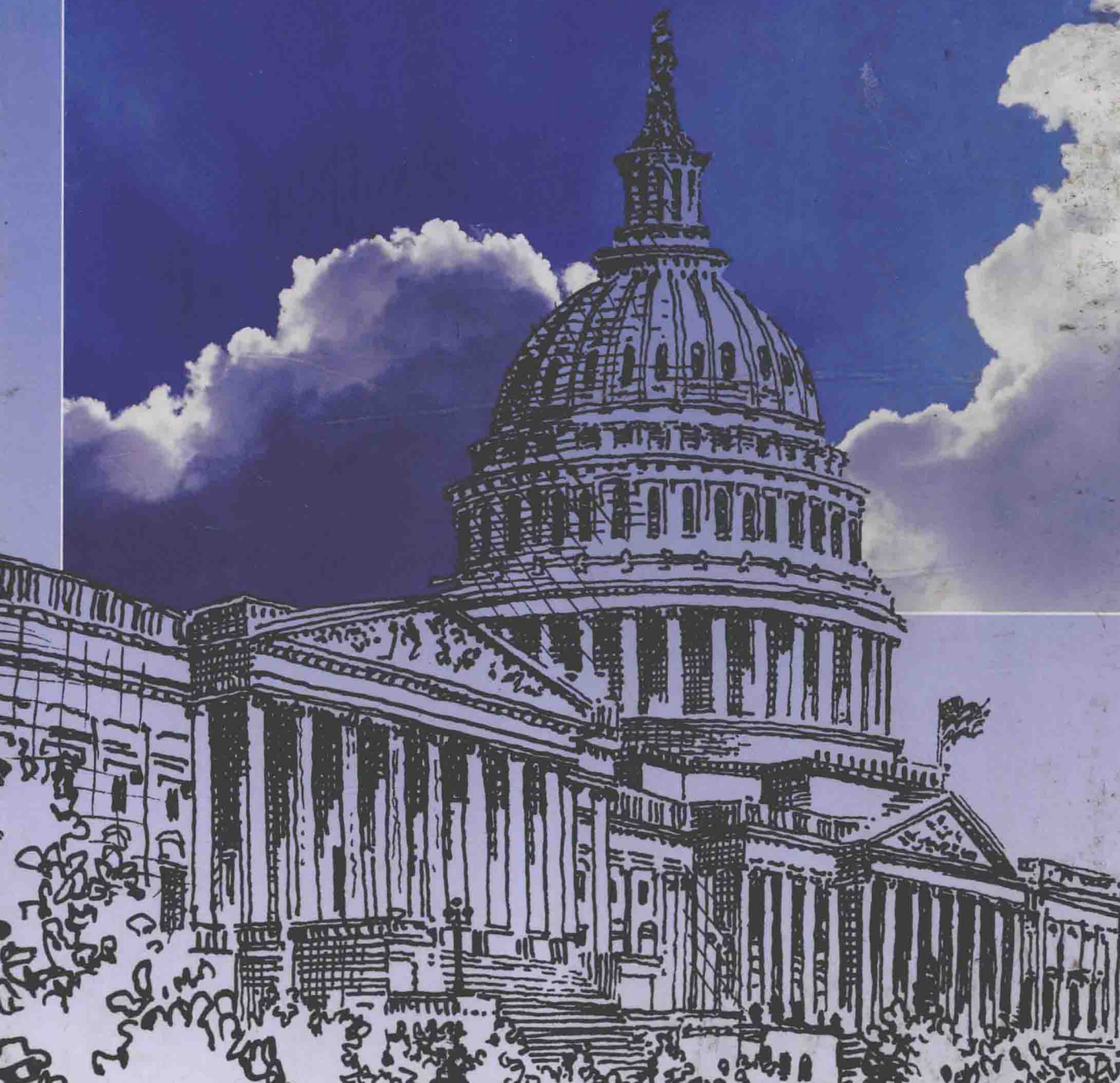
KAREN O'CONNOR LARRY J. SABATO

American Government

ROOTS AND REFORM



American Government

ROOTS AND REFORM

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Preface

Teaching introductory American government presents special challenges and rewards. It is a challenge to introduce a new discipline to beginning students. It is a challenge to jump from topic to topic each week. Above all, it is a challenge to motivate large and disparate groups of students to master new material. The rewards offered by success, however, can accumulate in students who pay more attention to their government, who participate in its workings as more informed citizens, and who better understand the workings of democracy as practiced in the United States.

