

FOURTH EDITION

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# POLITICS AND POLICY IN STATES AND COMMUNITIES

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John J. Harrigan



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John J. Harrigan

Hamline University

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# Preface

In the closing years of the twentieth century, Americans are turning increasingly to state and community governments for leadership on the great domestic problems facing the nation. They do so in part because the federal government abdicated leadership in so many areas of domestic policy during the 1980s, and there is no other governmental arena to which to turn. But they do so also because of three vital threads that have woven through the fabric of American domestic politics in recent years:

- The unprecedented rejuvenation of state and local governments over the past quarter century.
- The unprecedented developmental role that state and community governments play today in the political economy.
- The never-ending ideological conflict over the public issues that dominate state and community politics.

These three themes played important roles in the earlier editions of *Politics and Policy in States and Communities*, and their importance has been highlighted in this fourth edition as well. Examples of the three themes abound.

*Item:* A quarter century ago, as we shall see, state government was decried as “dullsville” and local government as a “lost world.” So complete has been the rejuvenation of state and local government in the past two decades that these complaints no longer ring true. Today some of the most exciting political leaders around the nation are emerging from state politics (e.g., New York’s Democratic governor Mario Cuomo, and Republican senator Richard Lugar who came to the Senate from the mayor’s office in Indianapolis).

*Item:* States and municipalities have gone into the economic development business in a big way in recent years. They seek to stimulate business activity to create more jobs, attract new industries, and keep existing ones. This has sparked an intense interstate and interregional competition for corporate investment dollars. When General Motors decided to build a factory to

manufacture a new automobile to be called the Saturn, over half the states offered packages to GM in their competition to get the site of the new Saturn plant.

*Item:* Barely a quarter century ago, a prominent scholar published a book lamenting the end of ideology. Today ideology is alive and well in state and community politics. Too alive, in some people's judgment. On virtually every major domestic issue area (education, social welfare, crime, infrastructure, regulation) political leaders divide themselves into a variety of ideological positions on the left-right spectrum, which we shall examine shortly.

## Conceptual Themes

Rejuvenation of state and local government, the role of those governments in state political economies, and the influence of political ideology in state and community politics are the unifying themes of this book. Rejuvenation of state and local government is particularly the dominant theme for Chapters 2 through 12, which deal with the institutions and processes of state and local politics. Political ideology is most relevant in the material for Chapters 12 through 16, which deal with the major policy areas confronting state and local governments (crime, education, social welfare, infrastructure, and regulation). The object of examining the ideological aspect of these issue areas is twofold: (1) to help the reader better understand his or her own value orientations toward these issues and (2) to provide conceptual tools that the reader can use to make evaluations of these issues as they arise in the reader's own community. Finally, the theme of political economy is relevant in several chapters of the book but nowhere more directly than in Chapter 17, on the role that state and local governments play in promoting economic development.

## Important Features of This Edition

- A separate chapter (17) on economic development policy. So important has economic development politics become that a special chapter is devoted specifically to it. Especially useful in this chapter is a set of analytical questions the reader can use to assess proposed economic development projects in his or her own state.
- A unique appendix on career prospects in state and community government and politics. This appendix gives students a guide to numerous career possibilities in state and local politics. This is especially helpful given today's demand that the college curriculum be relevant to the workplace.

- End-of-chapter glossaries. Important terms are defined in glossaries at the end of each chapter, where they can easily be found by the reader.
- Up-to-date coverage of recent developments in state and community politics.

