

## Book Reviews

Richard L. Engstrom, Editor

**Nicholas Buccola.** *The Political Thought of Frederick Douglass: In Pursuit of American Liberty.* New York: NYU Press, 2012. vii, 225 pp. (\$49.00, cloth).

What is the link between mutual responsibility and liberalism? If one is committed to the view that individuals must understand the need for human interdependence in order for society to work, can one still claim to embrace the principles of autonomy, self-reliance, etc. that are characteristic of liberalism? In his text entitled, *The Political Thought of Frederick Douglass*, Nicholas Buccola attempts to present Frederick Douglass' answers to these difficult questions. For Buccola, Douglass does not see an incompatibility in holding these two views. Instead, he argues that Douglass sees the impossibility of liberalism's success in America without recognition of mutual responsibility for each other. Buccola tells us that Douglass' aim "was to persuade the American people to accept a new liberal creed that would replace narrowness with egalitarianism and selfishness with humanitarianism" (p. 1). At the heart of Douglass' conception of liberalism in America was a robust commitment to interdependence.

For Buccola, Douglass was able to cultivate this unique perspective about the possibility of a functioning liberal state that also needs mutual responsibility because of his unique history as a former slave. For Buccola, Douglass' reflections on slavery taught him the truth of liberalism's aim of creating the conditions for personal freedom. Further, slavery taught him that the achievement and maintenance of good liberal principles in America was possible only in a society where citizens felt particular obligations towards each other. Slavery informed Douglass about human nature, which on the one hand needed liberal principles to check human cupidity, while on the other hand possessed a natural drive towards natural rights. Slavery further informed Douglass about social psychology, in which the creation of moral surroundings is useful in cultivating actions necessary in maintaining liberalism. For Buccola, it is this unique perspective of being formerly enslaved that makes Douglass' thinking valuable in discussions regarding American liberalism specifically, and political philosophy more generally.

Buccola lays out how Douglass' unique perspective led him to the conjoining of communitarian and liberal ideas by dividing the text into two parts. The first half of the text is dedicated to supporting long-held assertions that Douglass should be classified as a liberal. As Buccola correctly shows,

Douglass' rejection of slavery is incumbent upon his understanding of how slavery is inconsistent with natural rights. He tells us that Douglass considered slavery to be wrong in two senses: "First, slavery authorizes some individuals to *restrain* other individuals. . . . Second, slavery . . . authorizes some individuals to *control* others" (p. 22). In as much as slavery gave some individuals complete authority to control or dispose of others' lives, Douglass thought that slavery robs individuals of the ability to fashion their own lives, and as a result inhibits the flourishing of those enslaved. For Douglass, this natural right to fashion ones own life, and to do so in a manner so as to flourish, stems from a natural impulse towards freedom. With this argument, one wonders whether Douglass thought that a liberal state is the only state that allows humans to operate in ways that are appropriate to them as humans, in that its emphasis on freedom is consistent with an impulse that Douglass thought was essentially human.

After arguing for classifying Douglass as a liberal by engaging his reflections on the system of slavery, Buccola enriches his argument by illustrating Douglass' responses to the typical liberal ideas of the primacy of individual rights, the importance of toleration, a commitment to limited government, and an embracing of democracy. Of particular interest here is Douglass' response to the issue of limited government, which is one distinguishing marker between himself and anarchist Garrisonians. For the Garrisonians, government was naturally corrupt because of its use of force to compel citizens' actions. Thus, "natural rights would be best served by the elimination of all government" (p. 61). For Douglass, this view was rather naïve. Though human rationality functions to recognize the primacy of natural rights, Douglass thought that humans were also liable to cupidity. As a result, government was necessary. Still, Douglass thought that there were limits on government in compelling individual actions, and that its aims of ensuring natural rights must be achieved with the assistance of a healthy moral ecology. Buccola shifts his attention towards this issue in the second half of the text.

