



Governing States and Cities

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**GOVERNING STATES AND CITIES**

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GOVERNING STATES AND CITIES

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PREFACE

This comprehensive textbook covers the broad spectrum of state and local government. It is an expanded and updated version of a more concise textbook, *State and Local Government: Politics and Public Policies*, 5th edition, also published by McGraw-Hill. The organization of chapters is designed to accommodate introductory courses taught in one semester or in one or two quarters. We begin with the study of constitutions and intergovernmental relations; proceed through the political process (parties, interest groups, and elections); discuss basic state government institutions (legislatures, governors, administrators, and courts); cover local government (cities, suburbs, counties, townships, and rural communities); and then conclude by examining the ways in which public policy is made in the areas of taxation, education, welfare, economic development, and the environment.

Our goal throughout the book is to answer “what difference does it make” questions. These include what difference does it make if state constitutions are long or streamlined, if political party systems are one-party or two-party competitive, if legislatures are professional or nonprofessional, if cities have elite or pluralist power structures, if states offer education vouchers, if governors have extensive formal powers, if states have the initiative process to make laws, and if states and localities compete in economic development. We seek to connect structure and process to public policy and to evaluate the nature of public policy outputs at all levels of government.

Political scientists described a “resurgence” of state and local governments in the 1980s, as they took the lead in political activism when faced with cutbacks in federal domestic policy initiatives. In the first half of the 1990s, states and cities faced severe financial distress. Many governments cut programs, laid off employees, and raised taxes. Now in the second half of the decade a growing national economy has put states in their best financial shape since the early 1980s. That’s the good news. The possible bad news (or, as they say, “the challenge”) for states and localities is that Congress may transfer responsibility for most domestic policy to the states. While Congress has pledged to return more money to states in the form of block grants and to cut federal mandates, states fear an overall reduction in federal financial assistance.

Finding the federal system in the midst of the greatest revolution of authority since the 1930s, we examine the ongoing changes in intergovernmental relations believing that states are better prepared than at any other time in their history to accept the transfer of programs and to provide services to their residents. But as state fiscal authority

Steven D. Gold warns, that does not mean states are magicians. If aid to states and localities is cut because it is a convenient way to balance the federal budget, then states will be hard put in the late 1990s to improve education, incarcerate more criminals, and protect the environment.

To help connect readers to the exciting reality of state and local government, we have included an article by Neal R. Peirce, the premier journalist writing about states and cities, in most chapters. To help give readers a more in-depth look at what political scientists and other scholars have to say about state and local government, we have a special boxed section in each chapter. These Scholarly Boxes focus on such topics as at-large elections, elasticity of cities, cumulative voting, party competition, the item veto, and state tax capacity. Key terms in the text appear in boldface type, and they are defined at the end of each chapter. There are also chapter summaries to give readers a review of the major points.

We have made every effort to include tables, graphs, and maps that contain the most current data available. While we discuss a number of issues that are in the news—such as community policing, reinventing government, term limits for state legislators, state-authorized gambling casinos, and the hiring of private contractors to operate public schools—our overriding concern is to give readers what introductory state and local government textbooks are supposed to deliver: an appreciation of the historical setting of subnational government, an understanding of how the primary institutions of government operate, an examination of how citizens participate in government, and an analysis of how these segments fit together to create public policy that affects our lives every day. If the most challenging public issues are to be dealt with effectively as we near the turn of the century, it is states and cities that will lead the way.

We want to acknowledge the help we received from those who reviewed the manuscript for this book. Their insights prompted us to make several organizational changes and they forced us to rethink issues raised in every chapter. Reviewers included: Edwin Benton, University of South Florida; Thad Beyle, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; William Culver, State University of New York at Plattsburgh; George Kiser, Illinois State University; Edgar LeDuc, University of Rhode Island; David Martin, Auburn University; John Portz, Northeastern University; Betty Rosser, Nicholls State University; Loran Smith, Washburn University; and John Straayer, Colorado State University.

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Others who provided assistance with the preparation of the manuscript include Barbara Roberts and Danielle Samrak at Ohio Northern University and Paula Hepburn at Salisbury State University.

David C. Saffell

Harry Basehart

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THE SETTING OF STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT



Kevin C. Rose/Courtesy of the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau

STATE VITALITY

During this century, the role of the federal government in public policymaking has expanded to a degree unimagined in earlier times. In fact, today the federal government can act on virtually any policy issue affecting our lives.¹ In those areas where Washington has refrained from action—for example, domestic relations, property, and contracts—the absence of legislation has been a matter of federal restraint rather than lack of constitutional authority.

The states dominated American government in the nineteenth century and the first decade of this century. However, several events in the first half of this century relegated the states to a position of secondary importance. Ratification of the Sixteenth Amendment (relating to income tax) in 1913 gave the federal government much greater ability to raise money and to centralize policymaking. The Depression showed the weaknesses of the states in responding to the nation's economic problems and led to greater focus on the president as the center of government. World War II further strengthened the authority of the president and the centralization of power in Washington.

State reform has been taking place since the early twentieth century, but the negative image of corrupt and incompetent state government persisted (and with good reason) into the early 1960s.² Since the mid-1960s, over forty states have ratified new constitutions or made significant changes in existing ones. Governors' terms have been lengthened and their powers increased. Legislatures have become more professional (see Chapter 5) and more representative of urban interests, and nearly all meet in annual sessions. Court systems have been unified (see Chapter 8), and intermediate appellate courts have been added in many states. State bureaucrats are more professional, and the number of state employees under some form of merit system has increased from 50 percent in 1960 to nearly 80 percent (see Chapter 7). An increase in party competition in the states, coupled with legislative- and executive-branch changes, has led to more innovative policy. In addition, federal cuts in aid have caused local governments to look more to the states for financial help (see Chapter 2). Since 1980, states have shown a new creativity in several policy areas, including education, corrections, and hazardous waste disposal.

This resurgence of the states was well under way when Ronald Reagan was elected president in 1980. Reagan believed that the federal government had done too much and that more responsibility for policymaking should be turned over to the states. In addition, federal categorical grants-in-aid (see Chapter 2) were criticized by congressional conservatives and by state and local officials for their red tape and insensitivity to local problems. The timing of Reagan's changes in policy and philosophy thus caught the states at a point at which they were the most capable of assuming new policymaking responsibilities. Unfortunately, the states also found themselves without some of the financial assistance they had come to expect from the national government. By 1990 states and localities faced severe financial pressures brought on by the recession and cuts in federal funds. A majority of states raised taxes, spending was cut, and employees were furloughed or fired in the early 1990s.

By the mid-1990s the financial position of most states and cities had improved as the national economy rebounded. However, states faced even greater cutbacks in fed-