We have witnessed some of these rewards from the lecture podium. With this book, we hope to offer our experiences in written form. Students need perspective and motivation; they also need to be exposed to information that will withstand the test of time. Our goal with this text is to transmit just this sort of information.

Approach

We believe that one cannot fully understand the actions, issues, and policy decisions facing the U.S. government, its constituent states, or "the people" unless these issues are examined from the perspective of how they have evolved over time. Consequently, the title of this book is *American Government: Roots and Reform.* In its pages we try to examine how America is governed today by looking not just at present behavior but also at the Framers' intentions and how they have been implemented over the years. For example, we believe that it is critical to an understanding of the role of political parties in America to understand the Framers' fears of factionalism, how parties evolved, and when and why realignments in party identification occurred. In turn, a comprehension of these processes will help us to understand the kinds of officials who have been elected.

In addition to perennial questions raised by the Framers, we explore issues that the Framers could never have envisioned and how the basic institutions of government have responded to these new demands. Clearly, for example, the Framers could never have envisioned election campaigns in an age of widespread television. It is highly unlikely that an affable former actor, Ronald Reagan, could have been elected president in an earlier century. New demands have periodically forced governmental reform, and understanding the dynamics of change is essential for introductory students.

Our overriding concern is that students understand their government as it exists *today.* In order to do so, they must understand how it was designed in the Constitution. They must appreciate a little of how it reached its current state. Finally, they must understand current political behavior and its effects. Each chapter, therefore, approaches its topic with a combination of perspectives that we feel will best facilitate this approach.

Features

Philosophical Perspective. Every chapter begins with a few sentences from *The Federalist Papers* (with the exception of Chapter 4, which begins with an Anti-Federalist quotation). These passages are explained in captions and then used as references at

relevant points in the chapter. From them, students learn that government was born amidst burning issues of representation and power, issues that continue to smolder today.

Historical Perspective. Every chapter uses history to serve two purposes: first, to show how institutions and processes have evolved to their present state, and second, to provide some of the color that makes information memorable. A richer historical texture helps to explain the present; it also helps to free the course from the time-bound nature of newspaper headlines.

Comparative Perspective. Change in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia reminds us of the preeminence of democracy, in theory if not always in fact. As new democratic experiments spring up across the globe, it becomes increasingly important for students to understand the rudiments of presidential versus parliamentary government, of multiparty versus two-party systems, and so on. In order to put American government in perspective, therefore, while avoiding the enormous complexities of huge transnational comparisons, we have used the model of Great Britain as a point of comparison. Throughout our chapter discussions, comparisons are drawn to Great Britain wherever appropriate points arise. By comparing the two governments, students learn the basic differences between presidential and parliamentary democracies.

The following pages demonstrate how these features appear in the text.