The purpose of the second half of the book is to answer an ever-asked question in liberal thought owing to the limited moral language that is internal to liberalism, namely, why should an individual be concerned for others? In Douglass' time, the question would be put as follows: why should I be concerned for the rights of the enslaved if I am a free man or woman? Douglass' task, then, was to convince free persons that they had an obligation to struggle for the rights of those who had none. Buccola goes through a multiplicity of arguments that Douglass gave in his attempt to convince free individuals that they had an obligation to struggle for the rights of those disenfranchised. At times these arguments are seemingly contradictory, but as Buccola accurately points out, each argument must be understood in their

appropriate historical setting and with regard to the particular audience that Douglass targeted. Ultimately, Buccola concludes that for Douglass, a particular ethos had to be created in which humans came to recognize obligations to others' natural rights in order for liberalism in America to work.

For Buccola, this moral ethos would be created in various ways. First, the ethos necessary to maintain liberalism in America would be the result of two "ideal" agents—the reformer and the self-made man (and woman). The reformer contributes to this moral ethos because he/she "goes above and beyond the call of duty by dedicating his life to closing the gap between moral ideals and political realities" (p. 102). The reformer is he/she who shapes government into one that is undergirded by natural rights, and also reminds "ordinary" individuals of their obligation to respect and struggle for the natural rights of others. The self-made man/woman illustrates, through hard work, the possibility of flourishing that is the result of a society undergirded by natural rights. Furthermore, this ethos is maintained through education, rituals, and the rhetoric of statesman.

In all, one may wonder how religion in Douglass would have figured into his commitment to liberalism, the moral ecology necessary to maintain it, and Douglass' conception of humans. Further, one may question whether Buccola does Douglass' thought justice in taking arguments from very early essays and pairing them with essays from very late periods without the guide of historical and developmental shifts, or considering the political landscapes that Douglass engaged. However, Buccola's contribution achieves a very high standard of academic rigor. It shows us the complexity of Douglass' thoughts without shying away from questions that arise as a result of them. In a very well written, clear, and well argued text, Nicholas Buccola shows us why Frederick Douglass' thought is invaluable to any conversation of American liberalism.

Corey L. Barnes  
*University of Memphis*

**Matt Grossmann.** *The Not-So-Special Interests: Interest Groups, Public Representation, and American Governance.* Stanford University Press, 2012, 248 pp. (\$80.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper, \$24.95 electronic).

"Special interest" is a four-letter word in American politics. Journalists, pundits, and politicians routinely spin fantastic stories about the larger-than-life power of interest groups in Washington. Special interests have made puppets of our lawmakers, they say. Special interests have insidious hidden

agendas, they say. We need leaders who will finally take a stand against the special interests once and for all. Or so they say.

Against this sensational backdrop, *The Not-So-Special Interests* provides a refreshingly clear-eyed assessment of the landscape of interest group politics in Washington. The book focuses on *advocacy organizations*, groups that represent some constituency. As the book explains, these organizations bear little resemblance to the special interest boogeymen of the popular imagination. They represent ethnic and religious minorities (e.g., Cherokees and Evangelicals). They represent occupations (e.g., teachers) and issue positions (e.g., pro-life). Almost everyone, it turns out, is a part of some “special interest.”

And if that’s the case, then it doesn’t make much sense to spend time pondering how we can break the supposed strangle-hold of special interests in Washington. We should be asking other questions: Why are some social groups better at forming advocacy organizations? Why are some organizations better at getting their voices heard? Using impressive original data on the more than 1,600 advocacy organizations in Washington, *The Not-So-Special Interests* walks us through a few of the answers.

The book first asks which social groups are best represented by organized advocates. Its explanation—a theory it dubs *Behavioral Pluralism*—is that the social groups that are represented best by organizations in Washington are those that are most engaged in civic life in other ways (and not necessarily those with the kinds of preferences and cost structures that many models of collective action focus on). The book analyzes data on the average traits of the people in each of the several hundred distinct social groups represented by advocacy organizations in D.C. With these data, *The Not-So-Special Interests* shows that groups that have more education and income (“socioeconomic status”), that pay more attention to the news, that feel more politically effective, and that participate more in politics in other ways have more formal organizations in Washington with bigger staffs that are cited more often in the D.C. news and that testify in Congress more often. Although the book notes that most interest groups are tiny—on any given issue, there are only a few powerhouses—it concludes (somewhat cheerfully) that advocacy organizations in Washington represent the entire spectrum of American civic life.

