



*Fifth Edition*

*1992 Election Update*

# American Government

*James Q. Wilson*

# AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

INSTITUTIONS AND POLICIES

Fifth Edition

*James Q. Wilson*

*University of California, Los Angeles*

D. C. HEATH AND COMPANY

Lexington, Massachusetts • Toronto

*Address editorial correspondence to:*  
D. C. Heath and Company  
125 Spring Street  
Lexington, MA 02173

Acquisitions Editor: Paul Smith  
Production Editor: Karen Wise  
Production Coordinator: Lisa Merrill  
Photo Researcher: Mark Corsey  
Text Permissions Editor: Margaret Roll

“Politically Speaking” Cartoons: Peter Wallace  
Photograph credits: page A67

Cover design: Kenneth Hollman  
Cover photograph (the Jefferson Memorial): Robert Shafer/Uniphoto

*Copyright © 1992 by D. C. Heath and Company.*  
Previous editions copyright © 1989, 1986, 1983, 1980 by D. C. Heath  
and Company.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication  
may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or  
by any means, electronic or mechanical, including  
photocopy, recording, or any information storage  
or retrieval system, without permission in writing  
from the publisher.

Published simultaneously in Canada.

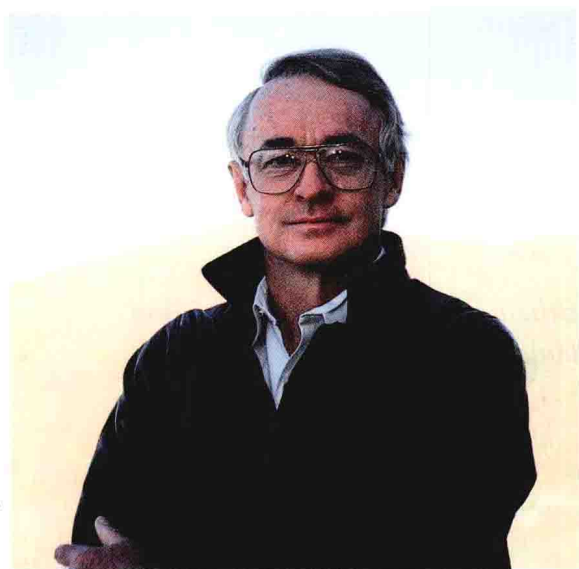
Printed in the United States of America.

International Standard Book Number: 0-669-24770-7

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 91-71584

10 9 8 7 6 5

*For Roberta, Matthew, Rebecca, Annie, and Bob.  
And Winston, Clementine, and Sarah.*



James Q. Wilson is the Collins Professor of Management and Political Science at the University of California, Los Angeles. He was previously the Shattuck Professor of Government at Harvard University. Raised in California, Wilson received a B.A. degree from the University of Redlands and a Ph.D. degree from the University of Chicago. He is the author or coauthor of twelve books, including *Negro Politics*, *The Amateur Democrat*, *City Politics* (with Edward C. Banfield), *Varieties of Police Behavior*, *Political Organizations*, *Thinking about Crime*, *The Investigators*, *Bureaucracy*, *Watching Fishes: Life and Behavior on Coral Reefs* (with Roberta Wilson), and *Crime and Human Nature* (with Richard J. Herrnstein).

Wilson has served in a number of advisory posts in the federal government. He was chairman of the White House Task Force on Crime in 1967, chairman of the National Advisory Council on Drug Abuse Prevention in 1972–1973, a member of the Attorney General's Task Force on Violent Crime in 1981, and a member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (1986–1990).

In 1977 the American Political Science Association conferred on him the Charles E. Merriam Award for advancing the art of government through the application of social science knowledge and in 1990 the James Madison Award for distinguished scholarship. In 1991–1992 he was President of the Association.

He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a member of the American Philosophical Society. When not writing, teaching, or advising, he goes scuba diving. He says that it clears the brain.



