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Serving the Public Interest in Several Ways: Theory and Empirics

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Highlights

- We develop a model where people can serve the public interest by making charitable donations and by taking a public service job and exerting effort on the job.
- Our theoretical analysis predicts that, for a given strength of altruistic preferences, workers in public service jobs make smaller donations to charity than workers in regular jobs.
- An empirical analysis of German cross-sectional data on self-reported altruism, sector of employment, and donations to charity provides support for this prediction, although the difference is not always statistically significant.
- A further analysis using Dutch panel data on sector of employment and volunteering yields similar results.

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