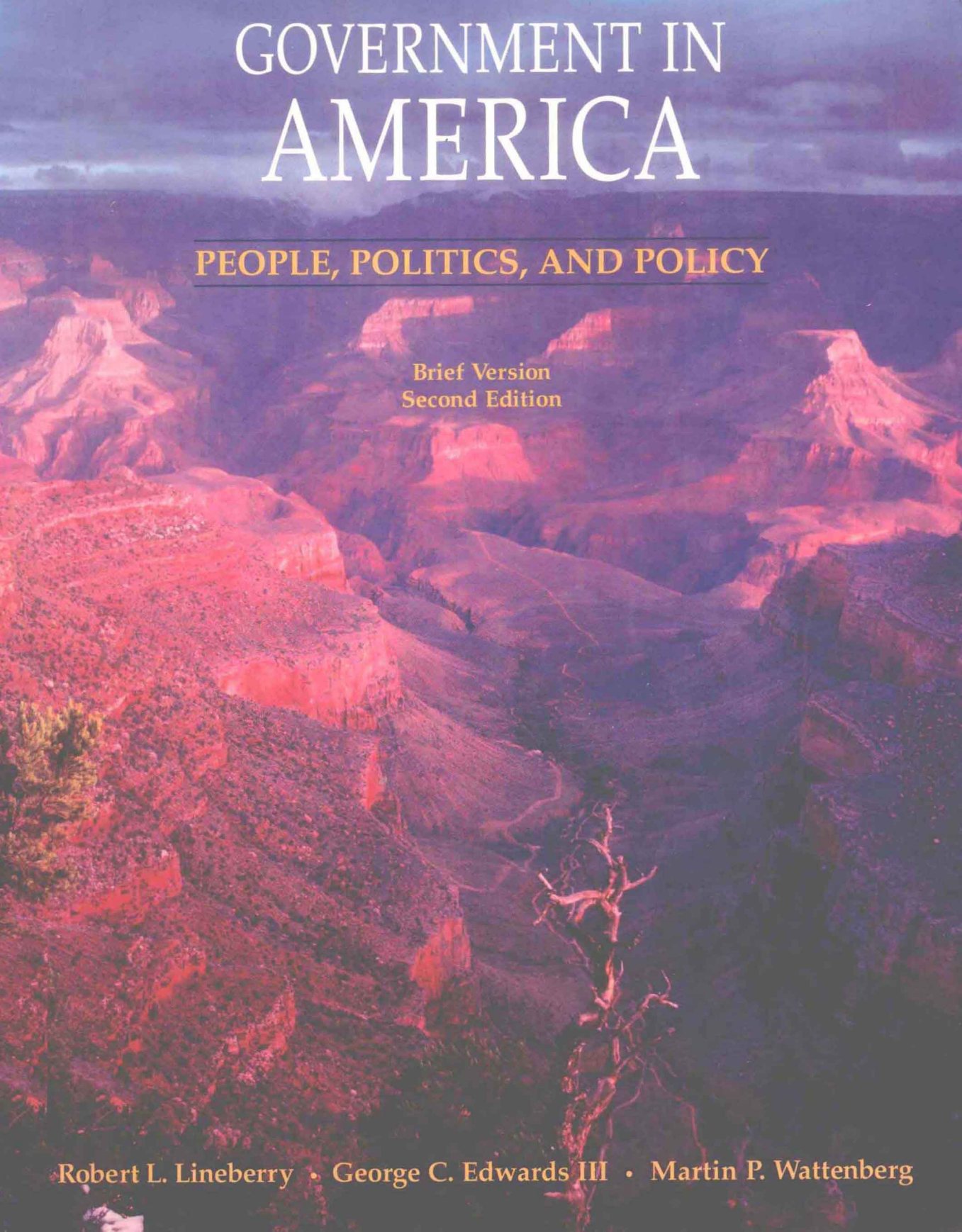
GOVERNMENT IN AMERICA

PEOPLE, POLITICS, AND POLICY

Brief Version
Second Edition



Robert L. Lineberry • George C. Edwards III • Martin P. Wattenberg

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To

our Introduction to American Government students

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PREFACE

Since 1980, *Government in America* has been widely used in courses on American government. This has been very gratifying, and in this brief version we have retained the qualities that have proven themselves in the classroom.