# PREFACE

I wrote this text in the conviction that students want to know not only who governs but also what difference it makes who governs. In teaching an introductory course in American government, I have found that student interest is most fully engaged when the instructor can show how our government institutions and political processes help explain why some policies, and not others, are adopted.

Explaining both who governs, and to what ends, cannot be done without treating the politics of policy-making in some detail. For this reason I have examined several policy areas in the light of a simple—but I think useful—conceptual scheme that helps students understand why some groups or individuals exert more power on certain issues than on others. Unless the instructor links institutions and policies in a systematic way, the student is likely to judge the worth or power of the institutions by resorting to such familiar but misleading catch phrases as the “imperial presidency,” a “do-nothing Congress,” or the “biased media.”

---

## Perspectives

Merely attending to politics and policies is not enough, however. Many students, understandably, have very little historical perspective, know next to nothing about how other democratic governments behave, and believe that the Constitution is largely of antiquarian interest. To impress upon students what is distinctive about our government, I have tried to write each chapter with three perspectives in mind. First, contemporary American politics has been profoundly shaped by historical forces. Some important aspects of politics are of recent origin, but others—I think most—are the result of long-standing

arrangements and past experiences. Second, the Constitution is one of those arrangements that color almost every aspect of politics and the underlying political culture. I try to give special attention to the way in which the Founding created a distinctive regime. Third, that regime differs from the governing arrangements of most other democratic nations. If we want to know why things happen as they do here, it is often helpful to know how they might happen if we were in Britain, France, or Sweden. Because of these beliefs, I try to set the institutions and policies of American government into the context of historical change, constitutional procedures, and comparative perspectives.

---

## The Fifth Edition

Environmentalism has become one of the biggest national issues; accordingly, the new chapter on environmental policies and politics is the biggest single change in this edition. Almost as important are the many changes made in existing chapters that reflect the dramatic turn of world events: The chapter on foreign policy has been rewritten to reflect the breakup of the Soviet empire, that on military policy to include the war in the Persian Gulf.

In welfare politics, the issues have changed of late to include the problems of work requirements for AFDC recipients, cost containment for health care providers, and supplying services to the homeless. Chapter 17 has been revised to deal with these new concerns.

Civil rights continues to be contentious. In Chapter 19 I follow the newest contortions of the Supreme Court as it copes with affirmative action procedures and abortion restrictions, and

I describe the provisions of the recently enacted Americans With Disabilities Act.

The federal government still seems unable to cope with the deficit; Chapter 16 discusses how the “economic summit” led to the replacement of Gramm-Rudman deficit targets with a new set of budget constraints. I also supply a box that explains how the country got into the savings and loan mess.

Since I just published a book on the bureaucracy, it seemed like a good time to revise Chapter 13 by adding to it a more serious discussion of agency culture and the constraints on administrative action.

Needless to say, all the chapters on participation, campaigning, elections, and state government have been made current through the 1990 elections. A revised and updated version of this edition of the text containing all the latest returns will be made available shortly after the 1992 presidential race.

Although Congress has not changed greatly in the last few years, I revised the material in Chapter 11 to make the complexities of legislative procedure a bit clearer and added a new conclusion that systematically contrasts the “old Congress” with the “new Congress.”

---

### **Instructor's Options for Using This Book**

This text can be used in a variety of ways. It can be assigned to be read in its present sequence. Or one can assign a chapter on a particular institution (say, Congress) and then follow that immediately with a chapter about a policy with which that institution has been extensively involved (say, civil rights). In the same way, the chapter on the presidency could be followed by the chapter on foreign policy, and the chapter on the judiciary by the one on civil liberties. Alternatively, the chapters on civil liberties and civil rights could be assigned immediately after the chapter on the Constitution.

Most instructors will want to assign all the chapters in Part 1 (The American System), Part 2 (Opinions, Interests, and Organizations), and

Part 3 (Institutions of Government). If they wish their students to be familiar with the politics of policy-making, they should assign at least Chapter 15 of Part 4 (The Politics of Public Policy). Additional policy chapters can be used as the instructor's preferences suggest. In any case, the main themes of Part 4 are summarized in Chapter 23.

---

### **Illustrative and Reference Material**

I have added several features to the book that will, I hope, stimulate thinking about political issues. The first is a series of boxes headed “What would you do?” These pose hypothetical problems confronting a decision maker, such as a candidate, a president, a senator, or a Supreme Court justice. Should we send in troops? Take money from a political-action committee? Vote for or against the constitutionality of a state law banning contraception? Each dilemma comes in the form of a brief memo, similar to ones that presidents and others actually receive. The issues on both sides are summarized, and the student is asked to come to a decision as if he or she were the decision maker. These boxes can be used for class discussions, as a springboard for class debates, or as the basis of student papers.

The “Politically Speaking” boxes constitute another new feature. Two dozen or so bits of political jargon—including *litmus test*, *logrolling*, *lame duck*, *muckraker*, *coattails*, *boycott*, *Third World*—are defined, and the history of these terms is briefly stated. Politics is about words and symbols, and I have found that when students know how some of these words came into political use, they remember not only the words, but the meaning, context, and issues.

The lists of political trivia and of the popular maxims of politics have been retained, as has been the box containing some Supreme Court cases that the student is asked to decide.

Since I believe that politics is fascinating and ought to be memorable, I hope that these materials not only will provide a refreshing pause in the text but also will help fix certain events in the reader's mind.



At the end of the book the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and *Federalist* papers 10 and 51 are included, along with a complete listing of presidents and Congresses showing the partisan composition of each.

---

## Personal Views

The study of politics is not a value-free science, but admitting that point ought not to entitle an author to pontificate at will. The author of a textbook is under a special obligation to handle matters of evidence and inference in a systematic and evenhanded manner. Major controversies ought to be clearly described and the opposing positions fairly presented. I have tried to avoid making snap judgments, using loaded language, and describing politics as a struggle between good and bad guys. I do not claim that I have succeeded or that I am “objective”—I doubt that any writer can ever be—but I have labored mightily to avoid sloganeering or indoctrination. I hope that colleagues will not hesitate to point out where I have failed.

---

## Supplements

An outstanding supplementary program is offered in connection with the fifth edition, including the *Student Handbook*, the *Instructor's Guide*, a *Computerized Testing Program* by Publishing Innovations, Inc., the *Test Item File*, and full-color overhead transparencies.

The *Student Handbook* is designed to help the student master the text as well as prepare for examinations. Each *Handbook* chapter offers a “Chapter Focus,” illuminating the chapter's main points and listing learning objectives for the student; a “Study Outline” of the major topical areas covered; “Key Terms” to understand, including the significant names and concepts introduced; a “Did You Think That . . . ?” section, treating some of the possible misconceptions about material in the chapter; a “Data Check” section, clarifying the points made in the chapter's quantitative tables, graphs, and diagrams;

a “Practicing for Exams” section, with sample true/false, multiple-choice, and essay questions; and completely revised “Applying What You've Learned,” detailing special projects to help develop mastery of key text concepts. Another *Handbook* feature is a selection of primary-source readings—“Classic Statements”—providing provocative excerpts from significant documents in American government. In addition, a computerized version of the *Student Handbook* is now available for both IBM and Macintosh computers.

The *Instructor's Guide* offers a wealth of valuable resources designed to help instructors plan their course and to prepare for and implement lectures and discussions. Featured as introductory materials are “Resources and References in American Government,” a comprehensive bibliography; a Film Guide; and a Videotape Guide. A “What's New Here, and Why?” section for the six parts of the text spells out the major changes in the fifth edition of *American Government*; this unique feature greatly streamlines the transition from the fourth to the fifth edition. Each *Instructor's Guide* chapter furnishes an “Overview and Objectives” outline; an expanded “Lecture Outline with Keyed-in Resources”; a list of “New Terms” introduced; and a “Themes” section, focusing on the general themes or topics around which the *Guide's* resource materials are organized. Then follow the resources themselves: a descriptive “Summary” of the theme; “Discussion Questions”; “Data and Perspectives for Analysis,” offering exercises that center on investigation of data, events, and theoretical perspectives; an “Abstracts” section, synopsizing an article or book relevant to the theme; an “Additional Lecture Topics” section for many of the themes selected; and listings of “Suggested Student Reading.”

The greatly expanded *Computerized Testing Program* and the *Test Item File* now offer about 4500 true/false, multiple-choice, and essay questions. Quizzes and examinations may be constructed from either the *Computerized Testing Program* or the *Test Item File*. The *Computerized Program* provides access to all questions in the *Test Item File* and allows instructors to tailor tests for their own classes. Instructors may also



use software to delete, add, or even change questions, as well as to print an answer key with page references for each question.

Further, to help the instructor improve students' analytical skills, we have produced a package of full-color overhead transparencies. The text's key maps, graphs, and diagrams are included, and text-page references are provided to facilitate use.

Each student will also receive free with the text a copy of a helpful and concise companion volume, *A Vade Mecum for American Government*, by Kenneth Holland of Memphis State University. This new volume provides students with a wealth of practical advice on such important skills as note taking, taking tests, writing research papers, and using the library.

Of special interest is a new D. C. Heath text entitled *Perspectives on American Government: A Comprehensive Reader*, edited by William S. Lasser of Clemson University. A rich and varied collection of cases, articles, documents, and cartoons covering virtually all major topics in *American Government*, this volume will present students with a wealth of background information and provocative points of view on numerous issues concerning American politics.

Finally, in recognition of the pedagogical value of new technologies, D. C. Heath is making available to instructors a variety of software programs that allow students to gain a more intimate understanding of political processes by manipulating statistical data or simulating campaigns and elections. Also, a number of excellent videos on topics such as civil rights and the Persian Gulf War are available for classroom use. Your local Heath sales representatives can supply you with the details.

Instructors may wish to take full advantage of these valuable teaching and learning resources in planning their courses.

## The Help of Others—Now and in the Future

The new chapter on environmental policy was critically read by professors Marc Landy of Boston College, Kenneth Meier of the University of Wisconsin, Walter Rosenbaum of the University of Florida, and David Vogel of the University of California at Berkeley. They saved me from several errors; I absolve them of those that remain.

My colleague Steven Ansolabehre of UCLA offered a number of useful suggestions on how to improve Chapters 8 and 11; I have tried to incorporate them all. Micki Chen supplied lucid and precise guidance to recent changes in court procedures and in the case law of civil liberties and civil rights. Xandra Kayden, Kevin Lavery, and Daron Shaw provided valuable research assistance.

I continue to benefit from letters I receive from users of past editions of the book. Leslie Friedman Goldstein of the University of Delaware pointed out some errors that I was happy to correct.

Systematic reviews of the text were supplied by several faculty users to whom I am very grateful: John M. Buckley (Orange Coast College), William Brundage (United States Air Force Academy), Robert L. Delorme (California State University at Long Beach), John Dister (United States Military Academy), John E. Lampe (Southwest Texas Junior College), Alan Monroe (Illinois State University), John K. Price (Louisiana Tech University), Ron Shaiko (Virginia Polytechnic Institute), and Frank Wayman (University of Michigan). I would also like to thank our phone survey respondents: Ellen Antoine (El Camino College), Lynn Bachelor (University of Toledo), Joel Goldstein (University of Louisville), Bruce Odom (Trinity Valley College), Mark Rushefsky (Southwest Missouri State University), and Glenn Stockwell (College of the Redwoods).

My editors at D. C. Heath—Paul Smith and Karen Wise—were, as always, splendid colleagues.

J. Q. W.

# AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

# PART ONE

## The American System



*“In framing a government which is to be  
administered by men over men,  
the great difficulty lies in this:  
You must first enable the government to control  
the governed; and in the next place oblige it to  
control itself.”*

FEDERALIST NO. 51



*Congress Voting Independence*, by Pine and Savage



# Contents

## PART ONE THE AMERICAN SYSTEM

1

### 1 The Study of American Government 2

What Is Political Power? 4 • What Is Democracy? 5 • How Is Power Distributed in a Democracy? 7 • Political Change 10 • Finding Out Who Governs 11

### 2 The Constitution 14

The Problem of Liberty 15 • The Constitutional Convention 20 • The Challenge 24 • The Constitution and Democracy 26 • The Constitution and Liberty 30 • The Constitution and Slavery 33 • The Motives of the Framers 35 • Constitutional Reform—Modern Views 38

### 3 Federalism 44

Governmental Structure 45 • The Founding 49 • The Debate on the Meaning of Federalism 52 • Federal-State Relations 54 • The Slowdown in “Free” Money 59 • Federal Aid and Federal Control 62 • Federalism and Public Policy 67

### 4 American Political Culture 71

Political Culture 73 • Comparing America with Other Nations 77 • The Sources of Political Culture 80 • Mistrust of Government 84 • Political Efficacy 86 • Political Tolerance 88

## PART TWO OPINIONS, INTERESTS, AND ORGANIZATIONS

92

### 5 Public Opinion 94

What Is Public Opinion? 96 • The Origins of Political Attitudes 98 • Cleavages in Public Opinion 105 • Political Ideology 112 • Political Elites, Public Opinion, and Public Policy 117

<b>6</b>	<b>Political Participation</b>	<b>120</b>
	A Closer Look at Nonvoting	121 • The Rise of the American Electorate 122 • Who Participates in Politics? 128
<b>7</b>	<b>Political Parties</b>	<b>137</b>
	Parties—Here and Abroad	138 • The Rise and Decline of the Political Party 141 • The National Party Structure Today 148 • State and Local Parties 153 • The Two-Party System 158 • Minor Parties 161 • Nominating a President 164 • Parties versus Voters 166
<b>8</b>	<b>Elections and Campaigns</b>	<b>170</b>
	Presidential versus Congressional Campaigns	171 • Primary versus General Campaigns 175 • Money 183 • What Decides the Election? 192 • Election Outcomes 199 • The Effects of Elections on Policy 205
<b>9</b>	<b>Interest Groups</b>	<b>209</b>
	Explaining Proliferation	210 • The Birth of Interest Groups 211 • Kinds of Organizations 213 • Interest Groups and Social Movements 219 • Funds for Interest Groups 222 • The Problem of Bias 223 • The Activities of Interest Groups 227 • Regulating Interest Groups 236
<b>10</b>	<b>The Media</b>	<b>238</b>
	Journalism in American Political History	240 • The Structure of the Media 245 • Rules Governing the Media 249 • The Effects of the Media on Politics 252 • Government and the News 253 • Interpreting Political News 255

---

## PART THREE INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT

264

<b>11</b>	<b>Congress</b>	<b>266</b>
	The Evolution of Congress	269 • Who Is in Congress? 274 • Getting Elected to Congress 279 • The Organization of Congress: Parties and Interests 283 • The Organization of Congress: Committees 291 • The Organization of Congress: Staffs and Specialized Offices 295 • How a Bill Becomes Law 297 • How Members of Congress Vote 306 • Ethics and Congress 310

<b>12</b>	<b>The Presidency</b>	<b>316</b>
	Presidents and Prime Ministers	317
	• The Evolution of the Presidency	320
	• The Powers of the President	327
	• The Office of the President	329
	• Who Gets Appointed	336
	• Presidential Character	338
	• The Power to Persuade	339
	• The Power to Say No	345
	• The President's Program	348
	• Presidential Transition	353
	• How Powerful Is the President?	359
<b>13</b>	<b>The Bureaucracy</b>	<b>362</b>
	Distinctiveness of the American Bureaucracy	363
	• The Growth of the Bureaucracy	364
	• The Federal Bureaucracy Today	368
	• Congressional Oversight	382
	• Bureaucratic "Pathologies"	386
<b>14</b>	<b>The Judiciary</b>	<b>392</b>
	The Development of the Federal Courts	394
	• The Structure of the Federal Courts	400
	• The Jurisdiction of the Federal Courts	404
	• Getting to Court	406
	• The Supreme Court in Action	410
	• The Power of the Federal Courts	414
	• Checks on Judicial Power	418

