

Public Administration

Understanding Management,
Politics, and Law
in the Public Sector

Second Edition

David H. Rosenbloom

Public Administration

UNDERSTANDING MANAGEMENT,
POLITICS, AND LAW
IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

SECOND EDITION

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RANDOM HOUSE
New York

To Ricky, our all-time favorite bureaucrat

Second Edition

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Preface to the Second Edition

When Deborah Goldman and I began working on the first edition of this book, we wanted to provide a useful framework for organizing the field of public administration, to produce a work that would be comprehensive, informative, and above all intellectually engaging. We started with some general ideas, a rudimentary outline, and a supportive publisher. The response has been gratifying. In 1987, *Public Administration Review* published a review, by Eleanor V. Laudicina, of seven recent public administration texts.¹ It is a pleasure to quote her at length:

Rosenbloom presents a simple but powerful conceptualization of contemporary public administration. Of all the new texts, Rosenbloom's articulates the most lucid, coherent, and comprehensive framework for understanding the current state of public administration as a discipline and as a practice. He takes the constitutional separation of powers as a starting point and examines every aspect of the field as it is influenced by political, managerial, and legal demands and by the simultaneous interplay of the three. The distinctive framework effectively illuminates the fundamental conflicts, strains, and tensions within the field and facilitates organizing and presenting the substantive material.

Laudicina went on to note that the last section of the book "attempts to restore to a central focus some fundamental values" by reemphasizing the "importance of the public in public administration with an examination of the inevitable tensions between individual and state," by stressing "the moral responsibility of the administrator to uphold individual rights," and by considering "in detail the concept of democratic constitutionalism as a core for the profession." Overall, she found that the book "offers a clear focus and moral imperative for the prospective administrator. . . ."

Professor Laudicina also picked up on a point that requires some clarification: "If the text has a weakness, it lies in the author's effort to conclude many of the chapters with evidence of an emerging synthesis of the three competing values." The discussions of synthesizing the managerial, political, and legal perspectives on public administration should be taken as suggestive and illustrative of how these views might be usefully combined. They are not intended to present convincing evidence that the competing approaches have been synthesized in practice. The main objective of these sections is to find useful common ground in the three perspectives, lest, in our thinking, they remain forever separate and in conflict. The second edition is clearer than the first on these points.

A word should be said about the framework itself. We view it as grounded,

for the United States, in the Constitution's definition and partial separation of executive, legislative, and judicial powers and roles. The Constitution provides each branch with a different focus: the executive is charged with executing the law, the legislature is a representative body, the judiciary adjudicates conflicting legal claims. But public administration must often combine these functions. It is a means of coordinating and bridging the separation of powers.

The idea that public administration includes executive, legislative, and judicial functions goes back at least as far as Alexander Hamilton's discussion in *Federalist* No. 72. He noted that "the administration of government, in its largest sense, comprehends all the operations of the body politic, whether legislative, executive, or judiciary," though he went on to emphasize that "in its most usual and perhaps in its most precise signification, it is limited to executive details" and falls within the province of the executive branch.² Leonard White's *Introduction to the Study of Public Administration* displayed interest in developing the larger Hamiltonian conception:

Students of government are familiar with the traditional division of governmental activities into the legislative, executive, and judicial. It is important to understand that the work of the administration involves all three types of activity. . . . Administration more and more tends in fact to reach into the established fields of legislation and adjudication, raising important problems. . . .³

More recently, Robert Fried's *Performance in American Bureaucracy* presented a related discussion of three "basic performance ethics" in public administration: a work ethic, a democratic ethic, and a legal ethic.⁴

Public Administration: Understanding Management, Politics, and Law in the Public Sector builds upon this intellectual legacy by developing each of the perspectives further and emphasizing their relationships to one another in all the major areas of public administration in the United States. As Professor Laudicina put it, in words too kind not to reproduce, "Rosenbloom's skillful use of his tripartite framework enlivens the material and sharpens the political, managerial, and legal perspectives on the evolution and current status of public administration."

Given the favorable response to the first edition, I have cast the second in a fundamentally similar mold. It is divided into the same four parts. Part One introduces the book's intellectual framework and discusses the development of public administration in the United States. Part Two considers public administration's core areas: organization, personnel, budgeting, decision making, and policy analysis and evaluation. Part Three analyzes regulatory administration as an illustration of the interplay of the three perspectives. Part Four focuses on the "public" and the "public interest" in public administration.