The job of a text is to help the instructor teach well. It should, first, attract the interest of students. Second, it should convey ideas and evidence to support those ideas, in order to provide a basic structure on which a good teacher can base a course of instruction. We, the authors, have over sixty years of experience among us teaching American government, and we have learned to present this complex subject in an engaging and understandable fashion.

A brief edition should include the essential information students require to understand American government and politics, as well as a framework with which to interpret this information. Although *Government in America Brief Version* has abridged the material in the full-length edition, it retains both the crucial information and thematic structure of the original.

This edition of *Government in America* continues to adopt a policy approach to American government. We feel that the principal reason for studying politics is to study the policies governments produce, and our discussion of politics is tied to the central question of "What difference does it make?" This focus engages students' interest and stimulates consideration of the most important aspects of governing. This approach was fairly unusual when introduced in the early editions, but today many other texts follow our lead.

In addition to a policy focus, two important themes run throughout the book: democracy and the scope of government. Each chapter ends with specific sections relating these themes to the topic of the chapter.

The first theme, democracy, deals with the initial great question central to governing—*How should we be governed?* The democracy sections evaluate how

well the American system lives up to citizens' expectations of democratic government. As with previous editions, we continue to incorporate theoretical issues in our discussion of different models of American government. We encourage students to think analytically about the theories and to develop independent assessments of the American government's politics and policy.

Our second theme, the size of government, focuses on another great question of governing: *What should government do?* In the sections on scope of government, we discuss alternative views concerning the ideal role and size for American government and the influence that the workings of government and politics have on the size of government. The government's scope is the core question around which politics revolves in contemporary America, and this question pervades many crucial issues, from equality to budgeting.

This edition has thoroughly updated chapters, including 1994 election material. We have also made an important content addition to the second edition of the text. In keeping with our policy orientation, we have added a new chapter 14, "The Budget." This new chapter tackles the perennial questions of where money comes from and where it goes, addressing the fiscal dimensions of government that profoundly shape the debate about public policy. The appendix has been expanded to include Federalist papers No. 10 and No. 51, as well as a glossary of key terms.

Finally, we would like to thank many instructors and colleagues whose thoughtful and detailed reviews helped shape this edition. We hope they find the results pleasing and effective. Our thanks go, especially, to: E. Perry Ballard, Anne Arundel Community College; Joseph Moore, Jr., Fresno City College; Nelson Wickstrom, Virginia Commonwealth University; M. M. Eskandari-Qajar, Santa Barbara City College; Mark C. Ellickson, Southwest Missouri State University; Steven Peterson, Alfred University; Jeanette Fregulia, Hartnell College; Forest Grieves, University of Montana; David H. Ray, University of Oklahoma; Larry D. Vandermolen, Schoolcraft College; Ruth A. Harrison, University of Tennessee-Knoxville; Perri L. Lampe, Maple Woods Community College; James L Renneker, Francis Marion University; Gerald B Money, El Paso Community College; Randy Hagerty, Northeast Missouri State University; Donald T. Jelfo, Cuyahoga Community College; and William Bloomquist, Indiana University-Purdue University.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

ROBERT L. LINEBERRY

is Professor of Political Science at the University of Houston and has been its Senior Vice President. He served from 1981–1988 as Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Kansas in Lawrence.

A native of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, he received a B.A. degree from the University of Oklahoma in 1964 and a Ph.D. in political science from the University of North Carolina in 1968. He taught for seven years at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

Dr. Lineberry has been President of the Policy Studies Section of the American Political Science Association and is currently the editor of *Social Science Quarterly.* He is the author or coauthor of five books in political science. Dr. Lineberry has also authored or coauthored numerous articles in professional journals. In addition, he has taught regularly, including twenty-five years of instruction of first-year American government.

He has been married to Nita Lineberry for thirty years. They have two children, Nikki, who works in Kansas City, and Keith, a student at the University of Texas.