Of course, simply having an organization in Washington is no guarantee that a social group can really influence public policy. In Part II, the book asks why some advocacy organizations are more influential than others—in other words, what determines whether a group’s voice is heard. Again, drawing on impressive original data, the book demonstrates the value of a new theory—*Institutionalized Pluralism*—which holds that the organizations that are most influential are those that are older, larger, more connected to a

public membership base, and able to comment on a wider range of issues. Advocacy organizations play an important symbolic role in U.S. politics, and the groups that are most “institutionalized” are most likely to become the “usual suspects” that lawmakers and the media turn to—they are most likely to be seen as legitimate mouthpieces for the groups they represent.

Cutting through the folklore about interest groups is no small task, but *The Not-So-Special Interests* blazes an impressive trail. It dispassionately devises sensible theories. It mingles real-world insights with heaps of illuminating quantitative data, most of which the author created from scratch using techniques that combine methodological rigor and common sense. The end result is a book that has important implications for the study of interest groups and for other questions in our field. Is there a liberal bias in media coverage? No—once we account for characteristics like the size and age of an interest group, its ideology has essentially no bearing on how often it is cited in print, on television, or on the web. Are congressional hearings biased in favor of interest groups sympathetic to the party in power? No—congressional committees always invite “the usual suspects,” even when their views are out of step with those of the committee leadership, because advocacy organizations provide convenient stand-ins for the politically engaged social groups that are affected by a given policy.

The only problem seems to be that less politically engaged social groups count for less in this process. In Part I, *The Not-So-Special Interests* shows that groups that are less civically engaged are less well-represented in the interest group system. The book casts this finding in the reassuring frame of pluralist theory: although the politically engaged have an advantage, our porous interest group system is open to engaged groups of all kinds. Where the book sees pluralism, however, I see the hazy silhouette of pluralist theory’s old rival, *power elite theory*. Social groups that pay more attention to politics are more likely to be represented by advocacy organizations in Washington. That might be because those groups are inherently more active in civic life. Or it might be because those groups can afford well-heeled advocacy organizations to keep them informed and to spur them to action when the issues that affect them are on the agenda. Social groups that feel more politically efficacious are more likely to be represented by advocacy organizations in Washington. That might be because they are better citizens, or it might be that groups who don’t have as much of a voice in Washington are understandably skeptical about what they can accomplish through government. Social groups that vote more often tend to have more advocacy organizations. That might be because politicians fear the clout of people who show up on election day or because “the process leading to electoral participation also leads to organizational mobilization” (p. 60). Or it could be that voting is one of many markers of “belonging” to the high society that

Washington caters to, or that voting is correlated with resources like money, free time, and so on—the kinds of resources that are barriers to entry in the interest group game. The links Grossman finds between civic engagement at the group level and organized advocacy in Washington could be signs of a healthy civil society. Or they could be symptoms of an interest group process that privileges those who are already privileged.

On this point, *The Not-So-Special Interests* mostly stays on the fence, or takes the pluralist side. And that's just fine—it is an impressive feat to simply show that groups that are more engaged are more likely to be represented by advocacy organizations. But now we need to know why. Whether we see “special interests” as a dirty word or not ultimately depends on whose interests we think they represent. It depends on whether we see advocacy organizations as natural extensions of the American civic tradition or as opportunities for groups that are powerful to preserve their privileged place in society.

The *Not-so-Special Interests* probably won't be the last word on this important question. But it should be the first word in many conversations about interest groups—and about American democracy.

Nicholas Carnes  
*Duke University*

**Richard L. Fox and Jennifer M. Ramos.** *iPolitics: Citizens, Elections, and Governing in the New Media Era*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 310 pp. (\$32.99 paper).