---

## PART FOUR THE POLITICS OF PUBLIC POLICY

424

<b>15</b>	<b>The Policy-Making Process</b>	<b>426</b>
	Setting the Agenda	427
	• Making a Decision	431
	• Majoritarian Politics: Distributed Benefits, Distributed Costs	433
	• Interest-Group Politics: Concentrated Benefits, Concentrated Costs	434
	• Client Politics: Concentrated Benefits, Distributed Costs	435
	• Entrepreneurial Politics: Distributed Benefits, Concentrated Costs	436
	• The Case of Business Regulation	437
	• Perceptions, Beliefs, Interests, and Values	445
<b>16</b>	<b>Economic Policy</b>	<b>452</b>
	Economic Health	453
	• Economic Theories and Political Needs	456
	• The Machinery of Economic Policy Making	459
	• Spending Money	462
	• The Budget	463
	• Levying Taxes	467
<b>17</b>	<b>Social Welfare</b>	<b>474</b>
	Overview of Welfare Politics in the United States	475
	• The Four Laws in Brief	478
	• Two Kinds of Welfare Politics	484
	• Toward a New Welfare Politics	488
	• The Problem of the "Safety Net"	490



<b>18</b>	<b>Civil Liberties</b>	<b>493</b>
	The Politics of Civil Liberties	494 • Politics, Culture, and Civil Liberties 495 • Interpreting and Applying the First Amendment 500 • Who Is a Person? 505 • Church and State 506 • Crime and Due Process 509
<b>19</b>	<b>Civil Rights</b>	<b>517</b>
	The Black Predicament	518 • The Campaign in the Courts 521 • The Campaign in Congress 528 • Women and Equal Rights 534 • Women and the Economy 539 • Affirmative Action 540
<b>20</b>	<b>Foreign Policy</b>	<b>544</b>
	Kinds of Foreign Policy	545 • The Constitutional and Legal Context 548 • The Machinery of Foreign Policy 553 • Foreign Policy and Public Opinion 555 • Cleavages among Foreign-Policy Elites 562 • The Beginning of a New Era? 568
<b>21</b>	<b>Military Policy</b>	<b>574</b>
	The Structure of Defense Decision Making	576 • The Defense Budget 579 • What Do We Buy for Our Money? 586 • Congress versus the Executive 589
<b>22</b>	<b>Environmental Policy</b>	<b>592</b>
	The American Context	594 • Entrepreneurial Politics: Pollution from Factories 596 • Majoritarian Politics: Pollution from Automobiles 598 • Interest-Group Politics: Acid Rain 600 • Client Politics: Agricultural Pesticides 603 • The Environmental Uncertainties 604 • The Results 606

**PART FIVE****THE NATURE OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY****608**

<b>23</b>	<b>Who Governs?</b>	<b>610</b>
	Four Kinds of Politics	611 • Competing Theories of Political Power 618
<b>24</b>	<b>To What Ends?</b>	<b>625</b>
	Competing Interests	626 • Restraints on Growth of Government 627 • Consequences of Activist Government 628 • The Influence of Structure 630 • The Influence of Ideas 632

## PART SIX

## STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

636

## 25

## State and Local Government 638

- State Constitutions and Political Philosophy 639
- The Legal Basis of State and Local Government 642
- The Structure of State Government 647
- The Structure of Local Government 656
- Politics and Policies 660
- Taxes and Tax Revolts 662

## Appendix A1

- The Declaration of Independence A3
- The Constitution of the United States A7
- The *Federalist* No. 10 A25
- The *Federalist* No. 51 A31
- Presidents and Congresses, 1789–1991 A35

Glossary A39

References A50

Index to References A64

Photo Credits A67

Index A69



