

POLITICS IN STATES AND COMMUNITIES

THOMAS R. DYE

A politically-oriented analysis of important conflicts in states and communities and the political structures and processes designed to manage them

STATES AND COMMUNITIES

Thomas R. Dye

PRENTICE-HALL, INC.,
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FOREWORD

If this book has a theme, it is that states and communities in America play an important role in the political life of the nation. State and local governments do more than merely provide certain services such as education, road building, or fire protection. They also perform a vital political function by helping to resolve conflicts of interest in American society. The concern of this book is with “politics,” that is, conflicts over public policy in American states and communities and the structures and processes designed to manage these conflicts.

This book not only attempts to *describe* politics and public policy in American states and communities, but, more importantly, it attempts to *explain* differences that are encountered from state to state and community to community by means of comparative analysis. In the past the phrase “comparative government” applied to the study of foreign governments, but the American states and communities provide an excellent opportunity for genuine comparative study. By that we mean the comparison of political institutions and behavior from state to state and community to community for the purpose of identifying and explaining existing similarities or differences. Only by comparing politics and public policies in different states and communities can we arrive at any explanation of political life.

No longer is the field of state and local government a “lost world” to students of politics. Today, some of the most intellectually exciting and theoretically significant research in political science is focused on American states and communities. This book tries to summarize the results of recent systematic, comparative research in political science and incorporate these results into a comprehensive analysis of politics in states and communities.

The author of a textbook is deeply indebted to the research scholars whose labors produce the insight and understanding that a text tries to convey to its readers. There is no way to adequately express this indebtedness. A glance at these chapters will reveal some particularly heavy re-

liance on the work of James A. Robinson, Robert H. Salisbury, Joseph A. Schlesinger, Diel Wright, Kenneth N. Vines, Herbert Jacob, Harmon Zeigler, Austin Ranney, Lester W. Milbrath, Robert S. Friedman, Daniel J. Elazar, Lewis A. Froman, Jr., Edward C. Banfield, James Q. Wilson, John C. Bollens, Henry J. Schmandt, Oliver P. Williams, Duane Lockard, Charles R. Adrian, John H. Kessel, Daniel Grant, Robert C. Wood, Herbert Kaufman, Charles Press, Aaron Wildavsky, Peter Bachrach, Charles Gilbert, Brett W. Hawkins, Floyd Hunter, Robert A. Dahl, Raymond Wolfinger, Robert E. Agger, Heinz Eulau, Thomas J. Anton, M. Kent Jennings, Ira Sharkansky, Matthew Holden, Gilbert Steiner, and James E. Anderson.

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Finally, I am indebted to Maureen Morris McIntosh for many things, including her very real contributions to this volume.

THOMAS R. DYE

Florida State University
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POLITICS IN STATES AND COMMUNITIES

CONTENTS

POLITICS IN STATES AND COMMUNITIES 1

- 1 *States and Communities in American Political Life*, 1
 A Political Approach to States and Communities, 6
 A Comparative Approach to States and Communities, 7
 Settings for State Politics, 12
 The Constitutional Framework of State Government, 16
 The Politics of State Constitutions, 26

STATES, COMMUNITIES, AND AMERICAN FEDERALISM 30

- 2 *The Structure of American Federalism*, 30
 The Evolution of American Federalism, 35
 National-State Relations: The "New Federalism," 43
 The Continued Vitality of the States, 48
 Interstate Relations, 51
 Politics of Federalism, 55

PARTICIPATION IN STATE POLITICS 65

- 3 *The Nature of Political Participation*, 65
 Voting in the States, 66
 Who Votes and Who Doesn't, 69
 Voting and the Law, 70
 Securing the Right to Vote, 74
 Interest Groups in Political Life, 77
 Functions and Tactics of Interest Groups, 81
 A Case of Pressure Politics: The Railroads Versus the Truckers, 84
 Interest Groups in the States: A Comparative View, 87

PARTIES IN STATE POLITICS 92

- 4 *Parties in the Fifty States*, 92
One Party and Two Party States, 95
Republican and Democratic Party Fortunes
in the States, 102
National Tides and State Politics, 107
Democrats and Republicans—What's the Difference? 108
State Party Organizations, 112

LEGISLATORS IN STATE POLITICS 115

- 5 *Functions of State Legislatures*, 115
The Making of a State Legislator, 117
Legislators Represent People, Not Trees or Acres, 121
Legislative Organization and Procedure, 127
Role Playing in Legislatures, 130
Party Politics in State Legislatures, 133
Constituency Influence in Legislative Politics, 138
Interest Groups in State Legislatures, 140
The Governor in Legislative Decision Making, 141
Legislatures in State Politics, 144