In politics and in the media, discussions of the Internet often become filled with hyperbole. During the Arab Spring, for example, the Egyptian revolution was sometimes referred to as the “Facebook Revolution” or the “Twitter” revolution. After all, if western media were reading posts about the revolution on Twitter and Facebook—and all the people these reporters know are on Facebook and Twitter—how could it be that not everyone in Egypt was part of this Facebook and Twitter revolution too? In *iPolitics: Citizens, Elections, and Governing in the New Media Era*, Richard L. Fox and Jennifer M. Ramos have put together an edited volume that examines various aspects of politics online. The book has a United States focus but also covers cases in Western Europe and looks at certain aspects of the Arab Spring as well. The analysis considers the use of social media, YouTube, blogging, and old-fashioned websites by politicians, citizens, and the media.

Perhaps the most beneficial aspect of the book is that it does not take either a positive or a negative position on the role of new media and the

Internet. Instead, the book is generally more nuanced and examines whether new media are changing the way in which politicians, the media, and citizens interact with one another. Three chapters that are especially strong in this regard are those covering whether the wider variety of news sources is making us smarter, the use of social media by members of the U.S. Congress, and about the role of Netroots progressives in the health care reform debate. Each of these chapters presents a nuanced approach to the question at hand.

Four chapters in the book are especially worthy of a detailed discussion because they illustrate the debates regarding the internet and politics today. Jennifer Lawless takes a sharp pin and punctures the idea that members of Congress are using social media in new and effective ways to communicate with their constituents. Lawless finds that members are taking the old-school forms of political communication—the press release that engages in position taking and credit claiming—and have moved it to Twitter and Facebook. Members do not seem to be using social media to engage in new forms of communication, like educating their constituents by linking to that new study by a think tank or by the Congressional Budget Office or the General Accounting Office, or even using social media to humanize themselves by tweeting that they attended their child's school play. The internet is where paper has migrated but it has not become the place for experimentation or invention by members of Congress. One interesting and initially surprising finding is that Republicans—not Democrats—are more robust users of social media. However, considering that conservatives initially developed direct mail activities much more effectively than did liberals, it actually is not necessarily surprising that we see Republicans using social media more than Democrats. However, the bottom line is that neither party's members of Congress are using social media to break new ground.

Zoe Oxley's work on media in politics questions whether the increasing diversity of media is making us smarter. She presents an array of data showing that in the public at large, people are less able today to name political leaders—the U.S. Vice President, the President of Russia—and that overall political knowledge had declined for all educational cohorts but especially for those with the lowest levels of education. In a statistical analysis of who are the most knowledgeable people regarding politics, those who read a newspaper and who listen to National Public Radio—very traditional news outlets—score much better than cable news or television news websites. Very interesting, however, is that people who read newspapers online score better than those who read the newspaper in the traditional paper format. Although she does not speculate, it may be the case that reading the paper online allows people to immediately look at source information of interest to them—you can click and look at the report by the Congressional Budget

Office or the analysis by a think tank—where they might not be able to do this as easily using traditional media.

Oxley's key conclusions—more information is not making us smarter as a population and is also leading to a bifurcation between the well- and non-well educated provides a nice transition to Matthew Kerbel's consideration of the role of Netroots progressives in the debate over health care reform. These progressives were excited for the possibility of universal coverage but especially for single-payer universal coverage. These progressives clearly had a story in their heads that went something like this:

The internet propelled Obama to victory, helping him raise millions of dollars, facilitate volunteer meet-ups, and promote the truth about the Bush administration. Once Obama is in office, we will use these same tools to promote a progressive agenda and get it enacted.

