

fourth edition

AMERICAN PUBLIC POLICY

AN INTRODUCTION

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FOURTH EDITION

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Preface

We have made a variety of significant changes for the fourth edition of *American Public Policy*. Having completed this edition during the 1992 election year, we have tried to keep our text current with the issues that have been prominent in the political debate: We have updated coverage of proposals for health care reform, affirmative action, the abortion controversy, free and hateful speech, AIDS, education reform, and foreign policy. Each substantive chapter considers the major policy changes of the early 1990s in detail, and the final chapter provides a comprehensive summary.

American Public Policy is an introductory undergraduate text that focuses on the substantive issues of public policy. Most texts stress methods of policy analysis, models of policy, or the policymaking process. Although these topics are important, their dominance at the introductory level often makes the subject too abstract to engage students' imaginations. In our own teaching, we have found that an interest in more rigorous analysis grows most naturally out of a lively classroom discussion of specific, substantive policy issues—for example, welfare, abortion, tax reform, or nuclear weapons. We believe our book is unique in its emphasis on such issues, combining history and description with debate about alternative solutions.

This text is intended for the first undergraduate course in public policy, either in the form of a one-semester course or as part of a two-semester sequence that includes both political institutions and public policy. We do not assume any prior knowledge of basic policy issues on the student's part, although we do presume an understanding of the basic structure of American government. Therefore, we present the policy material step by step, building a picture of existing policy that the student can use to evaluate alternatives.

Each chapter follows the same outline of four major sections for easy access and comparison. The first section, "Issue Background," provides information the reader needs to know about the background of the particular topic, including descriptions of early policy actions. The second, "Contemporary Policy," outlines the evolution of present-day governmental policy in that area. The section on "Policy Evaluation" presents an in-depth discussion of the principal successes and failures of policy relating to the particular issue under study. Finally, the "Future Alternatives" section evaluates possible alternatives to existing policy. The book compares a wide range of perspectives—from conservative to liberal to radical—but does not take any ideological positions. Instead, students are challenged to develop their own evaluations of the alternatives proposed in contemporary policy controversies.

The book does not neglect the state and local dimensions of policy issues, but the focus is primarily on national policy and national policy debate. Cross-national comparisons of policies and their impacts are presented when relevant. Each chapter ends with a summary of important points and a list of suggested readings for further study.

Chapter 1 introduces the study of substantive issues of public policy. Major policy concepts are defined, and the contexts in which contemporary public policy operates—institutional, economic, demographic, cultural, and ideological—are delineated. Each succeeding chapter examines an individual area.

Chapter 2 gives attention to questions of economic regulation, leaving an entire chapter (Chapter 3) for macroeconomic policy, including the ramifications of the federal budget deficit and international competitiveness. Chapter 4 deals with both environmental and energy policy, which allows us to highlight the important interaction between these two policy areas.

Chapter 5 focuses on the policies that link the different levels of our federal system, policies such as revenue sharing and grants-in-aid. In Chapter 6, the creation of specific policy to respond to the growth of crime is considered. In particular, the chapter evaluates the impacts of policies specifying an individual's constitutional rights: confessions and the right to counsel, the exclusionary rule and search and seizure, and capital punishment.

Chapter 7 looks at the double bind of income support and welfare dependence, beginning with a definition of the term *poverty* and an account of the creation of the welfare system. Expanded attention is given to poverty among children, homelessness, and the underclass. In the chapter that follows, the nation's health care is discussed in terms of a different kind of double bind, one of unlimited needs but limited resources. Medicare and Medicaid are examined, and the issues of bioethics, AIDS, and long-term health care are evaluated. Current proposals for health care reform are summarized.

In Chapter 9, the tradition of free public education in the United States is shown to be in jeopardy. The chapter has been rewritten to consider such problems as poor student achievement, teacher competence, inequities resulting from the system of local control, and inequality in education due to the growth of private schools. The idea of equality, both legal and social, is discussed in Chapter 10. Programs of the 1960s and 1970s—those aimed at achieving equality in the schools and in employment and securing the right of abortion for women—are now questioned seriously. This seeming turnabout in priorities is studied. An entire chapter is then devoted to the issue of first amendment freedoms in an open society, with a special focus on the many safeguards to these freedoms that have been developed over the years and on continued conflicts regarding most of them (for example, the role of religion in American education). Finally, Chapter 12 discusses the primary policy issues facing the United States in the post-Cold War, post-Persian Gulf war world.

American Public Policy can be used in a variety of ways. Instructors may choose to consider all of the policy areas presented or to select a group of them for special emphasis. Chapter 1 should be read first, but the rest of the chapters can be

assigned in any sequence the instructor prefers. Supplementary readings focusing on particular issues may be conveniently added.

Many people have read and commented on this fourth edition, and we wish to thank particularly the following persons: John Quincy Adams, Millsaps College; Timothy S. Brady, California State University–Bakersfield; Euel Elliott, University of Texas at Dallas; Don F. McCabe, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville; and Elena Padilla, New York University. We are grateful for their interest and suggestions. Don Reisman, Frances Jones, and Erica Appel of St. Martin's Press provided invaluable editorial assistance.

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