Stephen J. Rockwell
Peter Woll

American GOVERNMENT

★ Competition and Compromise ★

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Stephen J. Rockwell
Brandeis University

Peter Woll
Brandeis University

Boston Burr Ridge, IL Dubuque, IA Madison, WI New York San Francisco St. Louis
Bangkok Bogotá Caracas Kuala Lumpur Lisbon London Madrid Mexico City
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AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: COMPETITION AND COMPROMISE

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Preface

American Government: Competition and Compromise combines the best aspects of traditional introductory textbooks with a timely new chapter progression and versatile new teaching tools. The book covers all of the familiar topics of American government and politics in a manner designed to capture and hold students' interest by building on their experience, by offering brief, provocative readings set off in boxes and tied closely to the concepts in the text, and by offering text-based assignments designed to serve as the basis for short papers, class discussions, and an understanding of the American system as a coherent whole.

THEME

Competition and compromise lie at the heart of American government. This theme offers students a realistic understanding of the key dynamics that sustain and drive American political life. Further, because competition and compromise are such fundamental and prevalent parts of American government, this text provides a ready foundation for integrating the newest issues and events into the classroom.

CHAPTERS

American Government: Competition and Compromise is distinguished by its timely and innovative chapter progression.

Part One examines Americans and politics: Chapter 1 covers the media, Chapter 2 examines interest groups, Chapter 3 looks at political parties, and Chapter 4 focuses on elections, campaigns, and voting.

Opening the book with examination of the news media and political participation in America has significant advantages over the more traditional method of starting with the Constitution and founding principles. First, the chapter progression of *American Government: Competition and Compromise* appeals to today's students and their interests from the outset, encouraging them to become careful and informed observers of the news—habits that will benefit their understanding of politics and government as they move through the book.

More importantly, though, this chapter progression enables *American Government: Competition and Compromise* to cover the media far more thoroughly and with better integration than traditional textbooks. Chapter 1 examines the competition and compromise involved in gathering and presenting news—topics often excluded from traditional texts. The relationship of media coverage to other aspects of the system like campaigns and elections, policymaking, and presidential leadership are then integrated throughout the book where appropriate, instead of being relegated to an isolated chapter on the media. In short, *American Government: Competition and Compromise* covers more issues related to the news media and better integrates that material throughout the chapters on political processes and institutions—and it does so in a chapter progression that immediately captures students' attention and interest.

The remainder of *American Government: Competition and Compromise* covers all of the important and familiar topics involved in introductory textbooks; this is not a textbook about the media and politics alone. Interest groups, parties, campaigns, elections, and voting are covered in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, rounding out Part One by offering students a thorough understanding of the diversity and complexity of participation in American political life.

Part Two turns to the foundation and principles of American government, with Chapter 5 centering on the Constitution and Chapter 6 addressing civil liberties and civil rights. Chapter 5 highlights the competitive design established by the framers at the Constitutional Convention and the continuing relevance of their efforts to promote competition and encourage compromise in American government. Chapter 6 addresses the inevitable competition over the meaning of constitutional principles, and the difficulty of forging compromises when fundamental principles are at stake. Students who have become familiar with the diversity and complexity of American politics covered in Part One will be in an excellent position to understand and appreciate the framers' difficult task as well as their remarkable success.

Part Three covers the institutions of American government. Chapter 7 focuses on the bureaucracy, offering students an initial understanding of the bureaucracy's powers and limitations in a competitive system. This gives students a foundation for understanding the main branches of government and the ways in which the bureaucracy often stands at the center of institutional competition and compromise. Chapter 8 looks at the presidency, highlighting the diverse and often contradictory demands Americans make on that office. Chapter 9 examines Congress and the competition and compromise involved in reelection, lawmaking, and oversight. Chapter 10 centers on the courts, with attention to the competing interests and judicial compromises that surround the activities of the federal judiciary.

FEATURES

American Government: Competition and Compromise features many innovative teaching tools designed to enhance classroom participation and integrate assignments with the text itself.