GOVERNORS IN STATE POLITICS 147

- 6 *The Many Roles of a Governor*, 147
The Making of a Governor, 150
Executive Power in State Government, 153
The Governor's Managerial Powers, 158
The Governor's Fiscal Powers, 161
The Governor's Legislative Powers, 164
The Powers of Governors: A Comparative View, 165
The Governor as Political Leader, 167
Other Executive Offices, 171

COURTS, CRIME, AND CORRECTIONAL POLICY 174

- 7 *Politics and the Judicial Process*, 174
The Structure of Court Systems, 177
The Making of a Judge, 180
The Politics of Prosecution, 183

Judicial Decision Making, 185
Crime in the States, 188
Police Protection in the States, 192
State Correctional Policies, 194

COMMUNITY POLITICAL SYSTEMS 197

8 *Communities as Settings for Politics*, 197
Variety in Community Politics, 201
Communities as Governmental Units, 204
Cities as "Municipal Corporations," 209
Forms of City Government, 213
Socio-economic Environment and the Structure of City Government, 218

PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY POLITICS 224

9 *Voters*, 224
Managers and Councils, 232
Mayors, 236
Planners, 241
Interest Groups, 248

STYLES OF COMMUNITY POLITICS 256

10 *Machines and Bosses*, 256
Reformers and Dogooders, 263
The Future Style of City Politics, 271
Nonpartisanship, 273
Policy Styles in Local Government, 278
Reform and Public Policy, 280

METROPOLITICS: CITIES AND SUBURBS 282

11 *The Anatomy of a Metropolis*, 282
Political Differences Between Cities and Suburbs, 293
The So-Called Metropolitan Problem, 298
The Case for "Fragmented" Government, 302
"Solutions" to the Metropolitan Problem, 304
"Metro" Government, 309
Bargaining and Metropolitan Decision Making, 314

COMMUNITY POWER STRUCTURES 319

- 12 *Models of Community Power*, 319
The Elite Model of Community Power, 322
Businessmen in Politics—An Alternative View, 326
The Pluralist Model of Community Power, 330
Comparative Study of Community Power, 336

POLITICS, CIVIL RIGHTS, AND PUBLIC ORDER 340

- 13 *The States and School Desegregation*, 340
"De Facto" Segregation in Cities, 348
Negro Population Trends, 352
The Making of Ghettos, 355
State and Local Antidiscrimination Laws, 359
Life in the Ghettos, 362
Civil Rights and the New Militancy, 364
The Special Tactic of Civil Disobedience, 369
Violence in American Cities, 370
Assessing the Causes of Riots, 373

THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION 380

- 14 *Directions in Educational Policy*, 380
The Cost of Teaching Johnny to Read, 382
Organizing and Financing Public Schools, 384
States and School Teachers, 387
The Federal Role in Education, 390
Drop-Outs and Mental Failures, 391
Schools and Communities, 393
Reading, Writing, and Religion, 397

THE POLITICS OF TRANSPORTATION 402

- 15 *Public Highway Policy*, 402
Federal Highway Policy, 404
State Highway Organization and Finance, 407
A Comparative View of State Highway Politics, 410
Partisanship and Highway Policy, 411
The Metropolitan Transportation Mess, 412

THE POLITICS OF WELFARE, HEALTH,
AND HOUSING 416

- 16 *Development of Health and Welfare Policy, 416*
 Federal, State, and Local Responsibilities
 in Welfare, 417
 Politics of Welfare, 422
 Public Health Politics, 425
 A Comparative View of State Health
 and Welfare Policies, 429
 Politics of Public Housing, 434
 Urban Renaissance-manship, 438
 Politics and Poor Folks—The Office
 of Economic Opportunity, 439

THE POLITICS OF BUDGETING
AND TAXATION 445

- 17 *State-Local Tax and Revenue Policies, 445*
 A Comparative View of State Tax Systems, 451
 Types of Taxes and the Incidence of Taxation, 456
 The Politics of Budgeting, 460
 Federal Grants-in-Aid, 467

INDEX 473

1

POLITICS IN STATES AND COMMUNITIES

States and Communities in American Political Life

Although states and communities in America bear the major responsibility for the nation's domestic affairs, the spotlight of national attention is usually on political events in Washington. Important issues of economic prosperity, international peace, and military preparedness must be resolved by the national government, but in such fields as education, law enforcement, crime prevention, welfare, health and hospitals, highways, housing, urban renewal, sanitation, water supply, sewage disposal, transportation, public utilities, and many others, the combined efforts of states and communities far exceed the efforts of the national government. DeTocqueville, a French political scientist who described American government over a century ago, observed that the real government of the United States was not found in the nation's capital: "The federal government scarcely interferes in any but foreign affairs . . . the governments of the states in reality direct society in America." The powers of the federal government have grown immeasurably since DeTocqueville's time, yet states and communities continue to do most of the "governing" in domestic affairs.

