

Editor's Note

Welcome to our 2023 issue. Understanding the evolving operations of our three branches of government, including executive branch agencies, has always been a prime concern for *Federal History* and our organization, the Society for History in the Federal Government (SHFG). This issue presents several articles and features that delve into pivotal and consequential moments in those operations, especially during the dramatic expansion of the national security state in the post–World War II era.

Congratulations to **Edward C. Keefer** for receiving the 2022 Roger R. Trask Award and delivering the Trask Lecture of the SHFG, included here. Keefer worked for 34 years as a researcher, editor, and the general editor of the Department of State's documentary series *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS). He also worked for 14 years at the Secretary of Defense's Historical Office writing authorized histories of individual secretaries of defense. In his lecture, he offers insights that help explain the vital roles and contributions of federal historians.¹ Historians and documentary editors at State, in particular, advance the declassification of documents in the course of their work so that their historical products “are an opening wedge for further research.” The FRUS series “reverberates in the wider fields of academic and popular history.” The work of government historians in general is integral to the success of their programs: they write agency histories, provide context for decision makers through their research and reports, and educate the public on the development of U.S. political and governmental history. And the quality of their work, he stresses, is on par with that of academia.

William F. Finan III traces the planning for creation of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in 1957–58 after the Soviet Union's launch of *Sputnik I*. The resulting fear of Soviet dominance in science and space research prompted calls for rapid expansion of U.S. programs. Finan researched the papers and interviews of key participants in the planning stages to document a more accurate and prominent role for the Bureau of the Budget in that process. The Bureau, through the Reorganization Plan No. I of 1939, was charged with

¹ For a government-wide view of federal historical work, see Victoria A. Harden, “What Do Federal Historians Do?” *Perspectives on History* (May 1999) <https://www.historians.org/research-and-publications/perspectives-on-history/may-1999/what-do-federal-historians-do>. See also the quarterly issues of SHFG's newsletter, *The Federalist*, <https://shfg.wildapricot.org/Federalist-Newsletter>.

“developing plans of administration management” throughout the executive branch. Its expert planners were essential to President Dwight Eisenhower and his science adviser, James R. Killian, Jr., in creating NASA as a new, civilian-led agency able to effectively carry forth U.S. research in space. Finan’s investigation highlights some of the complex considerations that factor into bureaucratic planning for successful agency operations, including provisions for agency independence, adequate leadership authority and accountability, and effective interagency relations. In the end, we gain important insights into the reinvention and evolution of U.S. agencies in the modern era.

Jeremy Neely explores the contours of Reconstruction in Missouri, one of four slave states that remained within the Union during the Civil War. His work contributes to a growing body of research on the western border states that is uncovering patterns of post–Civil War governance and social relations that differ sharply from experiences in the Deep South. Federal troops left Missouri in late 1865, so “Reconstruction thus fell to the state’s own leaders”—the dominant Unionist faction. The dilemma, Neely finds, is how to explain the Unionists’ determined support for free labor and emancipation yet “tepid support for Black civil rights.” Their new 1865 state constitution guaranteed economic freedom to African Americans but effectively preserved white supremacy, denying the vote to freedmen, unlike in the federally occupied South. In this nuanced account of the state leaders’ factional debates, we see that they sought to solidify the gains of the war—preservation of the Union and emancipation—but on terms that would preserve white dominance and promote the state’s economic progress. Neely’s account provides a good basis for comparison with the post–Civil War experiences of other border states.

Cheryl Mango chronicles a pivotal moment in the modern civil rights movement in which Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) faced the danger of dissolution or forced merging with white schools. Since their start in the antebellum period HBCUs have trained and educated Black students. They lacked sufficient endowments, private funding, and research partnerships afforded to white schools, and they experienced inequities in state and federal funding and policies. The nationwide push for integration of schools in the 1970s forced HBCUs to justify their essential value and the need for support. In 1980 Black leaders successfully convinced President Jimmy Carter to establish a program in the executive branch to protect and secure more resources for Black Colleges. Overall, Mango’s story of that political and institutional “revolution” for HBCUs focuses several important understandings: the unique and critical ability of HBCUs to

speak to and nurture Black students, the essentiality of the schools in a nation still afflicted by institutional and educational racism, and the unprecedented federal protection of those educational opportunities as a component of federal guarantees of civil rights.