GEORGE C. EDWARDS III

is Distinguished Professor of Political Science at Texas A&M University and Director of the Center for Presidential Studies. From 1985–1988 he was Visiting Professor of Social Sciences at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. One of the country's leading scholars of the presidency, he has written fifteen books on American politics and policy-making, including *At the Margins: Presidential Leadership of Congress, Presidential Approval, Implementing Public Policy,* and *National Security and the U.S. Constitution.*

Professor Edwards has served as President of the Presidency Research Section of the American Political Science Association and on many editorial boards. In 1988 he

went to Brasília to advise those writing the new constitution for Brazil. That same year he was also an issue leader for the National Academy of Public Administration's project on the 1988 Presidential Transition, providing advice to the new president. In 1993 he spent six weeks in China lecturing on democracy, and in 1994 he was a consultant to Russian democratic leaders on building a political party system in that country.

When not writing, speaking, or advising, Professor Edwards prefers to spend his time with his wife Carmella, skiing, sailing, scuba diving, playing tennis, or attending art auctions.

MARTIN P. WATTENBERG

is Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Irvine. His first regular paying job was with the Washington Redskins in 1977, from which he moved on to receive a Ph.D. at the University of Michigan in 1982.

While at Michigan, Professor Wattenberg authored *The Decline of American Political Parties* (Harvard University Press), currently in its fourth edition. Most recently, he has written *The Rise of Candidate-Centered Politics: Presidential Elections of the 1980s*, also published by Harvard. In addition, he has contributed many professional articles to such journals as the *American Political Science Review, American Journal of Political Science, American Politics Quarterly, Public Opinion Quarterly,* and *Public Opinion.*

Professor Wattenberg has also lectured abroad about American politics in Australia, Asia, and Europe. Presently, he is working with a colleague in Canberra on a project comparing American and Australian electoral behavior.

When not writing or lecturing, he can most often be found on the beach at Newport or at the local tennis courts.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 *Introduction*

The twenty-first century is fast approaching, bringing with it unimagined challenges. We want to be able to respond to these challenges individually, as citizens, and collectively, as a nation. In your lifetime, for example, the United States has turned from being the world's largest creditor to its largest debtor nation; you have seen the decline and dissolution of what President Reagan called the "Evil Empire" of the Soviet Union; and the United States has gone from the quagmire of Vietnam to the pyrotechnics of the Persian Gulf War. There are inevitably other challenges to come. It is our hope that *Government in America* will help you become a well-informed citizen, a citizen better able to lead our country into the next century.

Chapter 1 begins this process by introducing you to three important concepts: *government, politics,* and *public policy.* It also raises two fundamental questions about governing that will serve as themes for this book:

1. *How should we govern?* Americans take great pride in calling their government democratic. Today there is a rush to establish democracy in many countries, but not everyone agrees on what democracy means. This chapter will examine the workings of democratic government. The chapters that follow will evaluate the way American government actually works against the standard of an "ideal" democracy. We will continually ask who holds **power** and who influences the policies adopted by government.

2. *What should government do?* This text will explore the consequences of the way American government works on what the government does. In other words, "Does our government do what we want it to do?"

The second theme is closely linked to the first—the process of government is tied to the substance of public policy. What government should do can be examined in terms of "the scope of government." Debates about the role of government, including its functions, its budget, and the number of its

employees, are among the most important in American political life. These debates are at the core of disputes between the major political parties and between liberals and conservatives.

GOVERNMENT, POLITICS, AND PUBLIC POLICY

Government, politics, and public policy are interrelated. Government is important because of what it does for us—and to us. It can protect us, feed us, educate us, send us to war, tax us, and affect us in just about every aspect of our lives. All of these actions involve setting public policies. The way government makes decisions about public policies is through politics. This chapter will first examine government itself to see how it works and how these procedures affect the policies it produces.

Government

The institutions that make public policy for a society are collectively known as **government.** In our national government, these institutions are Congress, the president, the courts, and federal administrative agencies (often called "the bureaucracy"). We also have thousands of state and local governments in the United States, and they make policies that affect us as well. All told, there are roughly 500,000 elected officials in the United States; this means that somewhere, on almost every day of the year, someone is running for office.