But the book has been strengthened considerably throughout. It has been updated to include more on the Reagan presidency's impacts on public administration; more attention is paid to state and local administration; and much new material has been added. More specifically, Chapter 3, on federalism and

intergovernmental relations, now includes a better discussion of different types of federalism and a section entitled “Relationships among Local Governments.” Chapter 4, on organization, has been substantially improved by a more comprehensive discussion of the systems approach and by the presentation of new material on the environmental, ecological, network, agency-theory, and matrix approaches. A section on performance appraisal has been added to Chapter 5, on public personnel administration and collective bargaining. Chapter 6, on budgeting, addresses the impact of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act and the pervasive concern with the federal deficit. Chapter 7, concerning decision making, now includes a discussion of “grid-regulations” as an administrative decision-making tool. Material on “utilizing evaluation” appears in Chapter 8, on policy analysis and evaluation. A stronger framework for analyzing regulatory policy, regulatory reform, and administration has been incorporated into Chapter 9. Part Four, like the rest of the book, has been updated in a variety of ways. The second edition is accompanied by a revised instructor’s manual, which includes a test bank.

Turning the first edition into the second made me more aware of how much change has occurred in some areas of public administration—especially political-career administrative relationships, federalism, budgeting, and regulatory and “third-party” administration. But it is difficult to assess the long-term significance of many of these changes. California’s Proposition 13, hailed as revolutionary back in 1978, turned out to have only a limited impact generally. The “Reagan revolution” is already considered by many to be “one that wasn’t.”⁵ Deregulation has been far more limited than seemed likely to be the case in the early 1980s. Historically, the administrative state seems so universal and entrenched that the movement toward “privatization” could be considered merely a limited expedition into a backwater. But it, and other changes, may actually be fundamental. The future will definitely bring interesting times to public administration, but can we say more?

John Chubb, of the Brookings Institution, has given us a useful metaphor in likening the administrative state to a “fat cell” (which is far better than the cancer as which bureaucracy is so often portrayed!).⁶ A fat cell will shrink when it is deprived of nourishment, but it will not disappear. It will always seek to be fed and will expand almost continuously when it is able to do so. Chubb argues that the institutional structure of the administrative state acts in a similar way. It can be put on a diet and forced to shrink, but its basic structure remains intact, and it will grow when the opportunity is present. One can point to relationships between legislative committees and administrative bureaus and to those between local administration and federal agencies as examples of institutional arrangements that have been constrained, but perhaps not fundamentally altered, during the Reagan years. As our discussion of public administration and the public in Chapter 10 indicates, there is strong public support, which may be nourished in the future, for *expansion* of the government’s role in several areas of social life. The second edition reflects the caution of the fat cell perspective. We hope that there will be a third edition, and we will know more by then.

1. Eleanor V. Laudicina, "A Thousand Flowers Blooming: Recent Texts in Public Administration," *Public Administration Review*, 47 (May/June 1987): 272–275.
2. *The Federalist Papers*, ed. by Clinton Rossiter (New York: Mentor, 1961), p. 435.
3. Leonard D. White, *Introduction to the Study of Public Administration* (New York: Macmillan, 1926), chap. 1, as reprinted in Jay Shafritz and Albert Hyde, eds., *Classics of Public Administration*, 2d ed. (Chicago: Dorsey, 1987), pp. 58–59.
4. Robert C. Fried, *Performance in American Bureaucracy* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976), pp. iv–v.
5. Peter Kilborn, "Where the Reagan Revolution Went Awry," *New York Times*, November 8, 1987, sec. 4, p. 1.
6. John Chubb, "Centralization, Federalism, and the Constitution: An Institutional Perspective," presented at the conference, The Constitution and the American Political Process, University of Illinois, December 6–8, 1987, Urbana.