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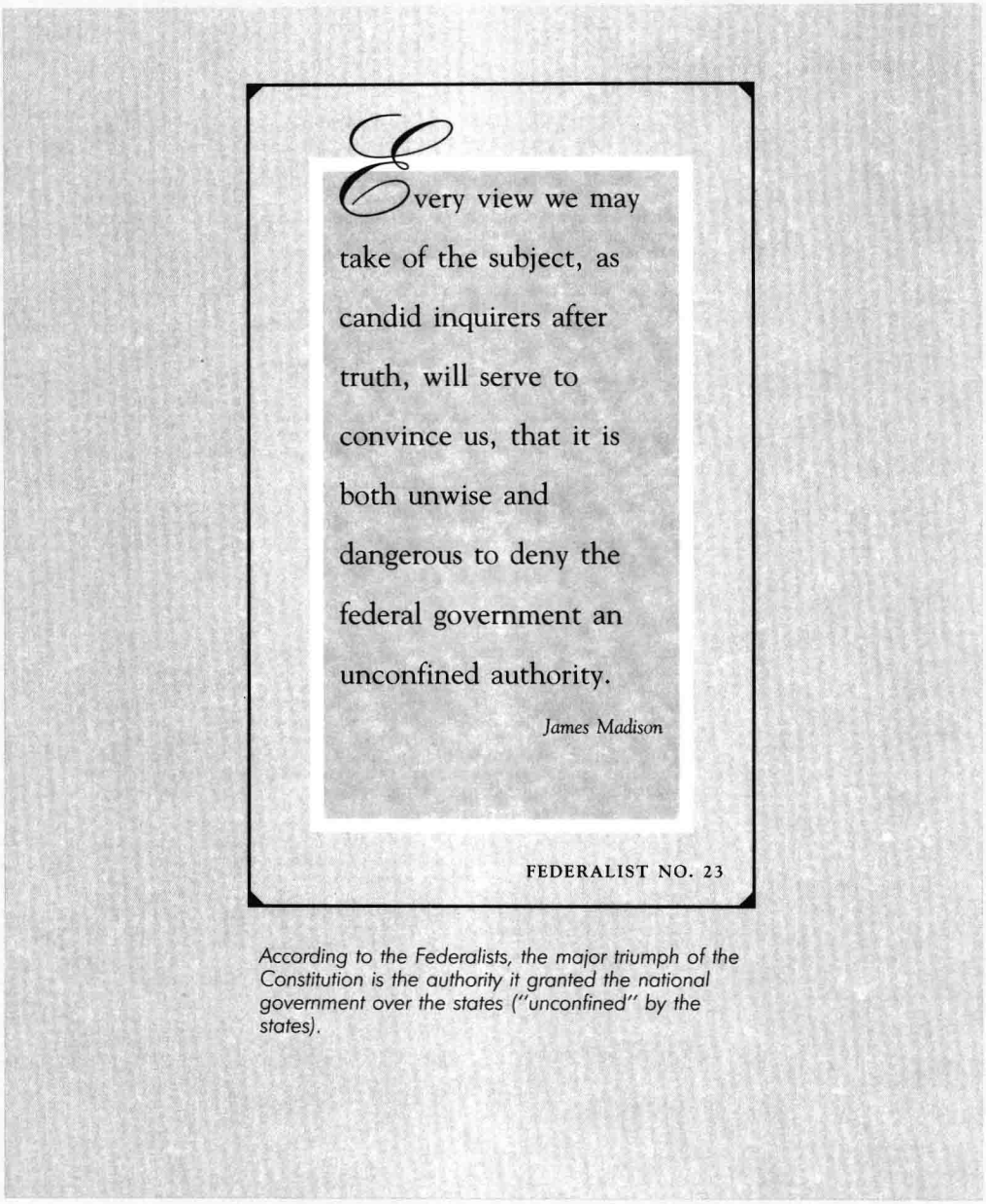


According to the Federalists, the major triumph of the Constitution is the authority it granted the national government over the states ("unconfined" by the states).

Each chapter begins with a quote from *The Federalist Papers* with a caption explaining its context and meaning (this example is from Chapter 2, "The Constitution").

SAMPLE TEXT FEATURES

limited to the states in which the numbers are close. With a direct popular election, where only the national vote total matters, a close count would mean the daunting task of recounting every ballot in the nation.

Overall, although individual elections may sometimes be predictable, the electoral system in the United States is anything but static. New generations—and party-changers in older generations—constantly remake the political landscape. At least every other presidential election brings a change of administration and a focus on new issues. Every other year at least a few fresh personalities and perspectives infuse the Congress, as newly elected U.S. senators and representatives claim mandates and seek to shake up the established order. Each election year the very same tumult and transformation can be observed in the fifty states and in thousands of localities.

The welter of elections may seem like chaos, but from this chaos comes the order and often explosive productivity of a democratic society. For the source of all change in the United States, just as Hamilton and Madison predicted, is the individual citizen who goes to the polls and casts a ballot.

In most societies, there is an insatiable itch for change and a desire to better the conditions of life. In authoritarian countries, repression and violent revolution are the only avenues open to check or provide for change. In democratic nations such as the United States, the voters have the opportunity to orchestrate a peaceful revolution every time they visit their polling places.

Elections take the pulse of average people and gauge their hopes and fears; the study of elections permits us to trace the course of the American revolution over 200 years of voting. Much good and some harm has been accomplished by this explosion of balloting—but all of it has been done, as Hamilton insisted, "on the solid basis of THE CONSENT OF THE PEOPLE."