## Teaching Features of This Book

This book contains numerous pedagogical features that aid the instructor in teaching the course and help the student in learning the material:

- “You Decide” exercises. These are boxed case studies that ask the reader to respond to lively issues that range from deciding welfare eligibility in a complicated case to anticipating how the Supreme Court would rule in affirmative action cases.
- Chapter previews and summaries. Chapter previews give the reader a brief outline of the major issues in each chapter. The end-of-chapter summaries seek to wrap up the most important points.
- Highlight boxes in each chapter. These are short, boxed case studies that seek to illustrate important points made in the body of the text.
- A comprehensive *Instructor’s Manual*. This manual provides: (1) chapter outlines, (2) twenty-five to thirty multiple-choice questions for each chapter, (3) suggested classroom exercises to promote discussion of key issues and topics, (4) proposed research projects designed to have the student investigate how well the chapter’s assertions apply to his or her state or community, (5) a film guide, and (6) study guides that can be given to the student. The two-page study guide for each chapter can be duplicated and distributed to the class as an aid for mastering the material of the course. Each contains (a) learning objectives for the chapter, (b) identification terms that the student should understand, and (c) mastery questions for which the student should be able to outline answers.
- Detailed footnotes that the reader can use as a guide to basic literature on research topics.

## Acknowledgments

For me it is exciting to write and teach about state and local politics, because it is a topic that is directly involved in people’s daily lives and one that has changed dynamically over the past decade. If some of that excitement rubs off on some of the student users of this text, I have many people to thank. First, there are the many users of the earlier editions of the book. They will

see retained the approaches they responded to positively in the earlier editions and will note substantial additions in this edition to accommodate changing events and perspectives. Additionally and more directly, I am greatly indebted to the following reviewers who read part or all of the manuscript and gave me their invaluable comments: Peter J. Haas, San Jose State University; Kenneth D. Kennedy, College of San Mateo; and Bruce Williams, University of Kentucky. But most of all my appreciation is to Sandy for her support.

*John J. Harrigan*

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction to State and Community Politics

### Chapter Preview

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Chapter 1 introduces the central concerns of state and community government today and outlines the plan of this book. In this chapter we will discuss in turn:

1. How state and local government responsibilities have increased in recent decades.
  2. How state and local governments have reformed and rejuvenated themselves to handle their new responsibilities.
  3. What conflicts arise in states and communities as those governments seek to carry out their responsibilities.
  4. How state and local governments have become increasingly concerned with political economy and the politics of economic development.
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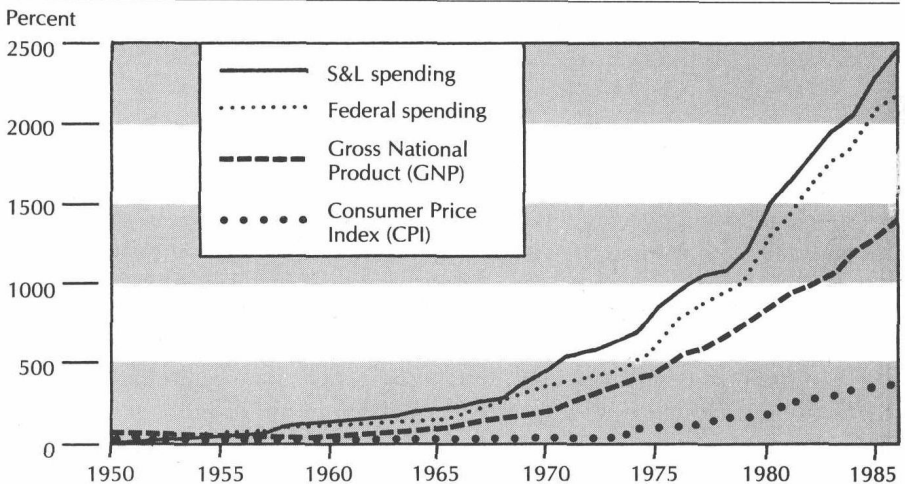
### Introduction

State and local governments affect our lives much more directly than does the national government in Washington. Most of the governmental services we receive are delivered by state or local units, not by Washington. That includes most of the federal government's domestic services, such as public housing and Aid for Families with Dependent Children. Many people feel they can influence what goes on in their city hall or state capitol much more than they can influence what goes on in Washington. For most of us, Washington seems very far away, with most of its money being spent elsewhere, in somebody else's neighborhood, somebody else's state, or somebody else's country. State and local governments spend their money locally, and their projects are literally carried out before our eyes, sometimes in our own neighborhoods.

