others. Many fear the spectacle of negative attention when impugned by the president so they bow toward his rhetorical demands. In a very real sense, it is an exemplar (albeit half a century later and on a completely different media outlet) of Neustadt’s presidential persuasion power.
While important, tweets are not always the same as person to person interaction which can be achieved through remarks, rallies, or addresses in particular communities. Charnock et al. (2009) find presidential visits are “a valuable commodity… that presidents are increasingly deploying for electoral purposes” (p. 336). Looking at domestic speeches outside of Washington, DC but inside the United States may offer some value. Where does campaigning end and governing begin? Speechmaking is critical to the modern American presidency. Orstein and Mann (2000) argue the line has essentially disappeared. Presidents spend enormous amounts of time and energy focused upon branding themselves to the public. It seems the goal of modern administrations is to develop a brand loyal voter base. A “share of customers” approach to marketing has direct relevance to targeting voters. Peppers and Rogers (1996) refer to this technique as “one to one” (1:1) marketing. Businesses aim at increasing product loyalty over anything else. Consumers bypass other options because they have been conditioned to reject any alternatives. What are the political implications of this technique? Some suggest selling a candidate or political party may not be all that different from other types of more conventional products. “Over the past few years, thanks to technological advances and an escalating arms race between the parties, Republicans and Democrats have gone to great lengths to make campaigning more like commercial marketing” (Gertner 2004). Donald Trump, in many ways, epitomizes these perspectives. He inculcates the ultimate expression of the permanent campaign. His “Make America Great Again” rallies offer carnivalesque reinforcement toward his base while aiming to buoy himself, and at times, other officials. The first post-inauguration rallies started on February 18, 2017, less than a full month after he took the oath of office. These rallies fall somewhere between campaigning and self-aggrandizement. Many (especially the 2017 ones) fall outside the normal cycles for traditional campaigning, but all have the primary goal of buffering Donald Trump’s popularity thus making the speeches fall into the realm of the permanent campaign.

The administrations after Ronald Reagan have increased the average number of speeches they give per day during the first two years throughout the United States if you omit the Washington, DC and foreign speeches. Ronald Reagan gave 0.18 speeches a day. George H. W. Bush gave significantly more speeches (0.35/day) than all his predecessors and the numbers reflect it. A surprising finding involves the near-identical averages for Bill Clinton and George W. Bush (0.49/0.50). Bush gave
more year 2 speeches while Clinton gave far more year 1 speeches averaging the two within a hundredth of each other. Considering the relative failure of the Democrats in midterm elections in 1994 versus Bush’s Republican successes in 2002, these differences may pick up on a strategy to concentrate resources in strategic geographic areas as noted by several authors when referring to reelects (Bartels 1985; Brams and Davis 1974; Colantoni et al. 1975). Furthermore, Bush may have been more inclined to “enter races where they feel that their campaign appearance may help their candidate win the election, in close races” (Cohen et al. 1991, p. 176). It appears that daily speechmaking peaked in the Bush 43 administration and has been on a slow decline in the last two presidencies with Obama averaging 0.39 a day and Trump 0.27 (official)/0.33 (adjusted). Focusing upon the adjusted numbers, the Trump average is very close to the George H. W. Bush administration. Presidents still have a higher daily average since the 1980s, but it is possible the vast permeability of social media has impacted these numbers. The variety and ease of online outlets allows the public to have targeted information in the palms of their hands. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram all encourage brand loyalty from followers. That is, the “liking” or “following” of a person or entity allows their content to arrive unfiltered at its intended target. Local speeches compete with directed online content for personal rapport with constituencies. They can most certainly be utilized in conjunction with each other to amplify and motivate populations, but the driving need to always travel may be waning with the ability to stream video content in a modernized handheld fireside chat. However, that has not stopped the Trump administration from eliminating certain types of media content. The Trump administration eliminated the weekly radio address with its last broadcast in August 2018. The daily press briefing was ended by the Trump administration on March 11, 2019 (Kwong 2019) and not resumed until early 2020. The press corps is increasingly forced to rely upon Trump’s direct Twitter feed, speech remarks, or written statements. While written statements from specific executive branch offices are important, coordinated regular Oval Office addresses and press briefings can work both ways. They allow the press to get direct information, but also allow the president’s office to help disseminate a carefully constructed message on their terms. The president began press briefings on COVID-19 in March 2020 which many speculate he turned to with his inability to hold stadium rallies during the crisis (Grynbaum 2020; Kruse 2020). These events have been a combination of the administration briefing
the country on virus updates with the president occasionally venting his opinions regarding current topics on his mind.