Summary

Regular elections guarantee mass political action and governmental accountability. They also confer legitimacy on regimes better than any other method of change. There are various types of primary elections in America, as well as general elections, initiatives, referenda, and recall elections. In presidential elections, primaries are sometimes replaced by caucuses in which party members choose a candidate in a closed meeting, but recent years have seen fewer caucuses. After the primary and caucus season finishes, parties hold their national conventions to choose candidates—who generally have been determined in advance by the nominating elections—for the general election. In the general election that follows, statewide popular votes are used to determine the composition of the Electoral College, which ultimately makes the formal choice of a president.

Voters tend to vote retrospectively—that is, they judge candidates based on their past performance, or on the past performance of the party in power. Approximately every thirty-two or thirty-six years, voters have realigned into coalitions that redefine the parties and their candidates. These major realignments are precipitated by one or more critical elections, which polarize voters around new issues and personalities in reaction to crucial developments, such as wars or depressions. Voter participation tends to follow certain patterns: the more educated, affluent, and older the citizens are, the more often they vote; also, whites tend to vote more often than non-whites; Southerners vote less often than non-Southerners.

Chapters refer back to *The Federalist Papers* and the Founders wherever appropriate (this example is from Chapter 12, "Voting and Elections").

SAMPLE TEXT FEATURES

order to best implement their policies, they had to be able to appoint those who subscribed to their political views.

By the time that James A. Garfield, a former distinguished officer in the Civil War, was elected president in 1880, many reformers were calling publicly for changes in the **civil service system,** that is, the system by which appointments to the federal bureaucracy are made. Upon his election to office, Garfield was besieged with office seekers. Washington, D.C., had not seen such a demand for political jobs since the election of Abraham Lincoln as the first president of the Republican Party. Garfield's immediate predecessor, Rutherford B. Hayes, had favored the idea of the replacement of the spoils system with a merit system based on test scores and ability. Congress, however, failed to pass the legislation he proposed. So, possibly because potential job seekers wanted to secure positions before Congress had the opportunity to act on an overhauled civil service system, thousands pressed Garfield for positions. This siege prompted Garfield to record in his diary:

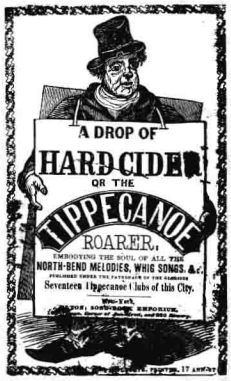
> My day is frittered away with the personal seeking of people when it ought to be given to the great problems which concern the whole country.[4]

Although he resolved to reform the civil service, Garfield's life was cut short by the bullets of an assassin who, ironically, was a frustrated job seeker.

[4] Quoted in Robert G. Caldwell, *James A. Garfield* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1965).

People of the Past

William Henry Harrison and Office Seekers



Nominated by the Whig Party in 1839, William Henry Harrison was the "log cabin, hard cider" candidate in the presidential campaign of 1840. Although Harrison was the son of a wealthy Virginia planter, the Whig Party developed an image of Harrison as one who had risen to distinction through his own efforts while retaining the tastes of the ordinary citizen. Harrison went to college and then enlisted in the army where he was promoted to major general. Harrison was a hero in the Battle of Tippecanoe, thus earning the nickname "Tippecanoe" which became the catchy campaign slogan "Tippecanoe and Tyler too" when Harrison selected his running mate, John Tyler.

Harrison ran his campaign without a platform. The advice given to him by Whig leaders was to say nothing about principles or creed. Lots of silly campaign songs were composed and noisy conventions and rallies were held everywhere, but no campaign promises were made.

At his inaugural address on March 4, Harrison droned on for close to two hours. It was a cold and wintry day and Harrison did not wear gloves or an overcoat. Not surprisingly, he developed pneumonia later that month and died on April 4.

Repeatedly dunned by supporters seeking patronage jobs, Harrison's last words were: "I can't stand it . . . Don't trouble me . . . These applications, will they never cease . . . ?" Even on Harrison's deathbed, the problems of a growing bureaucracy continued to hound him.

Every chapter includes a boxed biographical passage highlighting an interesting personality from America's political past.