Kerbel argues that what these progressives ran into was a buzz saw of traditional politics. Blue Dog Democrats were not going to be overly receptive to these progressive arguments and the Obama Administration co-opted the groups most likely to oppose a single-payer plan, but the cost of this co-optation was that the President did not press the single-payer agenda. Also, given that the Democrats controlled the Senate with a filibuster-proof majority for only a very short period in 2009 and 2010, the progressives were always fighting an uphill battle.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Kerbel's analysis though is how it illustrates the problem with the Internet that Cass Sunstein so eloquently wrote about in his book *Republic.com 2.0* (2009, Princeton: Princeton University Press). It is likely that many of these progressives lived in what Sunstein would refer to as a "cyber-balkanized" world. These progressives may have read similar progressive-leaning news, mainly talked about politics with like-minded people, and thought about politics with the same progressive worldview. For them, the idea that there would be strong support for single-payer and that opposition to single-payer was equivalent to being a sellout to big healthcare was obvious. Also, the idea that the internet would revolutionize these political debates was obvious too, as though traditional politics—regular lobbying, use of the traditional media, the role of money in politics—would fade under the assault of these new online politics. The Affordable Care Act illustrates both the limits of netroots politics and the way in which information balkanization may affect the way in which people view politics in the first place.

The final chapter of the book examines the use of the internet and social media in three Middle Eastern countries—Egypt, Kuwait, and Jordan—and how it may change politics in the region. This chapter, in some respects, presents a rather over-optimistic view of the potential power of



social media in the Arab world. As Pippa Norris notes in her work “Social Media and the Arab Uprisings” (in *Electronic Democracy*, Norbert Kersting, ed, Berlin: Barbara Budrich Publications), the people involved in using social media in the Middle East are more likely to be advocates for regime liberalization and change but most people in the region do not use social media. Instead, most people in the region get information via television—Al Jazeera and other cable channels—not via the internet. However, it may be that there is a missing part to this discussion, which is this: because the western media is obsessed with social media, the use of it by activists allowed stories of the Arab spring to become more widely known and more legitimate, since multiple Tweets and Facebook posts could be used to suggest a wider base of support for any protest.

The story of the role of social media and how it influences the media and is used by the media are well covered in this book. The discussion of the Arab spring illustrates the issues that Kerbel brought up regarding the net-roots progressives and the narrative that the internet can change everything. The internet can play a role in political change but this role is often overstated. As the chapters noted above, and other chapters in this well-written book note, there is a nuance to our understanding of the Internet and politics that should not be forgotten. It is one tool in the political tool kit but its use and importance can easily be understood. The divides that exist between those who are online and those who are not, who see the Tweets from members of Congress and those who don’t, and those who live in a narrow world of media and politics online and those who are exposed to a broader scope of issues. *iPolitics* explains the world of politics and participation online in an interesting and effective way. It will be of interest to academics and students alike.

Thad Hall  
University of Utah

**Joseph F. Zimmerman.** *State-Local Government Interactions*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012. xi, 259 pp. (\$75.00 cloth, \$75.00 electronic).

Joseph Zimmerman’s latest book on the topic of state and local government relations continues the arguments he first laid out in earlier works (e.g., *State-Local Relations: A Partnership Approach* 1983; 2nd ed. 1995) in favor of the devolution of power to local governments and cooperative approaches to local governance issues. The book centers on the challenges to local governance within a federal system that considers local governments to be

mere “creatures of the state” under the tradition of the *Ultra Vires* Rule (a.k.a. Dillon’s Rule). Drawing on his long and distinguished career studying local and state politics, Zimmerman presents a detailed account of what has become a very complex relationship between the American states and their local governments. Importantly, the book documents the wide variety of ways in which government officials have tried to deal with the tensions between state authority and local governance.

Zimmerman begins the book by laying out the historical and legal foundations for state-local government relations. The first chapter emphasizes the extent to which formal authority over local governance is vested in state governments and the wide variety of ways power has slowly been devolved to local governments. He then presents arguments as to why there is so much variation in local discretionary authority, including eight specific determinants hypothesized to affect local discretion. Unfortunately, these hypotheses are not empirically tested in the book, making them difficult to evaluate.

In the second chapter Zimmerman presents a more detailed account of the historical and institutional underpinnings of the state-local governmental relationship. This comprehensive examination of the legal environment should be mandatory reading for any local government official. However, the overall picture of the state-local relationship can be difficult to get a handle on with so much detail, variation, and complexity. To his credit, Zimmerman addresses this issue by presenting summary measures of city and county discretionary authority based on a U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations published in 1981. While the measures are undoubtedly useful as summary of the complicated mesh of statutory and constitutional rules that shape these complex relationships, they leave the reader with several unanswered questions. First, it is not clear how the measures were developed and what the values of the scale mean substantively. Another limitation of the measures, and of several aspects of the book, is the dated nature of the information. Though Zimmerman asserts that there have not been any major changes in local discretionary authority over the past three decades, his narrative of piecemeal reforms to the discretionary authority of local government implies that even minor changes can accumulate over time to create more significant shifts in state-local government relations.

