

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

I N A M E R I C A



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SIXTH EDITION

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**To the memory of
Roscoe C. Martin
and
Hibbert R. Roberts
and
to Myra**

G. J. G.

**To
Lynton K. Caldwell
and
Capt. Stephen H. Milakovich
and
to Cindy**

M. E. M.

Preface

Public Administration is a subject that reflects multiple perspectives. As a study, it has complex roots in different academic disciplines. As a practice, it draws from many “real world” fields of endeavor. That by itself should alert the reader to one of the essential realities of public administration: there are many sides to it. The wide variety of practices, themes, questions, and issues have commanded the attention of both academics and practitioners for more than a century, making it both a subject worthy of study and a complex aspect of governmental activity.

THEMES AND COVERAGE

Through five editions we have explored the many facets, themes, and controversial features of contemporary public administration. In this sixth edition, our discussions will center around five major questions that are essential for understanding today’s rapidly changing field of public administration. First, we will provide a focus on the existence of, and conflict between, political and managerial aspects of the field and the need to understand the importance of each. Second, we endeavor to explore the day-to-day challenges facing leaders and managers in the public and nonprofit sectors, such as coping with personnel issues and budgetary constraints, assuring ethical decision making, maintaining a professional and respected workforce, delivering quality service, and ensuring high levels of measurable productivity in governmental programs. Third, we will look at the continuing initiatives to “reinvent government,” a movement that has gained considerable strength and support at all levels of government in the United States since the early 1990s. This edition emphasizes the redefinition of the relationship between citizen and government; “entrepreneurial” thinking, innovation and creativity; “empowering” public employees; eliminating “unnecessary” regulation; and serving government’s “customers” efficiently and well. As a fourth area of concentration, we will examine the exponential growth of information technology and how it can improve communication among citizens, elected officials, and public administrators. The Internet, World Wide Web, and telecommuting offer the potential for expanded access for all citizens to participate responsibly in public decision making. Finally, we will focus on various types of ethical considerations that enter into administrative decisions, and examine ways to promote more ethical behavior, responsiveness, and accountability among public administrators.

In addition to these five major questions, considerable attention is paid to more specific management-related topics in the field. These include continuity and change in national-state-local operating relations (Chapter 4); management and

leadership responsibilities in public organization (Chapters 5 through 8); both old and new personnel management concerns (Chapter 9); ongoing tensions in the budgetary process, including continuing attention to budget deficits and government spending (Chapter 10); the emerging attention to government productivity and to customer service in the public sector (Chapter 11); and government regulation, privatization, and deregulation (Chapter 12). In the concluding chapters, we will look back at the field and attempt to integrate the various themes and subject matter coverage of the book, and will look ahead, as well, at emerging issues and concerns.

Finally, as in previous editions, we discuss the three themes that are very much at the heart of contemporary public administration: the degree of accountability of public administrative agencies, the efficiency with which public agencies and managers perform their duties, and the results or effectiveness of programs in the real world of public management. To some extent, these concerns have been with us since the administrative state began to emerge in the late nineteenth century, but they have taken on greater urgency as we move into the twenty-first century. What is new now—and what may emerge in the immediate future—may result in greater and more rapid change than that of any other period. These are the most interesting times for government and the public service.

NEW TO THE SIXTH EDITION

What best characterizes public administration at the beginning of the twenty-first century is the scope and rapidity of change affecting virtually all aspects of governmental activity. To capture the many changes in the field since the fifth edition of this book was published in 1995, we have made every attempt to add new and updated material throughout the text. Specifically, we have made changes in the following areas.

- Revised and updated text, including results and implications of the 1994 congressional and 1996 presidential elections.
- Updated coverage and “reinventing government” initiatives, ethics, unfunded mandates, and customer service quality standards
- New material on changing values, federalism, organizational development, human resources, budgeting, total quality management, regulation, and administrative law.
- Discussion of current policy issues, such as affirmative action, regulatory reform, deficit-reduction efforts, and ethical decision making in government.
- Coverage of current topics, including welfare reform to encourage job training and productive employment, reconsideration of social insurance programs, new approaches to budgetary dilemmas, and bipartisan concern with deficit reduction and balancing the federal budget.

