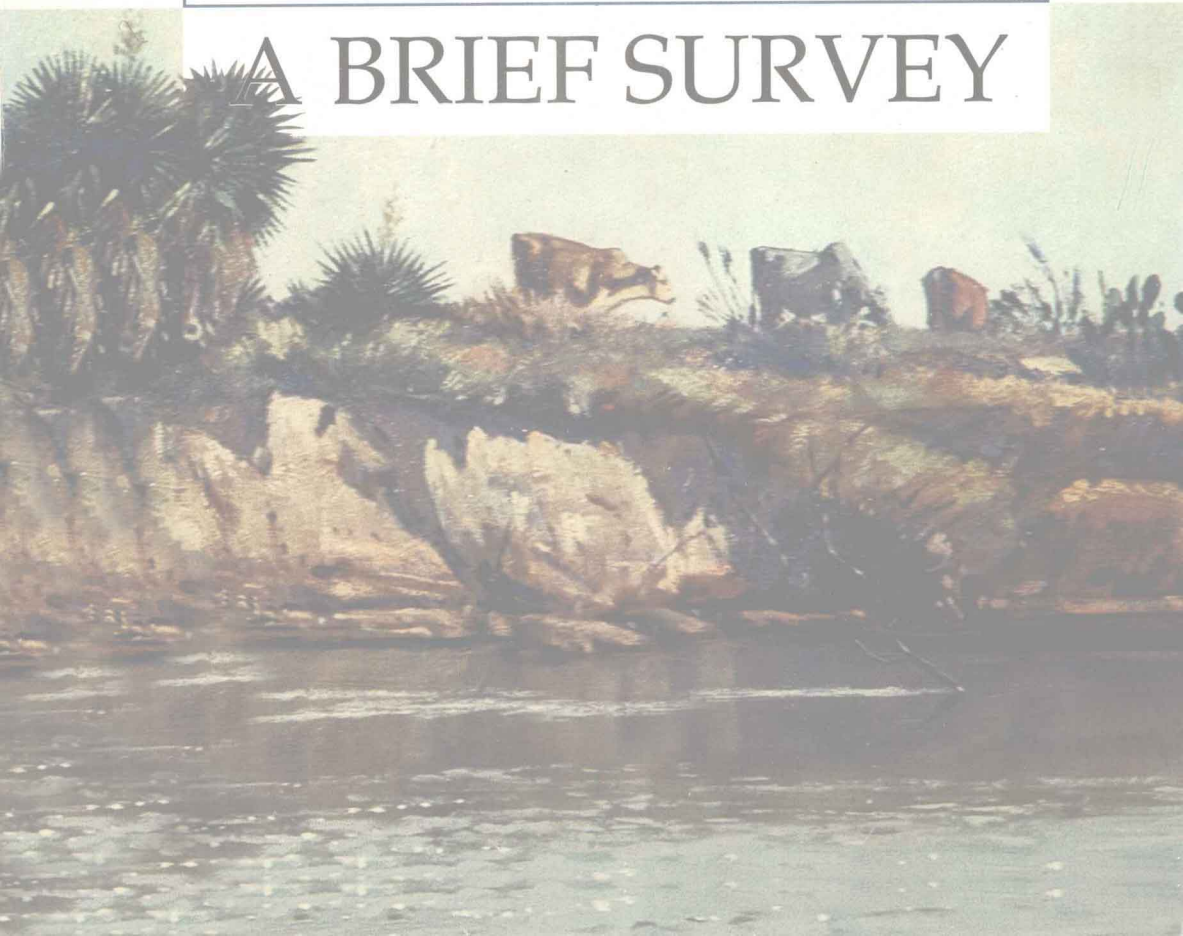


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FOURTH EDITION

PRACTICING TEXAS POLITICS A BRIEF SURVEY



PRACTICING TEXAS POLITICS

A BRIEF SURVEY / Fourth Edition

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Preface



This Fourth Edition of *Practicing Texas Politics: A Brief Survey* retains the basic plan of previous editions. Designed for use in college and university courses, the book describes and analyzes state and local politics as practiced in the Lone Star State. To provide timely information, coverage of subject matter is as current as possible.

As with the longer edition, titled *Practicing Texas Politics*, this *Brief Survey* has been prepared for a variety of classroom needs. For example, some instructors prefer a shorter textbook that permits students to have more time for other reading assignments. In addition, many Texas colleges and universities combine in one course the study of Texas government with that of American national government. This means that the subject of Texas government must be covered in a shorter period of time than if it were taught separately. Furthermore, most students enrolled in such introductory courses are not political science majors. For these situations, a more concise textbook may be preferable, but one that includes all essential information related to the practice of Texas politics.

It is important to note that in this *Brief Survey* the authors have reduced detail but retained most of the topics covered in the longer version of *Practicing Texas Politics*. The result, therefore, is a more concise text with fewer charts, tables, photos, cartoons, and readings. The authors have replaced many of the readings for the *Brief Survey* to keep them as up-to-date as possible. On first mention, key terms and concepts are italicized for emphasis and then listed at the end of the text portion of each chapter. Many of these terms also are listed and defined in a glossary at the end of the volume, and a bibliography (subdivided according to chapters) provides nearly three hundred titles of useful books and articles found in most college and university libraries. Nearly all items in the bibliography are recent publications, many published in 1992. Finally, a detailed index covers all chapters, including readings.