Discussion Boxes and **BriefCase Boxes** throughout the book support the main text with provocative readings and deeper analysis of examples illustrating important points; these boxes are closely integrated with the main text. The selections are brief and can be read quickly, making them ideal for in-class reading and discussion. Each box also includes an introductory note and a series of questions designed as a foundation for overnight assignments, short essays, or pop quizzes.

Scholar Boxes throughout the text link critical ideas in political science to important scholars, encouraging students to associate certain concepts with particular authors and researchers. Examples include "Fenno: Home Style," "Heclo: Issue Networks," and "Neustadt: The Power to Persuade."

Zip Boxes provide information at-a-glance on a wide variety of topics, including election and voting data, the growing prominence of thinktanks, campaign finance rules and abuses, and the committee system in Congress.

Each chapter concludes with two assignment features. An **Overnight Assignment** links a short task, like gathering information from the Internet or from the news, to the themes and concepts discussed in the chapter. **Long-Term Integrated Assignments** at the end of each chapter create a connected series of assignments designed to illustrate the ways in which diverse aspects of American politics relate to each other and form a coherent governing system. Students follow a particular news source, interest group, and issue throughout the book; by focusing on a specific case, they see how participation, principles, and institutions relate to each other in the political process. These assignments can serve as the basis for term papers, essays on midterms and finals, and other class projects.

Other Important Features

- Each chapter's introduction concludes with a "Bottom Line" feature summarizing the chapter's themes and concepts, providing a heads-up introduction to important points and also a convenient focus for review.
- Websites listed in the book's margins link concepts and ideas to information available on the Internet. Many of the feature boxes and discussions in the main text address the relationship of the Internet to American politics and government in areas like voting over the Internet, political parties and congressional "home style" on the web, and the effects of rapidly changing technologies on judicial review.
- Names of important scholars and political figures are set off by underlining to alert students to the importance of individuals in American politics and to provide for easy reference and review of concepts linked with particular individuals. This feature takes advantage of the familiar format for

Internet hyperlinks, which have made the underlined word stand out as an important path to further information.

- Each chapter includes a list of authors and sources for further research. Rather than list only specific works, we have supplemented our bibliographic lists with short lists of prominent scholars in specific fields. This feature helps students identify authors whose body of work is relevant to chapter topics, and it helps students pursue electronic database searches to uncover multiple works by important authors.
- Top Ten lists from *The Late Show with David Letterman* and similar entries update the concept of political humor, replacing traditional cartoons with contemporary political commentary.
- The text and boxes include discussion and data from the 2000 election, and so *American Government Competition and Compromise* is up-to-date and relevant for classes in the post-Clinton era.

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Introduction

Competition is good.

Competition drives American politics; every public debate in America involves competing interests, values, and viewpoints. The American system of government promotes participation, free speech, the organization of individuals into groups—and it works purposefully to multiply the diversity of ideas, interests, and attitudes coursing through American public affairs. Are corporate interests corrupting the news media? Are special interests taking over Congress, infesting the halls of the Capitol with selfish demands and tainted campaign contributions? Are American political parties too weak to govern? Have we delegated too much power to an unelected federal bureaucracy? Can the institutions of government remain relevant in the new century? All of these questions are answered by competing interests with competing values and viewpoints, and rarely does a yes or no answer satisfy; rarely does *any* answer satisfy for very long.

Because of the diversity of competing attitudes and interests involved in public affairs, public policy emerges as an endless series of compromises. By compromise, we mean accepting and being satisfied, even if only temporarily, with something other than an ideal resolution of political competition. The resolution might involve something less than somebody wanted, or maybe just something different. At every stage of the political process in America, individuals and organized interests are brought to compromise solutions by the nature of the constitutional system. The system demands negotiation, bargaining, trade-offs, and a constant reevaluation of interests, goals, and objectives. The system also holds out the promise of future efforts to achieve goals, making compromises safe way-stations—and making government a never-ending story of adaptations, ad hoc solutions, temporary setbacks, and forward-looking hopes.