If travel matters, where does the Trump administration go? There have been several scholars who have looked at presidential travel (Hart 1987; Tenpas 1997, 2003; Kernell 1997; Ragsdale 1998; Doherty 2007). Doherty (2007) suggests that travel “does target large, competitive states” (p. 770). Charnock et al. (2009) find some presidents trend toward uncompetitive states (Reagan) while others like George W. Bush leans toward larger competitive states. Electoral College numbers seem to factor into travel schedules more than just to encourage going to like-minded constituencies. George W. Bush sought local media (Barrett and Peake 2007; Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake 2006) and employed a “going local” strategy with mixed results finding the most favorable coverage in areas already supportive where an emphasis was on descriptive, rather than analytical stories (Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake 2008). Tenpas and McCann (2007) look at presidential polling. They found presidents do more around elections but recent administrations “polled more diligently the longer they were in office” (p. 365). Cohen and Powell (2005) look at state-level presidential travel and find presidents receive “a modest boost in state-level approval through strategically crafted public appearances” (p. 23).

**Media Markets**

By looking at speeches by two categories, Designated Market Areas (DMAs) and the Electoral College, we can see patterns within administrations. Electoral College regions rely upon the state borders to contain them. Presidents will often choose specific states to either reach new constituencies or reinforce bases of support. Market areas offer flexibility for nuances lost with geographical boundaries. Certain locations like New York City are physically within one state, but their market area extends as far as rural Pike County, Pennsylvania with a population of less than 50,000. When presidents give speeches in a city, the news coverage can often extend across several cities and even states. Media markets help explain information penetration to a region. Designated Market Areas help see the sizes of cities presidents prefer to give speeches when collated together into general sizes. Market areas reveal if presidents seek maximum media saturation in speeches outside Washington, DC or prefer to go places with smaller audiences. Gimpel et al. (2007)
found “low income voters are more likely to develop an interest in the campaign when they reside in states that both parties have targeted as battlegrounds” (p. 795). In conjunction with these findings, they also find the “geographic concentration of the poor enables activation and mobilization because television and radio remain constrained by geography of electronic signal propagation” (Gimpel et al. 2007, p. 795). Speeches in media markets matter because voter activation matters. It is imperative to reach voters. Television coverage reaches audiences who are not attending rallies and events. It brings the campaign to the average citizen and functions as a key source of information.

These media markets are calculated by Nielsen (n.d.) using the number of television households within each one. The top 25 are the largest markets in the United States. In 2018, they range from about 7.1 million to about 1.1 million. The fiftieth largest market has about 624,000 households, and the 75th has 383,000. The smallest television market in America is Glendive, Montana (ranked 210) with about 3500 households. While the number of households within each quartile has grown over time, the general ranking remains relatively stable for the majority of cities. When certain cities grow, they will move up in rank, but the majority tends to all increase together with only minor rank-ordering changes. Of the top 25 ranked markets in 1982, 22 of them are still in that range in 2018. The three that have moved lower than 25 (Baltimore, Indianapolis, and San Diego) are currently ranked 26, 27, 28. The three that moved upwards (Orlando, Raleigh, and Charlotte) were all ranked in the 30s in 1982.

Table 4.1 gives the annual percentage of first- and second-year speeches broken down into major media market ranges. Table 4.1 shows many presidents gravitate toward larger markets with significantly more speeches in year 2 over year 1. On average, presidents gave about 55 more speeches in year 2 (though George W. Bush gave 95 more) with the exception of Donald Trump. If one uses the numbers provided by the Press Secretary’s office, his speechmaking decreased in the second year. However, if one uses the actual numbers calculated based on other records of public speeches, Trump’s numbers increase, but not as much as other administrations (with the exception of George H. W. Bush). As a general rule, speechmaking in the midterm year increases throughout the United States. This finding should be expected and is in line with what even casual observers notice about most presidents in their second year. Many presidents (with the exceptions of Richard Nixon, George W. Bush)
Table 4.1 Percentage of year 1 and year 2 speeches in media markets by year and by ranked size

| President | Year | 1–25 | 26–50 | 51–75 | 76+ | Total |
|-----------|------|------|-------|-------|-----|-------|
| Nixon     | 1969 | 40.5 | 8.1   | 8.1   | 43.2| 37    |
| Nixon     | 1970 | 43.9 | 18.3  | 7.3   | 30.5| 82    |
| Carter    | 1977 | 51.1 | 15.5  | 22.2  | 11.1| 45    |
| Carter    | 1978 | 46.5 | 22.8  | 15.8  | 14.9| 101   |
| Reagan    | 1981 | 65.7 | 22.9  | 8.6   | 2.9 | 35    |
| Reagan    | 1982 | 49.5 | 16.5  | 15.4  | 18.7| 91    |
| Bush 41   | 1989 | 55.6 | 12.1  | 10.1  | 22.2| 99    |
| Bush 41   | 1990 | 54.5 | 18.9  | 9.8   | 16.7| 132   |
| Clinton   | 1993 | 75.4 | 11.6  | 9.4   | 3.6 | 138   |
| Clinton   | 1994 | 68.9 | 16.3  | 4.7   | 10  | 190   |
| Bush 43   | 2001 | 43.6 | 23.3  | 17.3  | 15.8| 133   |
| Bush 43   | 2002 | 45.6 | 20.2  | 10.9  | 23.2| 228   |
| Obama     | 2009 | 61.9 | 10.4  | 7.6   | 19.6| 92    |
| Obama     | 2010 | 60.4 | 16.7  | 11.8  | 11.1| 144   |
| Trump/Trumpadj | 2017 | 51.0/51.0 | 30.2/30.0 | 5.2/6.2 | 13.5/13.4 | 96/97 |
| Trump/Trumpadj | 2018 | 51.6/39.7 | 26.4/22.8 | 2.2/8.8 | 19.8/28.7 | 91/136 |

gave over 50% of their speeches in the largest markets in either year 1 or year 2. The exceptions are intriguing because they preferred smaller media markets to the larger ones. Each gave less than 50% of their total domestic speeches in markets smaller than the top 25. The case of Richard Nixon is interesting, but his number counts are substantially smaller than Bush. George W. Bush spent a considerable amount of time in the smallest markets. Barack Obama’s first two years are equally interesting because of their sharp change in speechmaking from the previous Bush administration. His speechmaking patterns more closely resemble Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan for the preference toward larger markets. In his first two years, approximately 60% of all Obama’s domestic speeches occur in the top 25 markets in the United States (when controlling for Washington, DC). Obama embraces a large market strategy working to reinforce bases loyal to the Democratic Party. Over 50% of the speeches given by Barack Obama in 2009–2010 were in the largest American media markets within states that voted for him in 2008. The domestic speechmaking strategy for Barack Obama relies upon the largest media markets in supportive states and areas. In contrast, the top 25 media markets in 2001 were also in 17 states. In 2001, George W. Bush gave 58.3% of all speeches in the
Donald Trump’s patterns look similar, yet distinctly different than George W. Bush. Using the adjusted numbers since they are truly the most accurate, President Trump’s first year shows an administration that spent about half of its time giving speeches in the largest media markets within the United States. In his second year, however, the adjusted (and more accurate) number falls to only 40% of the largest media markets in the United States. It is percentage-wise slightly lower than Nixon, and by far the smallest number for any president in the last 40 years. In fact, 21% (28 speeches) of the top 25 markets in 2018 were either vacation locations, Andrews Air Force Base, or obligatory meetings at the United Nations in New York. He spoke in these places because of compulsory circumstances, not choice. Donald Trump appears to be a president who shuns large markets. He gave a substantial number of his speeches in the smallest markets within the United States. During 2018, 28.7% of his speeches occurred in markets ranked 76–210. This number is the highest for any president with the exception of Richard Nixon. More important, it is the highest raw number total seen for administrations since these numbers were collected. Specifically, 11% of these smallest market speeches had fewer than 150,000 television households. Donald Trump used these markets as a way to target his base with 85% of these speeches in states that supported him in the Electoral College. The smallest media market occurred in July 2018 when Trump spoke in the Great Falls, Montana with has approximately 56,000 television households.

Most administrations focus on larger markets with the exception of George W. Bush and Donald Trump. When we turn to the specific fundraising and campaign speeches, we can see other effects. Bush gave few fundraising speeches his first year in office, but changed in his second year. In 2002, George W. Bush gave the most campaign speeches (63 speeches) in a midterm election year for any president at that point. He also gave a full 1/3rd of all his campaign speeches in media markets ranked 51–210. In comparison, Barack Obama gave only 2 campaign speeches in these smallest markets in 2010. Both were in states (Wisconsin and Virginia) he carried in 2008. In 2002, George W. Bush gave 24 campaign/fundraising speeches in the same sized markets in 14 different states. Eight of those 14 were states he did not carry in 2000. These two presidents have different campaign speechmaking styles in their first
midterm elections. George W. Bush went into smaller markets and often in states that did not support him in 2000. Barack Obama preferred the largest media markets and in states he carried in 2008.

Donald Trump also pursues a campaigning strategy that focuses upon the smallest media markets in places generally supportive of him. It is these campaigning numbers where the concerns for the numbers released by the Press Secretary’s office are most salient. For 2018, 1 speech was included in the *Daily Compilation* that qualifies as a campaign speech in 2018. Based upon other media (print/video/online) sources, there are **45 other speeches missing** from the records and not part of the official accounting. These missing speeches are critical because they completely alter the perception and focus of the Trump presidency within the media markets. With the adjusted numbers, Donald Trump gave the fewer number (volume or percentage) of campaigning speeches in the largest media markets in over 40 years. In fact, he gave only 1 campaign speech in a top 10 market. It occurred in October 2018 in Houston, Texas when he campaigned on behalf of Senator Ted Cruz in an unexpectedly close reelection contest.

President Trump has given more campaign speeches (adjusted) in the smallest markets (volume or percentage) than any other president in the modern era. In 2018, 47.8% of all campaign rally speeches were in media markets ranked 76–210. These smallest markets were in thirteen states with almost all of them in the Midwestern or Southern states. The largest city in these smallest media markets was Chattanooga, Tennessee. Donald Trump focused attention almost exclusively on smaller areas that were supportive of him in 2016. He actively worked to reinforce his base of smaller areas to the point of almost shunning the larger markets. The result is a unique pattern unlike any other previous administration with its rejection of the larger markets in favor of smaller ones. He targeted small cities in states that most strongly supported him in the 2016 election campaign. These findings fit with other scholars who assert presidents prefer locations where they are buffered by support rather than battered by detractors. Jacobson et al. (2004) argue presidents (in their case, Clinton) used campaign stops as payback for support (p. 179) over supporting marginal candidates (p. 180) for office.
Media markets allow for looking at targeted locations by population size, but the Electoral College results show partisan distributions. During reelections, presidents only have a finite amount of time and tend to focus on battleground states during election seasons (Althaus et al. 2002). This situation encourages presidents to use battleground states where their party has an edge (Althaus et al. 2002). The organization of the Electoral College means they need to worry less about population sizes and more about state allotments. Presidents need to appeal to enough voters in the right locations in order to win elections. Electoral College distributions are useful for looking at presidents during their two years in office. When presidents head into midterm elections, do they look prefer places with strong support, or do they seek to extend their influence? The Electoral College helps indicate whether presidents prefer to speak to more or less partisan friendly audiences.

Frequently, the Electoral College is divided into Republican and Democratic Party states. Its label designation depends on whether or not that party carried the state in the presidential election. When looking at public speeches in highly contested elections, these two categories may be too simple. By separating swing states into their own category, it is possible to see if presidents concentrated speeches in these areas. This creates two different groups for the swing states: one that eventually went Republican and Democrat. Swing states are those where the presidential election was highly contested. They are states where the popular vote was decided with less than 5% of the total vote. Swing states are the focus of the candidates and political parties. In contrast, the base states constitute ones carried by a candidate with more than a 5% margin in the popular vote.

Table 4.2 shows the percentage of speeches presidents give in year 1 and 2 by Electoral College results during the last 40 years. Presidents trend toward states their party carried in the previous election. Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush were the most notable exceptions. Carter gave about 40% of his year 1 and 2 speeches in states won by the Republican Party. Bush gave 39% of his year 1 and 2 speeches in places carried by the Democratic Party. Both Carter and Bush spent a considerable amount of time in swing states. These swing state numbers in Table 4.2 suggest both men were attempting to build constituencies and recruit support. In 2002, George W. Bush gave approximately 40% of all his speeches in
swing states. He gave more speeches in swing states than in Republican base states. Presidents since Reagan (excluding George W. Bush) gave a majority of their year 1 and 2 speeches in states they most easily won in the Electoral College. Obama in his first two years gave most of his speeches in the Democratic base states. Barack Obama’s patterns suggest a president who prefers giving speeches in places strongly supportive of the Democratic Party. He trends toward states with large electoral votes. Doherty (2010) observes between 1977 and 2004 non-fundraising speeches focus on states with large Electoral College incentives (p. 169). Barack Obama appears to fall in line with these findings. In 2009–2010, he gave an average of 3 speeches in the 15 states with fewer than 10 Electoral College votes. For states with 10–19 Electoral College votes, he gave on average 5.8 speeches in these 13 different states. He visited 7 states with 20 or more Electoral College votes. On average, he made 16 visits to these 7 states. Obama gravitates toward large states with friendly audiences. He works on reinforcing bases over building new areas of support.

| President | Year | GOP Win | GOP Swing State Win | Dem Win | Dem Swing State Win | Indep Total |
|-----------|------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|-------------|
| Nixon     | 1969 | 28.9    | 42.1                | 10.5    | 5.3                 | 13.1        |
| Nixon     | 1970 | 31.3    | 39.8                | 12      | 10.8                | 6           |
| Carter    | 1977 | 10.6    | 34                  | 31.9    | 23.4                | 0           |
| Carter    | 1978 | 15.4    | 23.1                | 44.2    | 17.3                | 0           |
| Reagan    | 1981 | 77.1    | 17.1                | 5.7     | 0                   | 0           |
| Reagan    | 1982 | 78.9    | 15.8                | 0       | 5.3                 | 0           |
| Bush 41   | 1989 | 60      | 20                  | 7.6     | 12.4                | 0           |
| Bush 41   | 1990 | 57.2    | 25.5                | 8.9     | 8.3                 | 0           |
| Clinton   | 1993 | 0.7     | 9.9                 | 68.9    | 20.5                | 0           |
| Clinton   | 1994 | 4.4     | 20.1                | 64.7    | 10.8                | 0           |
| Bush 43   | 2001 | 45      | 19.9                | 23.2    | 11.9                | 0           |
| Bush 43   | 2002 | 38.6    | 18.6                | 22.9    | 19.9                | 0           |
| Obama     | 2009 | 7.9     | 1.8                 | 74.6    | 15.8                | 0           |
| Obama     | 2010 | 12.2    | 4.3                 | 70.7    | 12.8                | 0           |
| Trump/Trumpadj | 2017 | 25.5/26.2 | 26.5/26.3 | 43.9/43.4 | 4.1/4.0 | 98/99 |
| Trump/Trumpadj | 2018 | 24.2/38.2 | 28.6/26.5 | 40.7/27.9 | 6.6/7.4 | 91/136 |
Donald Trump’s Electoral College patterns demonstrate a president who reinforces his bases though the superficial story suggests otherwise. However, with context, the patterns are not unusual. Trump gave most of his general speeches in states he won in the Electoral College. However, both years show a large percentage of speeches in states won by the Democratic Party in 2016. The reality is his low numbers mask the full picture. Over 80% of all the speeches in the Democratic category (90.5% in 2017 and 71.1% in 2018) were given in either at the United Nations, Andrews Air Force Base, or at Trump-owned properties in these states. These reflect a combination of mandatory obligations and de facto vacation locations and do not align with personal choice. If the speeches surrounding the California wildfires are also included, the percentage is even higher. Trump’s numbers appear somewhat skewed because of his low volume coupled with verbal exchanges at his personal properties in New York and New Jersey. President Trump adheres to a speaking pattern that rewards electoral loyalty. The top three states he traveled to the most in his first two years are Florida, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Though many of the speeches in Florida intermingle with travel to his personal vacation location, all three are traditionally considered swing states with competitive elections. The 4th most traveled to state is Nevada, a state narrowly lost by Trump in 2016 and he aggressively campaigned there for incumbent Senator Dean Heller who ultimately lost his reelection bid in 2018. The next 5 states, West Virginia, Texas, Indiana, Missouri, and Tennessee were all handily won by President Trump. For example, Trump traveled to West Virginia 8 separate times for a total of 10 speeches. The state supported him with over a 41% margin. For the other states, the smallest margin of support was Texas with only around a 9% difference. The others were all at least double that number. Trump does not really engage in base outreach. He heavily reinforces his strongest areas of support and only speaks in Democratic Party areas when there is a competitive election or required compulsory speeches.

As expected, presidents give the majority of campaign or fundraising speeches in states they carried in the previous presidential election. Fundraising is often concentrated in locations supportive in the last election (Doherty 2010, p. 169). In their midterm election years, Clinton, Obama, and Trump gave over 80% of their fundraising speeches in these states. George W. Bush stands out as a mild exception. He gave fewer speeches in Republican states, but his percentages were still over 60%. Presidents tend to avoid fundraising speeches in the states strongly held
by the opposing party. Barack Obama only gave 3 fundraising speeches in 2010 where the Republican Party won in 2008 with over 5% of the vote. All three were in cities (Atlanta, Dallas, Austin) where he carried the majority of votes for the county. In 2002, George W. Bush gave 18 speeches in strong Democratic Party states. Within those states, only a third of those speeches were in counties Bush won in 2000. The other two-thirds were all in locations with strong Democratic Party support like Boston, Trenton, and Los Angeles. Trump gave only 6 campaign speeches (rallies) in states that did not support him in the Electoral College. The three states, Illinois, Minnesota, and Nevada, all had Republican candidates in close races. Specifically, he campaigned on behalf of 3 candidates in Illinois, 7 in Minnesota, and 3 in Nevada. He did the best in Illinois with 2 of the 3 winning their contests. In Minnesota, 4 lost their elections while in Nevada, all the candidates he campaigned for were unsuccessful. Percentage-wise, Barack Obama and Donald Trump almost look like two sides of the same coin. They both heavily reinforce their bases, paying little attention to other places unless there is a potential vulnerable election. The raw totals do show Donald Trump did not truly pursue heavy campaigning during his first two years in office. His numbers are higher than Clintons, but far lower than either George W. Bush or Barack Obama.

Presidents generally go to their strongest areas of support when fundraising. If they venture into states won by the opposing party in the previous election cycle, it is often areas that are more supportive of their own party. Barack Obama and Donald Trump focus primarily successful regions for their party. George W. Bush gave more speeches in a wider range of areas in his first two years in office. Bush went aggressively into more Democratic Party states than Obama into Republican ones. Obama ran counter to many other presidents by actively fundraising during his first year in office and Donald Trump began giving rallies as early as February 2017 to help shore up support, financial and electoral. President Trump seems to commit to continuous campaigning in an exuberant way. Donald Trump appears to love campaigning, but merely tolerate governing. In both 2017 and 2018, President Trump held rallies in 9 of the 12 calendar months. He skipped a rally in January and February each year as well as one in November 2017 and December 2018. He gives rallies as a way to energize himself and his core constituency. While they function to shore up his base as well as his own support, they look to often be someone between the line of governance and overt campaigning.
Their goal ultimately functions as galvanizing electoral support, yet in many, Trump seems to be campaigning for himself out of cycle. In the Trump administration, the line between governing and campaigning was never drawn and all but evaporated over time.

Presidential speeches are an integral part of any administration. Where and to what audiences a president chooses to speak inform us about their priorities. The first two years of these presidencies give us an idea of how a president communicates with the public and travels around the United States. The last three presidencies have been similar and unique in their own ways. Obama gave a large number of speeches in the largest media markets, and preferred states he carried in the Electoral College. George W. Bush gave a considerable number of speeches in smaller media markets every year of his entire administration. He also gave more speeches in swing states than in Republican base states for almost every year he was in office. Donald Trump appears somewhere between Obama and Bush. Trump, much like Obama, acts as an aggressive base reinforcer. At the same time, he gravitates toward the smallest markets, akin to George W. Bush. President Trump does not give speeches throughout the United States, with totals more in line with administrations from almost 30+ years ago.

Trump prefers social media which supplants an aggressive speech schedule with an almost obsessive posting of short thoughts on Twitter. President Trump seems to prefer using his personal social media as a forum to control message. He uses Twitter to gain public attention to help crowd out dissenting voices. Other media sources are attacked as biased when they fail to parrot his branded messages. In August 2019, memos have leaked about proposed executive orders that would attempt to extend control over what is considered acceptable content on social media platforms (McGill and Lippman 2019). The Trump administration and campaign have threatened to sue media outlets for stories they disapprove of and take issue with content (Easley 2020; Grynbaum and Tracy 2020). Troubling questions emerge with the Trump administration and the documenting of speeches within the National Archives. The omission of so many campaign and rally speeches significantly alter the perception of the administration by the abstract numbers. The remaining speeches promote an image of a serious and routine presidency with little “off the cuff” commentary. By redacting them out of record, President Trump does not appear to engage in campaigning in 2018 or travel to small
media markets. The reality is far different with the president in October–November 2018 vigorously campaigning for many candidates, especially in small media markets. These patterns of omission extend well past the midterm through the second half of his presidential term in office. These exclusions within the national government’s log for presidential speeches are problematic and disconcerting. The president is openly and overtly manipulating the public record for their own personal advantage.

The strategy of the Donald Trump administration focuses upon strongest areas of support and doggedly reinforces them. This approach is not unique and echoed by most previous administrations in some form. Donald Trump does appear, however, to lean into areas of support with more frank preference than other presidents in recent memory. Most important, the missing materials in the Daily Compilation raise serious questions that vacillate between the need for accuracy and potential manipulation of factual documentation. There are concerns given many of these speeches should have been made available long ago, it is not a mere oversight. Instead, it may be an approach pursued by the Trump administration to subtly alter history’s accounting of his years in office. If the administration is willing to alter the record on speeches are easily found in full on YouTube, NPR, Fox, CNN, and so on, what other documentation are they not maintaining? As scholars, we should all be concerned about the accuracy because our work relies upon factual information with conclusions drawn from the information. As citizens, we should be outraged at either the incompetence of the administration or their brazenness to manipulate the public record.

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