Lori Maguire examines Senator Robert Byrd's (WV) opposition to the Iraq War in 2003 as a test case of a congressional attempt "to limit or check executive authority." As president pro tempore of the Senate and a student of legislative procedures and powers, Byrd worked to assert, but also protect, Congress's role of questioning, limiting, and counseling on questions of war powers. He led the limited opposition to President George W. Bush's war plans through speeches, committee hearings, attempts to build coalitions, legislative measures, and media presentations, but could not overcome most Democrats' hesitancy to oppose a president during a global crisis and a midterm election season. In Maguire's account, the war resolution debate revealed the limits of one legislator's principled efforts to check executive power, but also exemplified Byrd's fear of potential damage to the republic through Congress's abdication of its constitutional role.

In our interview, we honor the memory of **Michael A. Olivas** and his distinguished career and generosity as a scholar and teacher. He passed away in April 2022, just weeks after our interview. We are grateful to have had the chance to speak with him about his last book, *Perchance to Dream: A Legal and Political History of the DREAM Act and DACA* (2020). Olivas expressed his gratitude for the opportunities his professorship gave him for advocacy for immigrants and his students, a mission that compelled him since his graduate days at Ohio State University. We learn from his testimony and book of the numerous and consequential legal and legislative issues in the 1970s concerning immigrants' rights. These revolved around access to schooling, health care and other benefits, school residency requirements, and employment rights. Especially useful are Olivas's extensive surveys of diverse state practices in the licensing of the undocumented in such professions as nursing and teaching, revealing how "licensing laws were not keeping up with the 20+ years of increasing access." We are in debt to Michael Olivas for his clear and thorough explanations of the difficult social, legal, and political circumstances of the "DACAmended." His passion for immigrants and immigration reform shines through his work and legacy.

We are very pleased to feature a roundtable on **Adam Goodman's** book, *The Deportation Machine: America's Long History of Expelling Immigrants* (2020). We thank Dr. Goodman for his responses. Thanks also to our reviewers, **Eladio B. Bobadilla**,

Amanda Frost, **Deborah Kang**, and **Yael Schacher**, for their diverse and valuable insights; and **Maddalena Marinari** for her helpful evaluation of their remarks. The *Deportation Machine's* primary contribution, all agreed, lies in its “broadening of our notion of deportation,” enabling a clear and penetrating depiction of harsh U.S. immigration policies and how they evolved over the past 140 years. The immigration regime sought to deport the vast majority of migrants, resulting in about 57 million people being forced or coerced out of the country since the 1880s. Kang observes that the machine’s methods create “a powerful challenge to the persisting myth about the United States as a nation of immigrants.” Those practices were guided by racism, vigilantism, bureaucratic expediency, and greed, rather than by clear, consistent immigration policies. Officials used raids and other fear tactics for “control and expulsion,” to avoid the expense of forced deportation and to encourage migrants’ voluntary departure. Asians and then ethnic Mexicans were the prime targets over the decades. *The Deportation Machine*, along with several other recent works, establishes a convincing perspective for future research, and for immigration reform, and we are glad that we can help promote that work.

We welcome assistant editors **Kathryn Birks Harvey** and **Lisa K. Parshall** and their contributions in our new feature titled Law and Constitution. This issue includes brief reviews of four recent and diverse works that touch on important aspects of U.S. legal development.

As always, I thank Senior Assistant Editor **Judson MacLaury** for his capable review of all texts and our reviewers for their comments in improving these articles.

Thanks also to our members for their support of the Society for History in the Federal Government (www.shfg.org).

Benjamin Guterman
Editor
federalhistory@gmail.com