The book then proceeds to explore more substantive aspects of the state-local governmental relationship. Chapter Three documents the limits of the ability of local governments to raise revenue when state governments jealously guard these powers. Unsurprisingly, Zimmerman’s discussion of fiscal relations is quite thorough and he provides an assortment of alternative revenue mechanisms by which local governments can better meet their

resource demands. The next chapter builds on the fiscal challenges of local governments by examining how state government policies mandate action by local governments, often without resource support to implement these policies. Zimmerman argues that thirteen different types of state mandates can distort local government expenditures and policy priorities. Yet, it is not clear how we can evaluate the magnitude and significance of these expenditure distortions. What are the baseline expenditure patterns that would be adopted by local governments without state interference? Are these “distortions” always a threat to local governments?

Chapters Five and Six explore the role of state governments in addressing local governance issues and the influence of the federal government. Zimmerman examines the state action on local governance issues from the perspective of inhibiting, facilitating, or initiating the creation of metropolitan governmental units to deal with area-wide issues. Using the Twin Cities approach as a model, he argues that the state should be active in developing these kinds of solutions as the country continues to urbanize. He also argues for an active role of the federal government in pursuing area-wide solutions to local governance problems. Yet, he cautions that federal involvement through grants-in-aid have been less effective than his proposed tax credit approach. Though the arguments laid out in these chapters are compelling and the case studies are instructive, the analyses continue to rely on relatively dated literature and examples. It would be interesting to see how these arguments connect with more recent research in the burgeoning area of metropolitan politics and the expanded role of the federal government, particularly in the areas of homeland security and education.

The book concludes with a prescription for a more cooperative approach to local governance. The chapter begins with an explicit statement of the challenge faced by local governments; “An imbalance of state government interests and local government interests is at the heart of the great governance problem within the typical state,” (p. 179). Though Zimmerman does an exemplary job highlighting this imbalance despite the legal complexities and variation in the states, it is not clear that these imbalances are necessarily at the root of most problems facing local governments. Indeed, the book spends little time linking the legal complexities and biases to substantive policy problems and outcomes. Would a more balanced system actually produce better outcomes? Without this critical piece of the puzzle, it is difficult for the reader to evaluate fully Zimmerman’s model for improved state-local relations. Nonetheless, the prescriptions of the model do lay out several ways in which local government can exercise more discretion and work with, rather than under, state government. Future work in this area should certainly spend time evaluating the success of these cooperative approaches in achieving specific policy outcomes.

In all, the book is one of the most detailed explorations of state-local interactions, and, for this reason alone, should be required reading for all local and state government officials. Though the book often relies on dated analyses and cases, the arguments remain relevant to contemporary state and politics and public administration. The avenues for future research that stem from Zimmerman's comprehensive treatment of the topic are not only numerous, but should yield important insights to local and state governance in the 21st century.

Daniel C. Lewis  
*University of New Orleans*

**Norm Kelly.** *Directions in Australian Electoral Reform: Professionalism and Partisanship in Electoral Management.* Canberra: Australian National University E Press, 2012. xiii, 191 pp. (\$24.95 paper; free download at <http://epress.anu.edu.au/titles/directions-in-australian-electoral-reform>).

In 2010, Australia went through its closest federal election in 70 years, the outcome being a Parliament with no one party in control. In many countries, such an event would be followed, at best, by court challenges and an ongoing focus in the following term on aspects of the past electoral process or its management said to have benefited one side or the other. In fact, however, the announced election results—as distinct from the minority government which flowed from them—were generally accepted with equanimity by all. Norm Kelly's synoptic study, *Directions in Australian Electoral Reform*, the first of its kind in Australia, helps to tell us why.