Concerned with political developments extending to November 1992, this Fourth Edition of *Practicing Texas Politics* includes up-to-date coverage of the presidential election of that year, actions of the 72nd Texas Legislature, significant changes in the comparative strength of Texas's two major political parties, further consequences of the oil crisis of the 1980s, new developments in public education (including court-ordered changes in public school financing), painful legislative decisions on taxing and spending, the high crime rate related to drug trafficking, and the state's expensive but overcrowded prison system.

As in previous editions, many persons assisted in the preparation of the *Brief Survey*. They include journalists, newspaper editors, state and local

government personnel, librarians, and professors—especially colleagues in our own departments. The following reviewers read all or part of the typescript and provided many useful comments and suggestions, for which we are grateful:

John R. Abshire, Tarrant County Junior College—South

Sanders Anderson, Jr., Texas Southern University

Jim Case, Sul Ross State University

Frank J. Garrahan, Austin Community College, Northridge Campus

M. Theron Waddell, Galveston College

Last, we dedicate *Practicing Texas Politics: A Brief Survey*, Fourth Edition, to those Texas college and university students and instructors who, we hope, will be the chief beneficiaries of our work.

Eugene W. Jones

Joe E. Ericson

Lyle C. Brown

Robert S. Trotter, Jr.

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PRACTICING TEXAS POLITICS

A BRIEF SURVEY

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Chapter 1

The Environment of Texas Politics



THE FIRST POLITICIAN

Etta Hulme, © Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Today, as in the Stone Age depicted by cartoonist Etta Hulme, Texas politicians urge citizens to support their objectives and plans. An important difference between early Texans and those of the present, however, is the matter of numbers.

In 1990, census takers counted nearly 17 million people in Texas, so the Lone Star State has a larger population than Saudi Arabia or many other countries. But, when the first Spanish explorers viewed the Texas coast early in the sixteenth century, this region was only sparsely inhabited by American Indians (often called Native Americans). This exploration was carried out nearly 100 years before English settlers landed at Jamestown to found the colony of Virginia. In 1821, when Stephen F. Austin's English-speaking settlers entered Texas, about 7,000 persons of Spanish ancestry were already living in San Antonio, Goliad, Nacogdoches, and other communities between Louisiana and the Rio Grande. Today, in the last decade of the twentieth century, the political institutions and behavior of modern Texans bear the influence of both Anglo and Hispanic cultures, as well as the cultures of Africans, Asians, and others.

Political Behavior Patterns

The focus of this book is on *politics*, which has been described by Professor Harold Lasswell as the science of "who gets what, when, how."¹ In describing and analyzing the politics of state and local governments in Texas today, the authors have sought to help readers understand political action and to prepare them for political participation in the affairs of this state and its counties, cities, and special districts.

Government, Politics, and Public Policy

Government may be defined as a public institution with authority to allocate values in a society. In practice, values are allocated when a state or local government formulates, adopts, and implements a *public policy*, such as raising taxes in order to finance government operations or improving transportation by constructing streets and highways. Each public policy is a product of political activity that may involve both conflict and cooperation among legislators, between legislators and the governor, within the courts, and among various government agencies, lobby groups, and citizens.

Policy making involves political action intended to meet particular needs or to achieve specific objectives. For example, a state policy to promote public health by reducing or eliminating uses of certain pesticides alleged to cause cancer could be formulated by a state government agency, such as the Agricultural Resources Protection Authority, or by a nongovernmental organization like the environmentalist Sierra Club. To be adopted as public policy, the proposal would be incorporated into a bill and submitted to the Texas

Legislature by a state senator or representative. There, at committee hearings and on the floor of the Senate and the House of Representatives, the bill would be discussed and debated in the presence of lobbyists representing interest groups, journalists reporting the news, and concerned citizens. When the bill is passed by the Legislature and signed by the governor, the pesticide policy is officially adopted. Next, the new public policy must be implemented or put into operation. That responsibility might be assigned by law to the Texas Department of Agriculture or to some other government agency. Then the new policy measure may be challenged in the courts; the judiciary might uphold all or part of the legislation or might nullify it completely if it violates some provision of the Texas Constitution. Politics is the moving force that achieves public policy, which in turn determines the ultimate course to be pursued by government. Politics is also influenced by political culture.

Political Culture

The culture of a people may be defined as the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, including arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human effort, both physical and mental, that are characteristic of a community. In the United States, according to Professor Daniel Elazar, “culture patterns give each state its particular character and help determine the tone of its fundamental relationships.”² We are concerned here with *political culture*, which consists of those attitudes, habits, and general behavior patterns that shape a state’s politics and, ultimately, the making of public policy. Political culture is always in flux, with changes occurring constantly but with influences continuing over time. Today, the aggregate of behavior patterns that make Texas politics unique stems from both remote and recent experiences.

Texas Foundations and Characteristics The foundations of Texas’s political culture were laid and developed under the flags of six national governments: Spain, France, Mexico, the Republic of Texas, the Confederacy of the Civil War era, and the United States. Unlike most of the other 49 states, Texas was never a U.S. territory prior to statehood. As an independent republic, Texas was recognized by the United States, England, France, Holland, and Belgium. With a popularly elected president and congress, the republic maintained its own army and navy, operated a postal system, coined money, administered justice through its courts, and provided other governmental services.

According to Professor Elazar, the political culture of Texas is strongly individualistic and conservative. He identifies the state’s politics with economic and social conservatism, strong support of personal politics, distrust of political parties, and minimization of parties’ importance. Elazar notes that a majority of Texans are descendants of immigrants from traditionalistic southern states where conservatism, elitism, and one-party (Democratic) politics had long been entrenched. Although late-twentieth-century urbanization and industrialization, together with an influx of people from other states and countries, have been changing the culture patterns of Texas’s population, the