In response to reviews, we have added two new features to help increase students’ understanding of concepts and allow them greater access to research information.

- Key terms and concepts are now bold face within the text and listed at the end of each chapter. They are defined in the text or in a glossary at the end of the book.
- Discussion of the expanded use of information technology and reference to the St. Martin's Web site, where applicable, helps guide students through the sites of interest on the Internet.

Today's student of public administration is dealing with a multifaceted discipline that is quite possibly on the verge of its most exciting period. We encourage students and practitioners, as well as concerned citizens, to take advantage of the many tools available and to discover both the profession and the practice of public administration. For professors or students who may have questions or concerns about the text, tips on classroom activities, or comments about the profession, please address your questions to us:

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The reviews commissioned by St. Martin's Press were uniformly helpful in their critiques; the topic coverage in this book is stronger, more accurate, and more complete because of the insights and recommendations of the following

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This book is dedicated (by Gordon) to the memories of Roscoe C. Martin and Hibbert R. Roberts, and (by Milakovich) to Lynton K. Caldwell, 1996 recipient of the John Gaus Award from the American Political Science Association, and Capt. Stephen H. Milakovich (ret.), whose insights on the theory, teaching, politics, and practice of public administration are deeply appreciated. We owe them a great debt, a debt we will never be able to fully repay. The same may be said of our wives, Myra Gordon and Cindy Milakovich.

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PART I

The Context, Nature, and Structure of Public Administration in America

This opening section explores essential facts and concepts in public administration in order to set the stage for further detailed discussion of the subject in this book. The central themes are (1) the roles and functions of public bureaucracies within the larger governmental system, (2) the impact of politics within that larger system on administrative actions and decisions, and (3) the critical, and increasing, importance of ethics, productivity improvement, and effective management at all levels of government. In Chapter 1, we will first describe the most common structural arrangements of executive-branch agencies, stressing the growth of government generally and public administration in particular. We will explore similarities and differences between public and private administration, taking note of some ways in which they overlap in practice. We will then examine public administration as a field of study, especially its evolution from a relatively uncomplicated field in the early 1900s to the complex and rapidly changing discipline it is today.

In Chapter 2, we will establish the setting in which public administration operates. We will consider traditional conceptions of how public agencies ought to function and then compare them with the broad realities of American governmental bureaucracy; we will also discuss why the differences are important. We will then examine the underlying values in American administrative practice. Of central importance are the tensions between *political values*—such as individual freedom to choose, fair representation, and popular control—and *administrative values*—such as efficiency, economy, and the ideal of “political” (usually meaning partisan) neutrality. In addition, we will analyze the impact of the mass media, social change, and technology on our values.

Chapter 3 focuses on the nature and exercise of bureaucratic power and discusses various issues involved in the rise of what has become known as the “bureaucratic state.” The discussion centers on the dispersal of power throughout government and what that means for public administrators, the foundations of bureaucratic power, the political implications of structure, bureaucrats as political actors as well as public managers, and problems of political and administrative accountability. Bureaucrats are seen as active participants in a

broad range of political interactions that allow for considerable variety and complexity in the manner of their involvement.

Chapter 4 deals with the dynamic nature of federalism and intergovernmental (national-state-local) relations. A description of the formal federal setting is followed by an examination of intergovernmental relations within federalism. Particular attention is given to fiscal and administrative relations among the different levels and units of government, the divisive issue of unfunded mandates (federal programs *without* funds to support them), regulatory reform and devolution of federal program authority to states and local governments. The evolution of American federalism has profoundly affected the management of government programs at all levels, and it is essential that we understand how the two are interrelated. Federalism is an important structural element of public administration which, in turn, creates a challenging organizational dynamic among local, state, and federal stakeholders.

CHAPTER 1

Approaching the Study of Public Administration

The governor and elected comptroller of a state publicly disagree with one another on the condition of state government finances, taking issue especially over the question of projected revenues. A metropolitan transit authority allocates funds for an extensive study designed to assist local governments in the region with long-range transportation (and economic development) planning. A candidate for state government office runs successfully on her pledge to *abolish* the office after being elected! Local government bargaining teams engage in round-the-clock negotiations with a firefighters' union in an effort to avert a threatened strike only days away. The president and Congress fail to agree on federal budget priorities. As a result, national parks must close, economic reports are delayed, and social security recipients fail to receive benefits. Sound familiar?