Kelly focuses directly on a number of issues that go to the heart of the integrity of elections—the neutrality and independence of election administration; the nature of the franchise; voter registration, turnout and spoiled ballots; registration of political parties; political finance; malapportionment and redistricting—and shows how, in the last 30 years, Australian electoral systems have in these areas in the main been steered by various forces towards greater robustness and inclusiveness. He gives due attention to developments at both the federal and state level, which in Australia influence each other to a greater extent than is sometimes supposed. Kelly is both a scholar and a former member of the state parliament in Western Australia, and his analysis reflects a clear understanding not just of the intricacy of many of the issues, but also of the political interests motivating the players (which have been illuminated by extensive interviews conducted during research for the doctoral thesis on which the book is based).

The title of the volume is something of a misnomer, since Kelly's primary approach of expounding issues and their recent history eschews, in the main, the stating and testing of hypotheses and the identification of trends or directions either preceding or likely to flow from the period of reform he examines. His overall conclusions—that parties tend to be motivated by self-interest, sometimes manifested in a “cartelization” on the part of the major parties—are supported by much of the evidence he considers, but from a broader perspective might be thought over-pessimistic. This is partly because his choice of case studies is (quite reasonably) skewed towards areas marked by controversy.

While Kelly tends to emphasise the challenges standing in the way of change, a point worth emphasising is that the period of active reform from the late 1970s onward stands in stark contrast with the preceding 60 years. The introduction of the alternative vote after the First World War, compulsory voting in the mid 1920s and proportional representation for Senate elections in 1948 were highlights, as was the enfranchisement of all indigenous Australians in 1962. But in other respects, Australian elections in the late 1960s looked, to the voters, surprisingly like elections in the 1920s. The last 30 years however have seen electoral reform proceeding along two parallel lines, the first encompassing the sorts of changes requiring political will and legislation (which are Kelly's main interest) and the second relating to modernization of the electoral process, largely driven by Australia's election management bodies, frequently with bipartisan support.

A number of long-term factors have contributed to the renewed vitality of the reform process. Total federal control of federal electoral processes makes it possible for major changes to be effected by the passage of a single piece of legislation. The increased rarity of government control of the Senate has forced compromise and made it harder for ruling parties to legislate purely on the basis of their own self-interest. The general acceptance in Australia that it is possible for civil servants to be neutral and independent has enabled federal, state and territory Electoral Commissions to function as active and credible advocates for reform both in public and within government circles, to a greater extent than Kelly documents, though they sometimes choose their targets so as to avoid the thornier political thickets.

The existence in the country of nine different electoral jurisdictions has created an enabling environment for innovation. In addition, changes in international norms relating to elections have tended to be assimilated into Australia's electoral arrangements: for example, the reapportionment revolution in the USA shone a light on the engineered malapportionment of the majority of Australian legislatures, rendering such arrangements less respectable. Finally, the various parliamentary committees mandated to consider electoral matters, while unable to eliminate entirely the partisan disagree-

ments that Kelly documents, have been somewhat more successful than he concedes in distinguishing matters of genuine partisan disagreement from purely mechanical matters on which consensus can be reached. While Kelly notes that the committees' reports often contain dissents, in general they tend to relate only to a minority of recommendations.

There have also, on the whole, been remarkably few recent attempts to introduce vote suppression in the guise of reform, not least because the decline of partisan identification in Australia makes it more difficult for parties to know whose votes they might wish to suppress. Moves to require the production of evidence of identity at polling stations have gained little momentum.

Much of Australia's electoral reform has, in fact, been evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Major changes of the former type include the development of a national computerized electoral register; much improved voter education and information programs; publication of election results and statistics in real time on the Internet; and the provision of polling facilities more closely configured to the needs of the electorate. These have been accompanied by significant moves to restructure electoral administration in Australia, in a way that places a greater emphasis on the role of consistent jurisdiction-wide systems and a lesser emphasis on management by locally-based officials.