SAMPLE TEXT FEATURES

As chair of the Committee of Detail, Wilson had considerable input into the fashioning of the office of chief executive. Rejecting the suggestions of some of the delegates, who initially suggested multiple executives to diffuse the power of the executive branch, the Framers settled on a single chief executive. Borrowing from the constitutions of Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, and New Hampshire, the Framers called the new chief executive the president. Although the Framers had little difficulty in agreeing that executive authority was to be vested in one person or in agreeing on a title for the new office, the manner of the president's election continued to haunt them, so they turned to a discussion of easier issues.

Qualifications for Office

The Framers mandated that the president (and the vice president, whose major function was to succeed the president in the event of his death or disability) be a natural-born citizen of the United States and at least thirty-five years old. The Framers also insisted that any prospective president had resided in the United States for at least fourteen years. As it was not uncommon for those engaged in international diplomacy to be out of the country for substantial periods of time, the Framers wanted to make sure that prospective presidents spent some time on this country's shores before running for its highest elective office.

How Long Can a President Serve?

Initially, the length of the executive's term of office and his eligibility to seek reelection were the subjects of considerable controversy. Four-, seven-, and eleven-year terms with no eligibility for reelection were suggested by various delegates to the Constitutional Convention. When Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts arrogantly suggested a fifteen-year term, a better-humored colleague suggested twenty. After all, he noted, it was "the median life of princes."[5] Alexander Hamilton suggested that a president serve during "good behavior." Not surprisingly, the issue of length of term quickly became associated with eligibility to seek reelection. From the beginning, it was clear that if the delegates agreed to allow the state legislatures to choose the president, then shorter terms with the possibility of reelection would be favored. Thus, after the Framers of the Constitution reached agreement on the composition of the electoral college (see Chapter 12), the delegates in favor of a reelection option prevailed, and a four-year term with eligibility for reelection was added to the proposed Article II of the Constitution.

The first president, George Washington (1789–1797), sought reelection only once, and a two-term limit for presidents became traditional. Although Ulysses S. Grant unsuccessfully sought a third term, the two terms established by Washington remained the standard for 150 years, avoiding the Framers' much-feared "constitutional monarch," a perpetually reelected tyrant. In the 1930s and 1940s, however, Franklin Delano Roosevelt ran successfully in four elections as Americans fought first the Great Depression and then World War II. Despite Roosevelt's popularity, negative reaction to his long tenure in office ultimately led to passage (and ratification in 1951) of the Twenty-second Amendment, which limited presidents to two terms or a total of ten years in office, should a vice president assume a portion of a president's unfulfilled term.

Term limitations are rare in parliamentary systems, where the chief executive can remain in office indefinitely, or rather, as long as she or he can command the support of a majority of representatives in the lower house. **Margaret Thatcher, prime minister of Britain from 1979 to 1990, was quoted in the run-up to the 1987 general election (which her party, the Conservatives, won) that she intended "to go on and on" as prime minister. In practice, she did not. In theory, she certainly could have.**

[5]Quoted in Selma R. Williams, *Fifty Five Fathers* (New York: Dodd Mead, 1970), p. 77.

References to Great Britain are made when appropriate as a point of comparison (this example is from Chapter 7, "The Presidency").

SAMPLE TEXT FEATURES

Then and Now

Life on the Floor of Congress

Throughout Congress's first several decades, partisan, sectional, and state tensions of the day often found their way onto the floors of the U.S. House and Senate. Many members were armed, and during one House debate thirty members showed their weapons. In 1826, for example, John Randolph of Virginia insulted Henry Clay from the floor of the Senate, referring to Clay as "this being, so brilliant yet so corrupt, which, like a rotten mackerel by moonlight, shined and stunk." Clay immediately challenged Randolph to a duel, of which the only victim was Randolph's coat. In 1856, Representative Preston Brooks of South Carolina, defending the honor of his region and family, assaulted Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts on the floor of the Senate. Sumner was disabled and unable to resume his seat in Congress for several years. Guns and knives were abundantly evident on the floor of both House and Senate, along with a wide variety of alcoholic beverages.