Every government has a means of changing its leaders. Some changes, like those in American government, are orderly and peaceful. The 1981 transition between the Carter and Reagan Administrations was more dramatic than usual because of the last-minute negotiations regarding the release of American hostages in Iran. Rejected by the voters, the Carter people had packed their belongings. Bookshelves were bare. White House carpenters were screwing in the appropriate nameplates for the new president and his staff; the guard was changing just as the agreement with Iran was being reached. Some officials had special phones at home, connected directly to the White House. At exactly noon, however, as Ronald Reagan completed his oath of office, their phones went dead.[1]

Not all governments change in such a peaceful and orderly fashion. The twentieth century has been a time of revolutionary upheaval. Iran's revolution, which overthrew the Shah, eventually led to the seizing of American hostages. The Russians in 1917 and the Chinese in 1949 changed their governments through violent revolution in order to adopt communist governments. Sometimes a change in government is less orderly than in America, but less bloody than a revolution. Massive protests disrupted the government of Philippine president Ferdinand Marcos until he left office—and the country—to be replaced by the government of Corazon Aquino. Regardless

of how they assumed power, however, all governments have certain functions in common.

What Governments Do. Big or small, democratic or not, governments in the modern world are similar in the following ways:

1. *Governments maintain national defense.* The United States spends about $250 billion a year on national defense. Some politicians think the United States spends too much on defense; others think this amount provides only minimal defensive capabilities. With the end of the Cold War between the United States and the former Soviet Union, the costs of defense should decline.

2. *Governments provide public goods.* **Public goods** are things that everyone can share. Contrast a loaf of bread, a private good, with clean air, a public good. You can buy a loaf of bread and easily consume it by yourself. Clean air, however, is available to everyone. A public good, unlike a loaf of bread, is indivisible and nonexclusive. A central principle of modern political science and economics is that individuals have little incentive to provide public goods because no one can make a profit from them. For instance, many businesses seem unconcerned with cleaning the air, because they do not make a profit from providing clean air. Thus governments are usually left to provide things like public parks and pollution control.

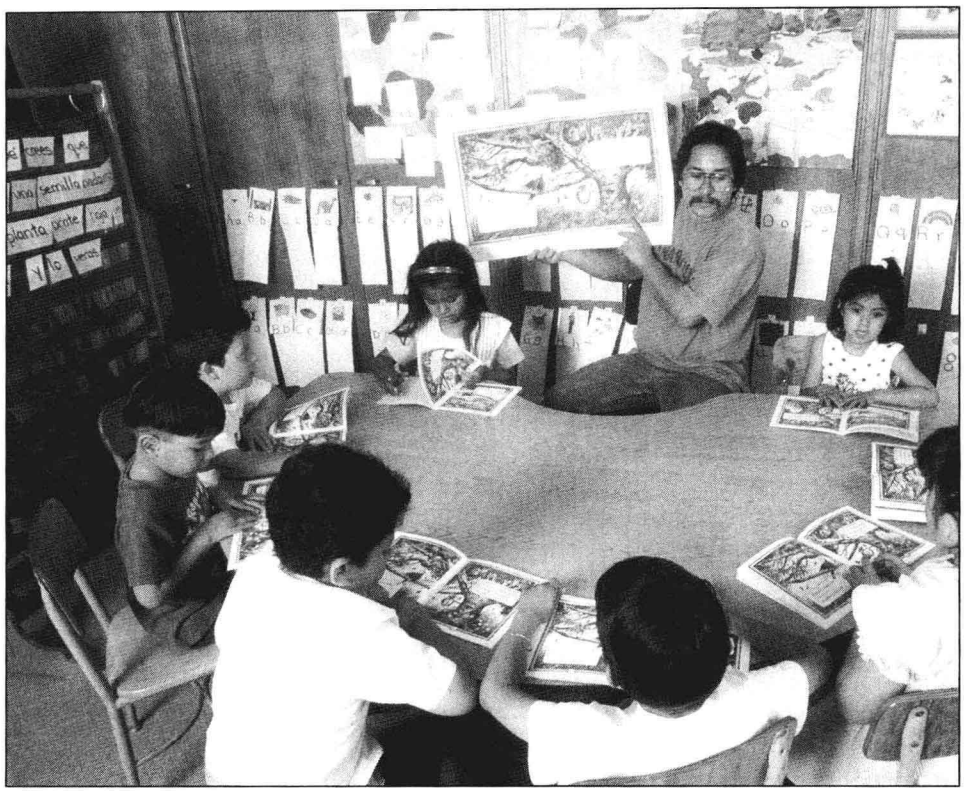
3. *Governments have police powers to provide order.* Every government has some means of maintaining order. When people protest en masse, governments may resort to extreme measures to restore order. Chinese security forces occupied streets around Tiananmen Square in June of 1989 to crush the student protest. Even in the United States, governments consider the power to maintain order one of their most important jobs. Americans today are generally supportive of an increase in the government's police powers to control high crime rates and drug abuse.

