

DAVID H. ROSENBLOOM

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THIRD EDITION

Public  
Administration  
UNDERSTANDING  
MANAGEMENT,  
POLITICS,  
and LAW  
in the PUBLIC  
SECTOR

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# *Public Administration*

UNDERSTANDING MANAGEMENT,  
POLITICS, AND LAW  
IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

THIRD EDITION

*David H. Rosenbloom*

The American University

With the assistance of

*Deborah D. Goldman, J.D., M.P.A.*

Member of the New York State Bar

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## PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Understanding Management, Politics, and Law in the Public Sector



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## *About the Author*

**David H. Rosenbloom** is Distinguished Professor of Public Administration in the School of Public Affairs at The American University. He received his Ph.D. in political science from the University of Chicago in 1969. In 1970-1971 he was an American Society for Public Administration Fellow in the U.S. Civil Service Commission. Professor Rosenbloom was elected to the National Academy of Public Administration in 1986. He became editor-in-chief of *Public Administration Review* in 1991. In 1992 he received the Distinguished Research Award of the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration and the American Society for Public Administration. His published work focuses on the politics, law, and personnel of public bureaucracy. Titles include *Federal Service and the Constitution* (Cornell University Press, 1971); *Federal Equal Employment Opportunity* (Praeger, 1977); *Public Administration and Law* (Marcel Dekker, 1983); *Bureaucratic Government, USA* (St. Martin's, 1980; with David Nachmias); *Representative Bureaucracy and the American Political System* (Praeger, 1981; with Samuel Krislov); *Essentials of Labor Relations* (Reston/Prentice Hall, 1985; with Jay Shafritz); and *Toward Constitutional Competence: A Casebook for Public Administrators* (Prentice Hall, 1990; with James D. Carroll).

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## *Preface to the Third Edition*

At various times throughout American history it has been claimed that, due to political or economic circumstances, the nation needs better public administration more than ever before. From President George Washington's day to the 1989 Report of the National Commission on the Public Service, the necessity of improving public administration is a theme that merges again and again. In truth, the nation has become progressively dependent on the public sector. Consequently, it is no exaggeration to say that today, just as in the past, the United States cannot possibly meet the serious challenges confronting it without strengthening public administration. Public administration will clearly play important roles in dealing with such concerns as the changing structure of international politics, poverty, homelessness, bank failures, economic growth, crime, substance abuse, inadequate educational opportunity, environmental degradation, global warming, infrastructure, health care, infant mortality, limited confidence in government, and AIDS and other diseases. Just listing these topics conveys a sense of urgency.

The third edition of *Public Administration: Understanding Management, Politics, and Law in the Public Sector*, like the earlier editions, is based on the premise that strong public administrative education can make a significant difference in the quality of public administrative practice. We view the book's mission as meeting the complexity of contemporary public administration head-on in order to make the field more understandable to beginning students and even to advanced ones and practitioners seeking to integrate their specialized knowledge into a broader intellectual framework. The core of our approach is to discuss and analyze the major components of public administration, such as organization, personnel, and budgeting, from three ever-present competing perspectives: management, politics, and law. In our view, reducing public administration to any one or two of these perspectives for the sake of simplification fails to do justice to the field, cannot adequately prepare students for either careers in the public service or informed citizenship, and will not enable the public sector to engage the nation's social and economic problems successfully. In short, the book seeks to be part of the solutions, not the problems. We think we are on the right track and are gratified that the book is used very widely and has a strong following.

Although its overall framework remains familiar, the third edition differs from the second in two main respects. First, we have thoroughly updated all the material. It is somewhat surprising how dramatically personnel, budgeting, regulatory concerns, and some other areas have changed in the past four years.

Second, in writing the earlier editions, we could not escape the uncertainties posed for public administration by the Ronald Reagan years. While the “Reagan Revolution” was still unfolding, it was not known whether it would be as successful in practice as in rhetoric. Would the public sector be vastly reduced in size and importance? Would widespread deregulation work? Would privatization of public services and regulatory activities bring vast changes? Would supply-side economics generate massive economic growth? Would such growth help to alleviate or cure many of the nation’s social problems? These were open questions then. Public administration was on the defensive, and only a crimped vision of its future seemed plausible to many. In hindsight, it is certain that while public administration did change significantly during the 1980s, it remains as central to governance as ever—perhaps even more so. In tone and mood, the third edition embraces this certainty.

We believe that public administrators are more apt to be viewed as heroes than villains in the 1990s (and beyond). The human problems that the nation currently faces will require competent, dedicated, and sometimes constant administrative attention. It seems that President Washington had it right all along when he wrote, “The successful administration of the general government [is] an object of almost infinite consequence to the present and future happiness of the citizens of the United States.” We very much hope that the third edition will contribute significantly to successful administration.