Competition is good. The framers confidently built a governing system that promotes the competition of interests and that checks and balances the exercise of power. With fragmented power and the participation of a large and

diverse public, compromise becomes the road to progress—and the dominance of compromise is why public debate never ends, because at any given time the system loves the middle-of-the-road solution. Competitors immediately begin to pursue better results, in the firm belief that the last compromise can be improved upon.

Competition and compromise create perpetual motion. For if the framers settled the question of whether competition is good, the question that drives American politics and reveals the heart of American affairs is always this: Are the compromises good enough?

THEMES

Competition and compromise occur among, and within, the many different pieces of our political system. This book examines these pieces and the ways in which they interact. In the big picture, people, groups, and interests compete in the political system. That system provides rules and procedures designed to ensure that most interests will get something that they want, even if no interest gets everything that it wants—the core of compromise. Government is the mechanism that orders the competition, enforces the rules, and adjusts procedures to adapt to new circumstances. Aspects of government are powerful elements of this system, so the government itself is often an important competitor.

Each chapter in this text examines how a piece of our political system is involved in the competition for power and influence in governing. Each chapter also examines the ways in which competition takes place *within* individual parts of the system, such as when representatives in Congress compete with each other. Throughout the book, we will also look at the ways in which our governing system encourages compromise. Current and historical examples demonstrate how and why people and interests compromise in order to achieve at least some of their goals. We will see how the media, organized political groups, and individual voters compromise when they participate in the political system.

Throughout this book, the authors consider competition and compromise to be valued elements of American government. Competition and compromise stabilize the political system, they encourage participation by interested parties, and they lead to sensible, if incremental, progress. The authors strive to present the system as a balanced, fair, and ultimately successful mechanism for integrating diverse viewpoints and for producing workable solutions in pursuit of our national goals.

Yet deeper questions lurk behind this point of view, questions that are easily overlooked. Americans worry that the compromises we make are not good enough—that we should be more outraged at violations of our trust and ethics, that we should do more to protect civil rights, that we should do more to ensure the integrity of our nation's public life. Americans ask whether practical and political compromises on issues and policies compromise our values and ideals, and whether compromising too easily leads to complacency—a

willingness to settle too quickly and for too little. Many careful and insightful observers, for example, fear that current trends—such as the rising cost of political campaigns, the power of special interest groups, and the decline of political parties—threaten the very foundations of our civic community. These observers worry that the competition in American politics isn't fair; they worry that convenient compromises subvert the pursuit of our ideals.

Compromises create risks. In particular, compromising on fundamental issues can obscure dangerous threats to our polity. Too much willingness to compromise risks dampening the spirit of reform and the political idealism that have inspired this country for more than two centuries. The cases and discussions in this book are designed to provide a foundation for evaluating the results of our system of competition and compromise.

MAJOR SECTIONS AND CHAPTER OUTLINE

Part One of this book examines the relationship of the individual American citizen to American government. The media, interest groups, political parties, and electoral behaviors, such as voting, are some of the most important vehicles through which people compete for power and influence in government. These four aspects of American public life all have important effects on what citizens know about public affairs, and also on what happens in government. Chapter 1 centers on the media, the most fundamental linkage between people and government, and highlights the ways in which participants in public affairs try to bend the media to serve their interests. Chapter 2 focuses on interest groups, a critically important way in which people and organized interests participate in government. Chapter 3 examines American political parties and their changing relationship to the public and government. Chapter 4 addresses electoral campaigns and voting, still the cornerstones of our American system.

Part Two of this book looks at the goals of the American political system and at the careful effort by our nation's founders to understand and control the competition inherent in American society. These goals start with the Declaration of Independence: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Chapter 5 focuses on the framers' efforts to design a governing mechanism to secure these grand principles, an effort that culminated in the United States Constitution. The laws and court decisions that have followed the Constitution, and the amendments we have made to the Constitution itself, are a fundamental expression of our nation's never-ending effort to realize our ideals in changing circumstances. Chapter 6 looks closely at the protection and promotion of civil liberties and civil rights, the true heart of America's effort to realize its ideals in the world of practical politics and competing interests.