Although the national government spends more money than all states and communities combined, over three-fourths of the national government's expenditures go for the cost of past, present, and future wars. Thus, if we

TABLE 1.1

A COMPARISON OF FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL EXPENDITURES
FOR ALL DOMESTIC PROGRAMS

	Public expenditures (in millions of dollars)			Percent of domestic spending	
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Federal</i>	<i>State-local</i>	<i>Federal</i>	<i>State-local</i>
		<i>Domestic *</i>			
1956	75,991	21,688	43,152	33.4	66.6
1960	97,284	36,828	60,999	37.6	62.4
1962	113,428	41,052	70,118	37.0	63.0
1964	126,569	47,928	80,579	37.2	62.8
1966	143,022	58,025	94,906	37.9	62.1

*Domestic spending excludes expenditures for defense, foreign relations, space, veterans benefits, and interest on general debt (which was created primarily by defense spending). Total federal spending includes trust fund expenditures, such as social security.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract.

subtract the costs of defense and defense related items from federal government expenditures, we find that federal expenditure for domestic affairs is quite modest. If only domestic spending is considered, states and communities spend twice as much as the federal government. As the President's Commission on Intergovernmental Relations pointed out:

The states and their subdivisions bear directly more than two-thirds of the growing fiscal burden of domestic government. In recent years their activities have been increasing faster than the nondefense activities of the national government.¹

War, depression, and international tension have directed so much public interest toward Washington that it seems the only government in America is the federal government. Public apathy towards state and local government is widespread. The news media emphasize national politics, rather than state or community politics. Voters show a greater interest in national elections than in state and local elections. We can expect 60 to 65 per cent of the nation's eligible voters to turn out in a presidential election, but average turnout in gubernatorial elections in nonpresidential years is closer to 50 per cent, and municipal elections often attract fewer than one-third of the eligible voters. Undoubtedly, the fact that the news media and the voters concentrate on national rather than state and local affairs indicates the great importance of peace and prosperity to most Americans. State

¹ Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, *Report* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1955), p. 36.

and community governments can not cope with the issues of prosperity and depression, war and peace, yet their role in American government is vital.

States and communities in America operate the world's largest public school system and highway network. They operate most of the nation's judicial, welfare, police, health, correctional, and recreational facilities. Most regulation of industry, banking, commerce, utilities, labor, and protection of public safety is in the hands of state and local governments. Their programs in conservation, sanitation, social work, housing, and urban planning are vital to the day-to-day lives of all Americans. Even when the national government is involved in these programs, states and communities must decide whether to participate in national programs, and if they participate, they must administer the programs within their jurisdictions. Despite the glamour of national politics, states and communities carry on the greatest volume of public business, settle the greatest number of political conflicts, make the majority of policy decisions, and direct the bulk of public programs. They have the major responsibility for maintaining domestic law and order, for educating the children, for moving Americans from place to place, and for caring for the poor and the ill. They regulate the provision of water, gas, electric, and other public utilities, share in the

TABLE 1.2

STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES BY FUNCTION

	1932	1942	1955	1960	1965
<i>Total</i>	8,403	10,914	40,375	60,999	86,962
Education	2,311	2,526	11,907	18,719	28,971
Highways	1,741	1,490	6,452	9,428	12,221
Welfare	444	1,225	3,168	4,404	6,315
Health	107	159	471	559	836
Hospitals	349	432	2,053	3,235	4,525
Police protection	318	394	1,229	1,857	2,549
Local fire protection	210	236	694	995	1,306
Natural resources	165	214	793	1,189	1,730
Sanitation and sewage	223	229	1,142	1,727	2,360
Housing and urban renewal	0	236	499	858	1,250
Local parks and recreation	147	128	509	770	11,040
Financial administration	470	578	1,452	2,113	1,267
General control					1,506
Interest	741	565	838	1,670	2,490
Other	539	718	2,517	4,351	6,524
Utilities and liquor stores	518	1,106	3,886	5,088	7,058
Insurance trusts	120	617	2,764	4,031	4,950

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract.