While many have studied those who trust, we seek to investigate those who distrust specifically the government to conserve money paid in taxes. In certain years of the National Election Study (NES), respondents were queried for their perception of people in the government to waste a lot of money paid in taxes, waste some of it, or not to waste very much of it. Researchers argue that the growth in distrust is a product of expectations that government policy can promote the quality of life (Dalton 2005). Through political rhetoric and campaigning, a societal expectation has been established that a national government can foster economic expansion, reduce inequality, and maintain employment for all. However, a globalized economic system that reaches beyond national boundaries limits government capacity to affect such domestic policies. Thus, citizens become disenchanted with the ability of the government to improve the quality of life and fulfill promises of economic vitality.

Past research has established a link between the growth in government distrust and resentment for government spending and taxation (Lowery and Sigelman 1981). The framing of government spending in political discourse can affect public opinion about the national economy (Jacoby 2000). In addition, Singer (2018) found after the Great Recession that personal economic pains drove changes in government approval. We suggest that individuals evaluate their circumstances, as well as information from political sources and the media, to arrive at a level of support for government spending. Therefore, in our analysis, we disentangle the effect of personal and national economic anxiety on the growth of distrust for government spending in the United States.

Looking at the first panel of Figure 1, we can conclude that Americans traditionally distrust their government to spend tax revenues wisely. We wonder, net the usual variables, how economic anxiety creates distrust in government spending.

Distrust of government, in general, increases in times of economic recession. In the second panel, distrust in government spending follows a similar pattern. In seven of nine surveys, national economic concerns were a source of distrust in spending (i.e., odds ratios show a negative relationship with trust). The national economic concerns odds ratios were stronger near contractions of the U.S. business cycle.

The literature has also established personal economic anxiety as a significant predictor of trust in government, but the effect varies from year to year (Citrin and Luks 2001). Often, these studies do not simultaneously control for national economic concerns. With both variables (see Table 1), we find in
the early years that personal economic concerns are unrelated to trusting government spending. In the years following the Great Recession, though, personal economic anxiety aligns itself with distrust of government spending.

What we see is a convergence of personal concern and national concern. This is a new phenomenon not evident in earlier data. It is emblematic of a vast change in the political landscape. Since the NES variables at focus are collected in

Figure 1. Effect of anxiety measures on distrust of government spending.

Note: We have connected the points with dashed lines to reflect the cross-sectional nature of the data set. In Panel 1, the mean and one standard deviation for the variable trust in government spending is presented. This graph is weighted. In Panel 2, effects of anxieties are presented as odds ratios (log scale) as well as 95 percent confidence intervals. This weighted logistic regression model also controls for age, gender, African American, conservative, racial resentment (item response theory factor score), and education.
pre-election interviews, they turn out to be a harbinger of things that came to pass in 2016.

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**Supplemental Material**

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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