Part Three of this book analyzes the major institutions of our governing system. By the time we reach these chapters, we will have seen the diverse interests involved in American politics and some of the ways in which they compete; we will have seen the design that promotes competition, and the development of the rules that govern the competition. In Part Three, we will examine how the government itself contributes to the system, not only ordering and enforcing the competition but also taking part itself. Chapter 7 looks

at the administrative bureaucracy, where much of the work of designing and implementing public policies takes place, and the target of competition among the three major constitutional branches of government. These major branches are the subject of the book's final three chapters. Chapter 8 analyzes the executive branch and the office of the presidency; chapter 9 focuses on Congress; and chapter 10 highlights the important role of the federal judiciary.

Together, these ten chapters provide an introduction to the American governing system, its inherently competitive nature, and the role of compromise in resolving differences and moving the nation forward.

STRUCTURE: WHY COVER THE MEDIA FIRST?

A defining feature of *American Government: Competition and Compromise* is that we address the media, interest groups, parties, and voting in the first part of the book. Most introductions to American government begin with the Constitution and the "rules of the game," and follow with an examination of how people and interests act under those rules. The problem with this approach is that American government did not start with rules; it didn't even start with principles. It started with people who had differing ideas and who wanted different things from public affairs and politics. Public affairs were competitive long before the Declaration of Independence defined our ideals, and long before the Constitution established a governing system to try to secure those ideals. Even today, our efforts to put our ideals into practice and to uphold the rights and principles of the Constitution *follow* from how we understand and explain those ideals. These understandings derive from the diversity that has always characterized the American people and their interests.

American government, then, starts with American people and their desires. Government is secondary, designed to secure these ends. Thus it is that this book turns first to how we perceive our world, how we as citizens and as members of groups interact, and how we compete to get what we want, for ourselves and for others. Only after understanding the competing forces in play in American public life will we be prepared to understand the genius of the Constitution's design and the success with which it has ordered and controlled competition in America for more than two centuries. And only then, with a better understanding of our competing interests and of the system designed to manage that competition, will we be ready to appreciate the extraordinarily complex demands we make on our government and the remarkable success of our institutions.

The fact that we deal first with the media does not mean that this book is about the media and American government alone, nor does it mean that we believe the media to be the most important element in today's politics. We address the media first so that we can build on readers' familiarity with the media, and also so we can address at the outset popular misconceptions about how the media function in American politics. Chapter 1 clarifies the media's importance and how media dynamics affect the news we receive about government; we build on these principles throughout the other chapters. Throughout the book, we will see that the media are an important source of

information and an indispensable link facilitating communication among citizens and government, but their effects on what issues government addresses and how those issues are addressed, as well as their influences on political activity like voting behavior, are often overestimated. Textbooks that relegate discussion of the media in politics to a single, isolated chapter in the back of the book unwisely delay examination of what is, and what is not, important about the media in contemporary American politics.

Our chapter progression also allows us to build on other aspects of American government that might be familiar to readers: interest groups, political parties, and voting. After reviewing and examining themes and scholarship on these topics, we are able to discuss the Constitution and governing institutions later in the book when readers have a more thorough understanding of the numerous competing interests involved in American government—the interests that those rules and institutions seek to organize.

AND WHY COVER THE THREE MAIN BRANCHES LAST?

As citizens, we are familiar with the three main branches of government and the ways in which the Constitution separates and distributes power among them. In short, the founding fathers structured the American system of government to prevent any one person, or even any one part of the government, from gaining too much power. In its familiar conception, then, the Congress makes the laws; the president executes and enforces the laws; and the courts interpret the laws. Power, though, overlaps: though the president is commander in chief of the nation's military, for example, Congress allocates the money that keeps the military functioning. Though Congress can pass bills, the president can veto them and thus prevent them from becoming law, at least temporarily. Though federal judges interpret laws, those judges are appointed by the president and approved by the Senate. In each of these cases, no single branch of the government can assume all the power; in each case, power is shared by several interests.