What do these examples—none of them hypothetical—have in common? All of them represent aspects of public administration, one of the most rapidly growing dimensions of the American governmental process and one with increasing influence both inside and outside of government.

Public administration in America today is a large enterprise made up of thousands of smaller units that encompasses the everyday activities of literally millions of government workers at all levels. Their decisions touch the daily lives of virtually every American. The growth of government activity and public bureaucracy is one of the most significant social phenomena of recent decades and has become the subject of considerable discussion among scholars and practitioners. At the same time, politicians of every stripe have criticized the bureaucracy: in 1976, Jimmy Carter promised to “clean up the horrible bureaucratic mess in Washington”; in 1980, Ronald Reagan promised to “get the federal government off your backs”; George Bush dared us to “Read my lips” in 1988; and, in 1996, Bill Clinton declared that “the era of Big Government is over.” Many other politicians have run successfully “against” the bureaucracy. The “taxpayers’ revolt” that surfaced swiftly and intensely in the late 1970s was in part a reaction against perceived bureaucratic excesses. It has even been suggested that the language of bureaucracy (its jargon) has harmed the English language as a whole. In one way or another, most of us are familiar—if not always comfortable—with government bureaucracy.

Our awareness of bureaucracy varies according to the situations in which we find ourselves. This awareness is usually higher when we fill out our income tax returns (especially when we have to pay additional tax on April 15), apply for government loans to finance a college education, seek federal assistance after a natural disaster, or deal directly with that most visible of street-level bureaucrats, a police officer.

We are less conscious of the role of **bureaucracy** under other circumstances. (Key terms and concepts are highlighted in **bold** print and listed at the end of each chapter.) Much bureaucratic decision making is obscure or just not directly meaningful to us. Consider, for example, decisions by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) to change eligibility formulas for determining student loans. Proposals such as these may be important and may even lend legitimacy to the final actions taken by public agencies, but they typically generate little publicity or public attention by themselves. Some of the most important work of government agencies takes place away from public view. Yet *everyone* has a general opinion—usually negative—about bureaucracy and politics. (See Box 1-1, “The Meaning of ‘Bureaucracy.’”)

Regardless of our level of awareness concerning particular bureaucratic activities or decisions, the institution of bureaucracy evokes strong feelings among millions of Americans. Mention of “the bureaucracy” usually elicits a strong response; bureaucrats are unpopular with many of those they serve. Bureaucracy has become a favorite scapegoat for many of society’s current ills, for several reasons: government agencies are clearly influential; in all but a handful of cases, bureaucrats are not elected by the public; and bureaucrats are convenient, increasingly visible targets. We hear a great deal about the growing power of bureaucracy and bureaucrats, the arbitrary nature of many decisions, the lack of government accountability, questionable ethics, poor-quality service, impersonal treatment, and cases of simple incompetence. The Clinton administration has placed a high priority on addressing precisely these sorts of concerns, proposing extensive and significant changes aimed at “reinventing government” with special attention on improving the ways bureaucracies interact with citizens.

Our attitudes toward both public and private bureaucracies (that is, toward all large organizations) have been affected by the larger complex of feelings and reactions toward government as a whole and toward other major institutions in American society, such as business, labor, the mass media, and education. The confidence of Americans in their institutions has declined significantly since the

BOX 1-1

The Meaning of “Bureaucracy”

A *bureaucracy* or a *bureaucratic organization* is characterized by an internal division of labor, specialization of work performed, a vertical hierarchy or chain of command, well-defined routines for carrying out operating tasks, reliance on precedents (previous actions) in resolving problems, and a clear set of rules regarding managerial control over organizational activities. It is assumed that most of those working in a bureaucracy are professionals in their specialties, and that their occupational loyalties rest with their organizations rather than with a political party or other external affiliation. Because much of public management in American governments occurs within bureaucratic structures, there is a tendency to use *bureaucracy* as just another term for public administration or public management; but it has a more specific meaning than either of those, particularly with regard to the form or structure of administrative agencies (see Chapter 5).