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An Introduction
to
**American
Government**

FIFTH EDITION



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AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

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An Introduction to American Government, Fifth Edition

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PREFACE

Politics and government are vivid and immediate to the citizen—at least to the citizen who pays attention to such matters. This is a world of current events, controversies, and crises found in the morning newspaper and on the evening television news. The president makes a speech on nuclear arms, meets with congressional leaders on the budget, leaves on a trip, or returns from one. Congressional leaders meet, speak, decide, or avoid decisions. The Supreme Court hands down a ruling on a major case. A governor takes one action; a city council takes another.

There is no shortage of information about politics. Attentive citizens can get more than they can absorb. What is in short supply is understanding: Why are things happening the way they are? Why are some decisions made and others avoided? Is the Supreme Court decision a new departure? What are its implications? Good journalism provides interpretation of the facts in the daily news; it tries to put things in perspective. But journalism sticks close to the immediate, with the goal of providing insight into the events of the day; the understanding sought is specific.

The political world of the scholar is different. The scholar seeks a more general understanding, abstracted from the specifics of a particular time and a particular place. There are many ways to seek such general knowledge: through studies with a broad historical sweep, through statistical studies of more current data, or through complex analyses using more or less formal frameworks and theories. Often this is very far from the day-to-day political world. The work of the scholar sometimes seems irrelevant to citizens or political practitioners, who want something that clarifies the real issues and situations they face. Yet is just such general scholarly understanding that can clarify the real world—indeed, its ultimate validation is in its ability to do so.

The task of an introductory textbook in American politics is to bridge the gap between scholarly studies of politics and the world of immediate political events. An introduction to American politics will fail the student if it merely repeats and elaborates on current events. The student may understand current events better but be ill prepared for the different events of tomorrow when the course has ended. On the other hand, the student is right to expect that a text will not remain at the abstract level of political

science research. The material may derive from such a source, but it must be made relevant to the world of politics. We have taken that as our task.

We present neither a single political perspective nor a single scholarly perspective. Ours is not a "point-of-view" text, interpreting American politics from a political position on the left or the right. Nor do we argue a specific scholarly theory of politics. Rather, we think of politics itself as well as the scholarly study of politics as open matters. We stress in the text that there are many different political viewpoints in America and many alternative ways of interpreting politics. We try to provide structure and clarity, but we do not provide neat packages and solutions.

In preparing the fifth edition of our textbook, we have made a number of important changes. We have tried, of course, to bring the material up to date—to reflect recent developments in American politics and society and to incorporate recent research. More fundamentally, we have gone a step further along the path we began in our last edition by giving greater attention to the basic institutions of American government and by emphasizing the many ways in which the rules of the governmental process affect the public-policy results.

Part Four of this edition, "The System In Action," has been substantially rewritten in order to expand the treatment of the institutional arrangements of the national government. We have tried to show that these institutions are occupied by real people, whether politicians, public leaders, judges, or what have you. These people have values and commitments of their own and, at the same time, their actions in office respond to the demands, needs, interests, and pressures of groups throughout the nation. Although we must separate the chapters that deal with political participation, citizen beliefs, interest groups, political parties, elections, and the mass media from those that examine the policymaking process, we have tried to emphasize the interdependence between these two broad components of "the system."

The central theme of the first editions of this book was political economy—the interaction of the political system and the socioeconomic structures of society. It remains our basic concern. It should be apparent to any reader of the daily paper that budgets and taxes and economic regulations and subsidies constitute much of the agenda of the political system and that the actions (and inactions) of government are of massive shaping effect on the economy and the society. In going about the task of revision we have tried to illustrate this basic theme and to use it to present material so that its meaning would be less that of a general truth and more that of a daily politicoeconomic reality.

In this edition we have added a chapter on the mass media (Chapter 12) so as to present more information about them and invite discussion on their operations and the role they play in the political process. We have revised and relocated two chapters. The present Chapter 6, dealing with civil liberties, we have placed next to our treatment of equality and civil rights so as to give a more integrated treatment to those topics. The present Chapter 13, an introduction to the policymaking process, is a much-revised version of its "ancestor" chapter and has been placed in front of the chapters that treat the institutions of the national government rather

than following them. The new chapter is designed to introduce and orient the student to the policy process and to emphasize that when the institutions are in action they are making policy—that is, deciding who will get what and other matters of great importance to each of us.

PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATIONS

In developing this edition we have introduced some new features. We have developed seven brief case studies of policymaking that we call “Institutions in Action.” These are not intended to give the student a comprehensive grasp of the policy areas but to illustrate, in the context of a particular policy issue, the operation of some important elements of the institutional structures of government. We have also included a set of “Profiles,” brief biographical sketches of some of the major figures, past and present, who have had especially important influences on the American polity. Finally, we have expanded our use of tables, graphs, and photographic illustrations to convey information that we think will be helpful to students seeking to understand how the American system works.

With the Fifth Edition we have made available manuals for further support for students and instructor. The *Study Guide* by Sandra L. Quinn and Freddy G. Musgrove, both of San Jacinto College, helps students to understand and review the text and provides practice tests in the form of short-answer, fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, and essay questions. The new *Instructor's Manual* and *Test Bank* are both by Larry Elowitz of Georgia College. The *Instructor's Manual* includes chapter outlines, synopses, ideas for classroom activities, and teaching suggestions. The *Test Bank* includes true/false, multiple choice, completion, and essay questions.

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In preparing this edition our partnership has expanded to three. The new material reflects this expansion, but the total result is very much a collaborative effort. We want to thank the many people who have made contributions to the fifth edition of the book. Colleagues who have provided critical comment are as follows: F. Glenn Abney, Georgia State University; Danny Adkison, Oklahoma State University; Lewis Bowman, University of South Florida; John Cabe, Tri-County Community College; Babalola Cole, Howard University; Stephen Craig, University of Florida, Gainesville; James Eisenstein, Pennsylvania State University; Larry Elowitz, Georgia College; Michael Fuller, Miami University, Oxford; Terry Gilbreth, Ohio Northern University; Walter R. Giles, Georgetown University; Emily Gill, Bradley University; William Hall, Bradley University; Richard Hoffstetter, San Diego State University; Marianne Jameson, Texas Southern University; George Kacewicz, California State University, Long Beach; Fred Mabbutt, Santa Ana College; Tom McMichael, Oscar Rose Junior College; Roseanne Mirabella, Human Resources Administration, New York (formerly of Ohio University); Robert Monson, University of Arkansas; Jim Morrow, Tulsa Junior

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Part **ONE**

THE BASIC SYSTEM

CHAPTER 1
Government and Politics in a Democracy

CHAPTER 2
The Constitutional Framework

CHAPTER 3
Federalism



The 1985 Inauguration of President Reagan

Chapter **1**

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS IN A DEMOCRACY

■ **W**e start this textbook with some very basic and difficult questions. Why do societies find it necessary to have a government? Are not governments coercive, even tyrannical at times? Do they not capture in taxes some of the hard-earned income of a population? Are they not large and often clumsy bureaucracies? Given such a list of liabilities, why have a government?

If there is a reasonable answer to the first set of questions, and this text tries to provide one, why is there so much disagreement over what governments ought to do? In short, what causes politics? Politics is commonly defined as the struggle to control the allocation of benefits and costs brought about by government policies. Using the powers of government to make things happen will seldom benefit all citizens equally. Disagreement, then, exists over who is going to benefit and who is going to pay for those benefits.

How does democracy affect government and politics in the United States? All societies have governments, and all societies have political disagreements over what their governments should do, but some societies, like that of the United States, organize their governments according to the doctrine of democracy. This doctrine calls for the active participation of all citizens in the making of laws which affect them.

While this chapter cannot tell us all that we need to know about government, politics, and democracy, it will introduce some basic ideas. These ideas will be elaborated upon when we turn to the Constitution, Congress, elections, interest groups, and other topics.

A Parable for Our Times

In a small, midwestern town there is a busy downtown area that most elementary school children cross to get from their homes to the schoolyard. This town was proud that for 17 years there had not been a single car accident involving a schoolchild. Each May the school patrol was given a special award dinner in honor of another accident-free year. Only a few citizens, those particularly active in school affairs, understood that the school patrol was trained and supervised by a retired police officer, who was paid a small salary by the school board.

One year there was a "tax revolt" in the town, and legislation was passed to reduce the property taxes by 25 percent. School authorities, like administrators of other government programs in town, had to reduce their budget. Few people realized that one of the less costly items to be cut was the salary for the retired police officer who trained the school patrol each year.

The following year was the eighteenth accident-free year, and the annual school patrol dinner was held on schedule. Due to budget reductions, hot dogs were served instead of fried chicken, but the patrol enjoyed itself as much as always.

On a gray November day the following year, two 8-year-old boys, one of them in the school patrol, had a scuffle after school. Without anyone quite sure how it happened, a delivery truck backed out of a narrow alley and ran over one of the boys. He suffered serious back injuries that would probably cripple him for life.