

ESSENTIALS OF

# American Politics



ROBERT J. SPITZER

BENJAMIN GINSBERG

THEODORE J. LOWI

MARGARET WEIR

# ESSENTIALS OF American Politics

Robert J. Spitzer

SUNY Cortland

Benjamin

Johns Hopkins

Theodore J. Lowi

Cornell University

Margaret

University of

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ESSENTIALS OF  
**American Politics**

TO  
*Teresa Wilson*  
*Sandy, Cindy, and Alex Ginsberg*  
*Angele, Anna, and Jason Lowi*  
*Nicholas Ziegler*

# Preface

This book proudly stands on the shoulders of the previous works of Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore Lowi, and Margaret Weir. Yet it is a new book, organized around several distinct objectives, to provide a clear, concise understanding of American government and politics. First, this book maintains a single conceptual focus: the relationship between the citizen and the government. Every important question raised in the book stems from the key issue of how people relate to their government, and, in turn, how the government reacts, regulates, and responds to the people. Second, the book's analysis includes historical treatment of political institutions and processes. Modern political relations are a product of America's political culture and can be best understood in a historical context. We ignore history at our peril. It is difficult to understand the modern strong presidency, for example, without knowing how much weaker the institution was in the early decades of American history.

Third, this book is structured and organized to help the reader grasp key ideas and facts without sacrificing complexity or talking down to the reader. The objective of learning about key ideas is a goal that is entirely compatible with clarity. To that end, each chapter begins with a single main idea that emphasizes an important lesson or principle. More specific key concepts are also listed at the start of each chapter. The major headings and subheadings in each chapter are written in sentence form not only to organize but to summarize and clarify the key ideas to come. Pop-up captions accompany tables and charts to help the reader extract the important information from visual presentations of data. In addition, the book is peppered with both contemporary and historical examples to engage the reader and illustrate key ideas and arguments.

As the book's title says, the objective is to provide the "essentials," both in concept and fact. The authors hope the reader finds that this goal has been met.

Special thanks are extended to W. W. Norton Vice President Steve Dunn, who organized and shepherded this project with skill and diplomacy, manuscript editor Jan Hoeper, editorial assistant Aubrey Anable, and Deb Dintino.

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