Not only do state and community governments have a more direct impact on our lives than does the government in Washington, but their role in domestic policy is steadily growing. This growth is illustrated in Figure 1-1, which shows that growth of state and local government expenses since mid-century has outstripped the growth of federal governmental spending, the gross national product (or GNP, the most common measure of the nation's economic output), and inflation, as measured by change in the consumer price index (CPI).

If state and community governments have played a growing role in coping with domestic problems in recent years, that role is likely to expand even further as we move toward the close of the twentieth century. There are two reasons for this. First, as we will detail in Chapter 3, the federal government during the 1980s abdicated leadership in tackling some of our most pressing domestic problems, such as air and water pollution, massive poverty, deteriorating public school systems, and dreaded toxic wastes seeping into the drinking water and contaminating the ocean beaches. During these years of neglect, groups concerned about these problems, finding little support for their concerns in Washington, D.C., began turning their attention to the states instead. By the start of the 1990s, the most imaginative leadership on some of these national problems was coming not from the national capital in Washington, but from the state capitals. Even if domestic liberals regain control in Washington<sup>1</sup> and try to recapture the initiative on domestic issues,

**Figure 1-1.** Growth of the Public Sector, 1950–1986



Source: Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1988* (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1988), pp. 257, 291, 407, 450; *Statistical Abstract: 1987*, pp. 250, 416, 463; *Statistical Abstract: 1984*, p. 272; *Statistical Abstract: 1971*, pp. 305, 396.

the drastic budget deficits inherited from the Reagan and Bush years leave the federal government very little ability to take on new responsibilities.

The years of domestic neglect were possible in no small measure because domestic problems for most of the past forty years were overshadowed by America's great Cold War conflict with the Soviet Union. During these years, there were only occasional bursts of federal energy on domestic problems, such as the expansion of spending on social welfare during the mid-1960s and on the environment during the early 1970s. And when federal budget cuts were needed, Cold War fears over national security usually ensured that it was not the military that got axed so much as it was federal programs for the environment, education, social welfare, and other domestic problems. This pattern was especially pronounced during the 1980s. Today, however, the Soviet empire is contracting, and a great thaw in the Cold War has occurred. And this thaw is the second reason why state and community governments will assume growing public visibility during the 1990s. If the Cold War has truly ended, it may be impossible to ignore any longer the scores of domestic problems that were given low priority during the years of neglect. As national attention turns to these issues, state and community governments will play ever-growing roles.

The abdication of federal leadership on domestic problems during the 1980s and a resurgent public concern over domestic issues in the 1990s, thus, are two major forces likely to push state politics to the forefront of public attention in the waning years of the twentieth century. As this takes place, the states will find themselves with difficult choices to make. Which public services should be emphasized? At what levels? Who should receive these services? Who should pay for their cost? And how should the great burden of regulating the environment, the economy, health, and safety be divided among the three levels of government (national, state, and local)?

## Rejuvenation of State and Local Government

If these great tasks had been handed to the states thirty years ago, in the 1960s, the states probably would not have been up to the task. In those years, scholars and journalists usually viewed state and community governments as incompetent at best. State governments were described as "sick,"<sup>2</sup> and state legislatures were caricatured as "horse-and-buggy" institutions.<sup>3</sup> States for the most part shirked their responsibilities for dealing with urban problems.<sup>4</sup> And as states ignored their growing urban problems in the 1950s and 1960s, the federal government picked up much of the slack with a vast expansion of social services and domestic programs. Journalists and social scientists increasingly turned their attention to Washington or to the central city, largely ignoring state government as "Dullsville."<sup>5</sup>