The executive, legislature, and judiciary are the three main branches of government in the constitutional design. It may seem strange, then, that these critical areas are covered in the *last* three chapters of this book. There are several reasons for this. First, the functioning of these branches is very complex. The foregoing outline of the general duties of the three branches is true in a sense, but it is also vastly oversimplified, given the amount of overlap among the branches and the complexity of how these branches actually function. But we can use this basic framework to help us understand the other pieces of the puzzle, and then return to the major branches after we have examined the other forces in play.

Second, the branches' complexity is a response to the diversity of the American people and to the innumerable demands we make on government. We need to understand how people relate to each other and how they relate to the government before we can fully understand the genius inherent in our constitutional design. Only then can we appreciate why the major branches

have become so complex and why the tasks they face in running our government are so difficult.

Finally, just as the media—and misconceptions about the media—have become so prevalent in American politics that it makes sense to discuss the media's influence up front and throughout the text, the administrative bureaucracy is now so fundamental to the functioning of the American government, and such a point of contention, that it makes sense to understand the potential and limitations of the bureaucracy before we discuss the branches that seek to exert power and influence over administration. In short, understanding the bureaucracy is now a prerequisite to understanding American governing institutions. The limitations of the presidency, the complexity of demands made on Congress, and the influence of the federal judiciary on public policy all come together in our public bureaucracies. Studying the nature of public administration in chapter 7, before we address the three main branches, helps clarify the strengths and weaknesses—and the power and influence—of the traditional branches of government in today's politics.

THE BOOK'S BOTTOM LINES

The complexity and fragmentation of the American political system makes it very difficult to discuss that system, because learning about one piece almost always requires some knowledge about some other piece. How can one understand how interest groups function within Congress, without knowing about Congress? Alternatively, how can one understand Congress without an understanding of how groups exert pressure on that institution?

As an introduction to the themes we will develop in each chapter, here are ten core aspects of the American governing system. These "bottom lines" capture the chapters' themes, and one shows up in each chapter's introduction. Together, they summarize the major ideas of this book.

1. The news media are a critically important political institution; much of what we know and learn about politics and government comes to us through the news media. Competing expectations complicate evaluations of the media's role and how well they perform in the public sphere. Moreover, the media business is very competitive, raising questions about how consolidation among media organizations affects the information available to the public. The media try to satisfy professional goals and the demands of the marketplace by making practical compromises, which affect what and how information is delivered.

2. Interest groups are a normal part of our political system, enabling people and organizations with shared interests to be more effective competitors in public affairs. Interest groups compete with each other using a variety of resources, and they build coalitions and make compromises to further their agendas. Overreliance on interest group politics is risky if public policy is driven only by selfish bargaining, if groups do not represent interests fairly, and if some groups come to have undue influence on elections

and government. Compromises encourage interest group behavior while trying to control the threats groups pose to the system.

3. The dynamics of American politics perpetuate a system dominated by two major political parties. In the electorate, political parties work to organize interests, reconcile conflicts, and win elections; in government, parties help coordinate action, order government activity, and compete for power and influence. Serious problems threaten the parties' ability to achieve these objectives successfully, and American parties are notoriously "weak." They are forced to make compromises in the electorate that dilute their positions on issues and risk alienating members with strong beliefs; they are forced to make compromises in government that limit their ability to coordinate government policies and to control individuals' behavior. Despite predictions of their demise, though, political parties have adapted to new circumstances and continue to be an important and influential part of our political system.

4. Campaigns and elections are the core of regular public competition in America, providing stability as well as the opportunity for peaceful and regular change in our leaders and in the direction of government. Expensive campaigns driven by candidate-centered organizations and intimately related to the media characterize modern elections. Successful candidates forge effective compromises between their own goals, the demands of the media, and the necessities of fundraising. Voters and votes are the prizes of these competitions, with numerous factors influencing voter access to the ballot, voter turnout, and voter choices.