4. *Governments provide public services.* Hospitals and other public services do not build themselves. Governments in our country spend billions of dollars on schools, libraries, weather forecasting, halfway houses, and dozens of other public services.

5. *Governments socialize the young into the political culture.* Most modern governments do not trust education to chance. Almost every one of them runs a school system whose curriculum consists, in part, of courses on the philosophy and practice of their country's government. Also important are symbolic acts in school, such as the daily recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

6. *Governments collect taxes.* In 1994, one of every three dollars earned by an American citizen was used to pay national, state, and local taxes. Although Americans often complain about the high cost of government, our tax burden is actually much lower than that of citizens in most other democratic nations.

The tasks of government listed above add up to tremendous responsibilities for our political leaders. Many important and difficult questions must be addressed regarding what government should do. The way we answer such questions is through politics.



Like most governments around the world, the American government uses the public schools to socialize its children. Required civics courses and government approval of curriculum and textbooks help ensure that the young understand and support the American system of government.

Politics

Politics determines whom we select as our governmental leaders and what policies they pursue. Political scientists often cite a famous definition of politics by Harold D. Lasswell: "Who gets what, when, and how."[2] It is one of the briefest and most useful definitions of politics ever penned. Admittedly, this broad definition covers a lot of ground (office politics, sorority politics, and so on) in which political scientists are not interested. They are interested primarily in politics related to governmental decision making.

The media usually focuses on the *who* of politics. At a minimum, this includes voters, candidates, groups, and parties. *How* people play politics is important, too. They get what they want through bargaining, supporting, compromising, lobbying, and so forth. *What* refers to the substance of politics and government—the public policies that come from government. Govern-

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ments distribute benefits, such as new roads, and burdens, such as new taxes. In this sense, government and politics involve winners and losers.

Public Policy

More and more, Americans expect government to do something about their problems. The president and members of Congress are expected to keep the economy humming along; voters will penalize them at the polls if they do not. When people confront government officials with problems to be solved, they are trying to influence the government's **policy agenda.** John Kingdon defined a policy agenda as "the list of subjects or problems to which government officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying serious attention at any given time."[3] One of the key elements of democratic government is that officials, if they want to get elected, must pay attention to the problems to which people want them to pay attention. When you vote, you are partly looking at whether a candidate shares your agenda or not.

A government's policy agenda changes regularly. Almost no one thought about flag burning until the Supreme Court ruled in 1989 that the First Amendment protected flag burning as free expression. When jobs are plentiful and inflation is low, economic problems occupy a low position on the government's agenda. Nothing works better than a crisis to elevate an issue on a policy agenda. An oil spill, an airline crash, or a brutal shooting will almost ensure that ecology, air safety, or gun control will rise to near the top of a government's agenda.

Political issues often draw the attention and active participation of entertainment stars. Talk-show host Oprah Winfrey was a prominent spokesperson on behalf of a 1993 law signed by President Clinton that established a nationwide database enabling child care centers to check on prospective employees.

Public policy is a choice that government makes in response to some issue on its agenda (see Table 1.1). It is also worth noting that policymakers can establish a policy by doing nothing as well as by doing something. Doing nothing—or doing nothing different—is a choice. Often a debate about public policy centers on whether government should do something rather than nothing. Reporter Randy Shilts' book about the American government's response to the AIDS crisis tells a sad tale of inaction, even when the AIDS epidemic reached crisis levels.[4] Shilts reveals how governments in Washington and elsewhere long ignored AIDS because it was viewed as a gay person's disease. The issue remained a low priority on the government's policy agenda until infections started to spread to the general population, including celebrities like basketball star Magic Johnson.

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

A **political system** is a set of institutions and activities that link together government, politics, and public policy.[5] Most systems, political or not, can be diagrammed. We can create simple renderings of how a nuclear power plant