## *ACKNOWLEDGMENTS*

The third edition rests on the foundations of the first two. The gratitude due to those who contributed to the earlier volumes remains undiminished. We would also like to express appreciation to several reviewers who offered suggestions for improving this edition: Curtis Berry, Shippensburg University; Pat Bodelson, St. Cloud State University; Robert Hamm, University of Wyoming; Larry Howard, University of Pittsburgh; Stephen Jenks, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; and M. K. Mohatatra, Indiana State University. In addition, we would like to thank Ron Feldman, then a presidential management intern with the U.S. General Accounting Office and the Office of Management and Budget, for a thorough critique of the second edition. Along with Dianne Shaughnessy, he also helped in collecting data for bringing the book up-to-date. Don Pettit of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service formatted the charts conveying the structure of constitutional rights in Chapter 11. Josh Rosenbloom labored mightily and accurately in developing the ranking in Box 3–9. Finally, my colleagues in the School of Public Affairs at The American University have been uniformly supportive. Of course, the usual disclaimers apply.

David H. Rosenbloom  
Deborah D. Goldman



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## *Preface to the First Edition*

*Public Administration: Understanding Management, Politics, and Law in the Public Sector* appears sixty years after the publication of the first major American public administration textbook, Leonard D. White's *Introduction to the Study of Public Administration* (1926). White viewed public administration as "the heart of the problem of modern government."<sup>1</sup> He tried not only to explain and cover his subject matter comprehensively but also to frame the discipline of public administration and its discourse. I have sought to remain within the tradition of public administration texts begun by White. *Public Administration: Understanding Management, Politics, and Law in the Public Sector* agrees with White that public administration is central to modern government. It also presents an intellectual framework that can be a device for developing a deep and comprehensive understanding of contemporary public administration in all its complexity. I believe that this framework can provide a basis for further fruitful discourse and development in the discipline and practice of public administration. Ironically—but not really surprisingly—the most succinct description of the intellectual framework employed here is Dwight Waldo's, rather than my own. With reference to my essay introducing the framework,<sup>2</sup> Waldo remarked:

. . . David Rosenbloom has set forth the structure of the problem before us. For each of the three constitutional branches, he points out, there is a body of doctrine, set of values, collection of instruments, and repertoire of procedures. For the executive branch this "cluster" is administrative, managerial, bureaucratic, and the emphasis is upon effectiveness and efficiency. For the legislative branch the cluster is political and policy making, and the emphasis is upon the values of representativeness and responsiveness. For the judicial branch the cluster is legal, and the emphasis is on constitutional integrity on one side and substantive and procedural protections for individuals on the other.

Realistically our public administration does consist of varying mixtures of these three approaches or clusters. It is not just undesirable, it is impossible to narrow the concerns of public administration to any one of them. Our task is to find the proper way to put the three together.<sup>3</sup>

These clusters (I call them *approaches* or *perspectives*) are an outgrowth of the constitutional separation of powers; they are inherent in our political culture and institutions. As public administration is central to contemporary American government, these approaches are central to our contemporary public administration.

Waldo called this framework "both an excellent analysis and an excellent prescription."<sup>4</sup> *Public Administration: Understanding Management, Politics,*

*and Law in the Public Sector* engages the task of putting the three approaches together. I hope the reader will find this effort worthwhile and participate in it. Together we may be able to help resolve the problem of modern government; certainly we can improve our understanding and practice of public administration.

The book is divided into four parts. Part One introduces the book's intellectual framework and discusses the development of public administration in the United States. Part Two considers public administration's core functions: organization, personnel, budgeting, decision making, and policy analysis and evaluation. Each of these areas is analyzed from the perspectives of management, politics, and law. Efforts are made to synthesize these three perspectives with regard to each core function. Part Three analyzes regulatory administration as an illustration of the interplay of management, politics, and law in the public sector. Part Four focuses on the place of the "public" and the "public interest" in public administration. Chapters are devoted to public administration and the public, public administration and democratic constitutionalism, and accountability and ethics. The concluding chapter is devoted to the prospects for building a new "administrative culture."

The book is accompanied by an instructor's manual, which includes a test bank.

In many respects, *Public Administration: Understanding Management, Politics, and Law in the Public Sector* differs from other texts in the field. It addresses the complexity of public administration in theory and practice. It provides a comprehensive intellectual framework. It emphasizes *understanding* public administration in its presentation of information, description, theory, and interpretation. It is an ambitious book. I hope you find it rewarding.

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## NOTES

1. Leonard D. White, *Introduction to the Study of Public Administration* (New York: Macmillan, 1926), preface.
2. David H. Rosenbloom, "Public Administrative Theory and the Separation of Powers," *Public Administration Review* 43 (May/June 1983): 219–227.
3. Brack Brown and Richard J. Stillman, "A Conversation with Dwight Waldo: An Agenda for Future Reflections," *Public Administration Review* 45 (July/August 1985): 463–464.
4. *Ibid.*, 464.

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PART  
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