5. The Constitution, and the political ideas of the eighteenth century, are the keys to today's American government. The Constitution is a unique and brilliant attempt to realize the best and highest values, while protecting people from the worst and most self-interested behavior. Optimism arises from eighteenth-century philosophy and anchors deep in the principles of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The institutional structures organized by the Constitution are designed to protect these values by fragmenting power and by setting myriad countervailing forces against one another. The framers accepted that people act in self-interested ways, and they carefully anticipated the worst actions by the worst people and sought to protect government and the people from themselves. At its core, the Constitution turns a philosophy of humanity into a complex and enormously successful framework that institutionalizes competition and encourages compromise.

6. The Higher Law, the common law, and the Constitution create civil liberties and civil rights that stand above the will of political majorities. The Supreme Court defines liberties and rights through constitutional interpretation, and it overrules legislation that infringes too far upon civil liberties and rights. The Court recognizes that individual liberties and rights are not always absolute: legitimate governmental needs can require restraints on individual freedoms, because civil societies and their governments have a justifiable interest in protecting themselves and the commu-

nity against certain individual actions. Efforts to weigh competing rights and interests complicate the protection of civil liberties and civil rights, and lead to some inconsistent, evolving, and even startling results.

7. Congress delegates significant authority to administrative agencies and executive departments; these organizations combine important legislative, executive, and judicial powers. The bureaucracy's extensive influence over how the government designs and administers policies and programs encourages the three main branches of government to compete with each other and with interest groups to influence the behavior of individual agencies. Agencies utilize their own competitive defenses to protect their autonomy. All of this competition has particular effects on the nature of American administrative and regulatory agencies. Finally, the actions and the efficiency of public agencies are complicated by the conflicting demands we make on their behavior.

8. Americans have high hopes and expectations for their presidents. At the founding, compromises regarding presidential selection aimed to satisfy diverse interests and create an office with a measure of independence and autonomy—but one that would nevertheless be checked in the exercise of its power. For the most part, the system has worked: today the office enjoys broad powers under the Constitution, the potential for energy, and a position of visibility and leadership without parallel in the American system. Yet other forces continue to limit the president's potential: Congress and the bureaucracy have their own interests and their own constituents, and they must be persuaded—not commanded—to work with the president toward his objectives. Leadership is more about bargaining and compromise with these forces than it is about striking out in new directions and hoping that the nation follows. Finally, presidents confront a fundamental dilemma in satisfying demands that the president serve simultaneously as the leader of the entire nation and as the leader of partisan initiatives.

9. Congress is the cornerstone of American government; its roles in representation, lawmaking, and overseeing government activities involve virtually every aspect of American politics. Congress's authority is expansive, a function of enumerated constitutional powers and helpful rulings from the Supreme Court, yet it is also checked and balanced by other institutions and by its own bicameral structure. Members strive for reelection, especially early in their careers, and for power and policy influence within Congress. In many ways, the activities and structure of the modern Congress are designed to maximize members' ability to meet these goals. Congress's lawmaking and oversight responsibilities endlessly multiply competition and the need for compromise across Capitol Hill, creating an open public policy process that produces change only incrementally.

10. With the courts as the venue for so many political disputes, the judiciary is as important, and sometimes more important, to the political process than the president or Congress. The courts can defer to or accommodate the compromises reached in the regular political process, or replace those compromises with judicially made compromises that weigh interests

differently. The role of the federal judiciary and its considerable independence in a competitive system become important aspects of American politics. In turn, the means by which judges receive and decide cases, and their political role in policy making, place the courts squarely within—and not outside—the American system of competition and compromise.

* * *

With that introductory outline of *American Government: Competition and Compromise,* we turn first to one of the most familiar and frequently misunderstood aspects of today's politics: the media.

Brief Contents