Preface to the First Edition

Public Administration: Understanding Management, Politics, and Law in the Public Sector appears sixty years after the publication of the first major American public administration textbook, Leonard D. White's *Introduction to the Study of Public Administration* (1926). White viewed public administration as "the heart of the problem of modern government."¹ He tried not only to explain and cover his subject matter comprehensively but also to frame the discipline of public administration and its discourse. I have sought to remain within the tradition of public administration texts begun by White. *Public Administration: Understanding Management, Politics, and Law in the Public Sector* agrees with White that public administration is central to modern government. It also presents an intellectual framework that can be a device for developing a deep and comprehensive understanding of contemporary public administration in all its complexity. I believe that this framework can provide a basis for further fruitful discourse and development in the discipline and practice of public administration. Ironically—but not really surprisingly—the most succinct description of the intellectual framework employed here is Dwight Waldo's, rather than my own. With reference to my essay introducing the framework,² Waldo remarked:

. . . David Rosenbloom has set forth the structure of the problem before us. For each of the three constitutional branches, he points out, there is a body of doctrine, set of values, collection of instruments, and repertoire of procedures. For the executive branch this "cluster" is administrative, managerial, bureaucratic, and the emphasis is upon effectiveness and efficiency. For the legislative branch the cluster is political and policy making and the emphasis is upon the values of representativeness and responsiveness. For the judicial branch the cluster is legal, and the emphasis is on constitutional integrity on one side and substantive and procedural protections for individuals on the other.

Realistically our public administration does consist of varying mixtures of these three approaches or clusters. It is not just undesirable, it is impossible to narrow the concerns of public administration to any one of them. Our task is to find the proper way to put the three together.³

These clusters (I call them *approaches* or *perspectives*) are an outgrowth of the constitutional separation of powers; they are inherent in our political culture and institutions. As public administration is central to contemporary American government, these approaches are central to our contemporary public administration.

Waldo called this framework, "both an excellent analysis and an excellent

prescription.”⁴ *Public Administration: Understanding Management, Politics, and Law in the Public Sector* engages the task of putting the three approaches together. I hope the reader will find this effort worthwhile and participate in it. Together we may be able to help resolve the problem of modern government; certainly we can improve our understanding and practice of public administration.

The book is divided into four parts. Part One introduces the book’s intellectual framework and discusses the development of public administration in the United States. Part Two considers public administration’s core functions: organization, personnel, budgeting, decision making, and policy analysis and evaluation. Each of these areas is analyzed from the perspectives of management, politics, and law. Efforts are made to synthesize these three perspectives with regard to each core function. Part Three analyzes regulatory administration as an illustration of the interplay of management, politics, and law in the public sector. Part Four focuses on the place of the “public” and the “public interest” in public administration. Chapters are devoted to public administration and the public, public administration and democratic constitutionalism, and accountability and ethics. The concluding chapter is devoted to the prospects for building a new “administrative culture.”

The book is accompanied by an instructor’s manual, which includes a test bank.

In many respects, *Public Administration: Understanding Management, Politics, and Law in the Public Sector* differs from other texts in the field. It addresses the complexity of public administration in theory and practice. It provides a comprehensive intellectual framework. It emphasizes *understanding* public administration in its presentation of information, description, theory, and interpretation. It is an ambitious book. I hope you find it rewarding.

1. Leonard D. White, *Introduction to the Study of Public Administration* (New York: Macmillan, 1926), Preface.
2. David H. Rosenbloom, “Public Administrative Theory and the Separation of Powers,” *Public Administration Review*, 43 (May/June 1983), pp. 219–227.
3. Brack Brown and Richard J. Stillman, “A Conversation with Dwight Waldo: An Agenda for Future Reflections,” *Public Administration Review*, 45 (July/August 1985), pp. 463–464.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 464.

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A book of this scope can generate intellectual and professional debts too numerous to acknowledge fully. The second edition rests upon the first and continues to be informed by those who were acknowledged in the earlier volume. But special thanks are again due to Bertrand Lummus of Random House, Inc., whose enthusiasm, encouragement, and support continue to be a source of inspiration. Mark Emmert, Ralph Shangraw, and David Nachmias generously assisted me with the revisions of Chapters 4, 7, and 8, respectively. The revisions also benefited from several anonymous reviews. The Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, provided an excellent environment in which to complete the second edition. Sole responsibility for any shortcomings the book may contain remains with the author.

D. H. R.
Syracuse, N.Y.

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