Today the House and the Senate are usually much more quiet. In 1984, however, a group of newly elected Republican representatives began taking over the House floor every day after the end of normal hours to berate their Democratic colleagues. The chamber was usually empty but, like all other action on the floor, these speeches were broadcast live on C-SPAN and often used by the members for distribution to local television stations back home. During a particularly strong attack on several Democrats' views on Central America, Representative Newt Gingrich (R.-Ga.) paused suggestively mid-speech, as though waiting for an objection or daring the Democrats to respond. No other House member was on the floor at the time, but since C-SPAN cameras only focus on the speaker, viewers were unaware of that fact.

Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill angrily reacted by ordering C-SPAN cameras to span the empty chamber to expose Gingrich's and other Republicans' tactics, but he failed to inform the Republicans of the change. O'Neill later apologized to the House Minority Leader, Robert Michel, but what Republicans labeled "CAMSCAM" ignited a firestorm on the floor. Incensed by remarks made by Gingrich, O'Neill dropped his gavel, left his spot on the dais, and took to the floor, roaring at Gingrich, "You challenged their [House Democrats'] patriotism, and it is the lowest thing that I have ever seen in my thirty-two years in Congress!" Trent Lott (R.-Ala.) then demanded that the Speaker be "taken down," the House term to call someone to order for violating House rules prohibiting personal attacks. The House Parliamentarian looked in the dictionary to see if the word "lowest" was a slur. As a hush fell on the House, the presiding officer told O'Neill that he had violated House rules. Bristled O'Neill, "I was expressing my views very mildly because I think much worse than I said."

O'Neill's penalty? The rarely invoked enforced silence for the remainder of the day's debate. So uncomfortable with that action was the House Minority Leader that he asked Lott to make a motion exempting O'Neill from the penalty, to which Lott agreed. No other House Speaker has ever been so reprimanded.*

*Alexander Stanley, "Tip Topped: O'Neill Tangles with Some Republican Turks over Camera Angles," *Nation*, May 28, 1984, p. 36.

could allow members to bring lucrative defense contracts back to their districts, encourage the building of bases, or discourage their closing within their districts or states, thus pleasing constituents.

The ability to bring defense contracts, public works contracts, or similar benefits to the district or state improves a member's chances for reelection or for election to higher office.

The Ancillary Package

The ancillary package reflects the pedagogical goals of the text: to provide information in a useful context and with colorful examples. We have tried especially hard to provide materials that are useful for instructors and interesting and helpful to students.

Special Feature

We are particularly pleased to present a unique blend of text, video, and supplementary reading on the perennial subject of how a bill becomes a law. In Chapter 6, we use the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 as an example of the complexity of modern legislation, and we refer to it again in Chapter 17, "Domestic Policy," as we illustrate how to analyze public policy. Instructors can supplement this coverage with a video showing highlights of C-SPAN's coverage of the bill, available from Macmillan. After reading about executive lobbying, committees, and floor voting, students will greatly enjoy the chance to see the twists and turns of the Clean Air Act Amendments on video. Furthermore, students can buy at a special reduced price a package from Macmillan combining this text with a copy of *National Journal* reporter Richard Cohen's *Washington at Work: Back Rooms and Clean Air,* covering the amendments in detail. By this means instructors can combine text, video, and a colorful case study in the tradition of *The Dance of Legislation.*

Also Available

Further Readings. To offer more in-depth historical perspective, the text is accompanied by a free book of essays by such political historians as Richard McCormack and Donald Robinson, each covering the evolution of a major institution or process.

Video Library. A full set of videos on every major course topic, including Congress, the presidency, the courts, and elections, is available through Macmillan.

Instructor's Manual. This manual includes lecture ideas, discussion questions, and classroom activities, as well as lecture suggestions for using the free readings, the Clean Air Act book by Richard Cohen, and the video library.

Test Bank. This item contains questions not just on the text, but also on the free readings, the Clean Air Act book, and the video library, allowing instructors to integrate all student materials easily. The *Test Bank* contains more than 1,500 multiple-choice, true/false, and essay questions, as well as midterm and final exams. It is available in a computerized version from the publisher.

Transparencies. A full set of color transparencies is available to complement classroom lectures.

Study Guide. A thorough *Study Guide,* including multiple-choice, matching, and true/false questions, as well as study outlines, is available for students who need help with review work.

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