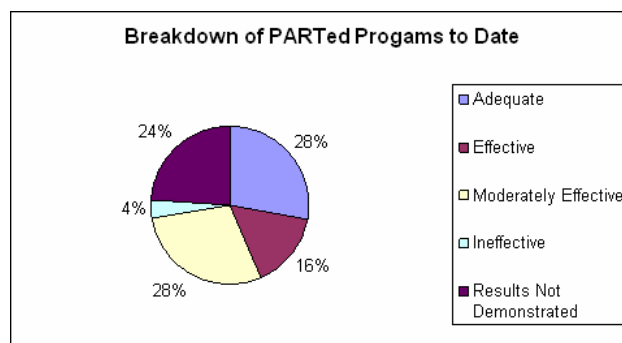




The Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) and the FY '07 Budget

The Office of Management and Budget has been claiming to measure federal programs' performance over the last four years using the Program Assessment Rating Tool. The PART, a crude and simplistic tool, measures program performance by requiring agency staff to answer a series of yes/no questions on program purpose and design, strategic planning, program management, and results. The OMB scores the responses and ultimately gives each program a rating of effective, moderately effective, adequate, ineffective, or results not demonstrated.

The OMB evaluates approximately 20 percent of all federal programs each year (they have identified approximately 1150 programs as being federal programs); so far 793 programs have undergone evaluation. Below is a breakdown of how PARTed programs have been rated to date:



PART and the President's FY 2007 Budget

OMB Watch has analyzed the much-publicized list of 141 programs and other sections of the FY 2007 budget and compared program funding requests to the ratings received under the PART. This analysis, like analysis we undertook in the 2006 budget, has yielded some inconsistent and puzzling results.

Out of the list of 141 programs to be cut or eliminated, **more than two-thirds (68 percent)** have never even been reviewed by the PART. It is unclear what kinds of determinations, if any, the president used to identify these failing programs when the White House budget staff has yet to assess them.

Even when programs are reviewed under the PART, there are no logical or consistent connections with budget requests. One-third of the PARTed programs the president proposed to eliminate or reduce received adequate or moderately effective ratings - passing scores on the PART. Out of all the programs the president choose to put on his list of 141 programs for allegedly not getting results, only 8 percent actually received a failing mark (ineffective) under Bush's own measurement tool.

Of the 154 programs marked for cuts or termination for FY 2006 by OMB, lawmakers reduced 66 and terminated 23. Seventy-six of the programs the administration wanted to cut in 2006 that did not get cut are back for round two on the hit list for FY 2007.

Conclusion

There is little evidence in the FY 2007 budget to support the presidential rhetoric that results are the basis of funding decisions. The president's rhetorical focus on performance and results seem to be just that — merely a smokescreen providing political cover for a Bush agenda that seeks to promote particular ideological policies while drastically reducing the size of the federal government.