While Kelly by no means argues that the issues which are central to his analysis have been resolved, it is hard to resist the conclusion that the salience of some of them is likely to decline with the passage of time, as technological challenges such as Internet voting make their way to the front and centre of the stage. His book will nevertheless be very useful to potential reformers of the future, as a reminder of the importance of battles fought by previous generations of which they may be unaware, and as a documentary record of the critical insight that elections and electoral reform are fundamentally political and societal rather than technical processes.

Michael Maley  
*Australian Electoral Commission*

**Tyson D. King-Meadows.** *When the Letter Betrays the Spirit: Voting Rights Enforcement and African American Participation from Lyndon Johnson to Barack Obama.* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011. xxviii, 345 pp. (\$80.00 cloth, \$32.95 paper).

*When the Letter Betrays the Spirit*, by Tyson King-Meadows, is an aptly-titled and remarkably thorough analysis of how institutional wrangling

over the Voting Rights Act has contorted the act's principles and diluted its strength. The author's chief claim is that the Johnson Framework for the act has been undermined by subsequent Presidents, and by Congress as well. First, executives since Johnson have redefined the letter of the VRA in a way that departs from Congress' original intent for it. Second, legislators have failed to sufficiently shore up the act against such redefinitions. As a result, President Obama has inherited a flawed framework that constrains his administration's efforts to ensure compliance with Congress' original intent for the VRA. Ultimately, the spirit of the act is undermined, along with the political strength of its intended beneficiaries. Or, in the author's illustrative words, the "battle of principals and of principles" has "boxed blacks into a corner"; paradoxically, "black voting rights have... fallen victim to the axiom of law enforcement". For King-Meadows, the solution is to establish a "Congress-centered, management-oriented method of enforcing the Voting Rights Act."

Over the course of seven chapters King-Meadows presents his argument from three angles. He first assesses the evolution of the VRA, specifically the most recent reauthorization of it in 2006. He then examines challenges to congressional authority by the executive branch, particularly under George W. Bush. He concludes with a systems theoretical approach to enforcing the act. In the process, he elaborates on the role of public opinion on the VRA, and on the Supreme Court's application of the concept of civic literacy to its decisions involving the act. King-Meadows' methodology is primarily qualitative. He devotes significant attention to three crucial debates over the meaning and scope of the VRA between: 1) Congress and the executive branch, 2) career lawyers and shorter-term appointees in the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department, and 3) Congress and the Supreme Court majority. The author also employs quantitative methodology including survey data to support his analyses of contemporary public opinion on voting rights policy (Chapter 5) and of the macro-political and institutional contexts of collective action and shaping voting rights policies (Chapter 7).

One seldom finds a single-authored volume that so thoroughly addresses the institutional and partisan dynamics around politics, law and minority voting rights. When it comes to work that scrutinizes the VRA, it is much more common to find examinations of the disputes between the legislative and judicial branches. I commend King-Meadows for his ability to weave so many strands into an illustrative whole. This is no mean feat. Again echoing the author's words, this book is "stunningly detailed" and amply documented.

On the whole, *When the Letter . . .* is well-written and solidly argued and supported. King-Meadows fully elaborates on all of his points. He also

provides lengthy excerpts of key arguments in the debates over the letter and spirit of the VRA. For someone who values substantial engagement with such texts (as does this reader), these excerpts greatly enrich the book. For those who don't, they may come across as overstated. Similarly, King-Meadows' attention to subsidiary points at times detracts from the primary goals of the book. For example, Chapters 5 and 6 contain information that is fascinating but that is sometimes rather tangential. I believe that the book would function perfectly well if those chapters were condensed and incorporated into other ones. Finally, some of the language can be rather jargonized.

King-Meadows' critique of the 2006 reauthorization of the VRA is very well-founded. He is absolutely right that in focusing on wresting key provisions of the act back from the Court in 2006, Congress failed to strengthen other crucial and controversial provisions of it. However, it may have helped for King-Meadows to put his critique of Congress' forfeiture of power in the fuller context of preceding reauthorizations. For example, the federalism/states' rights issues so central to the discourse in 2006 were equally dominant in the 1982 and the 1975 reauthorizations. Moreover, certain race-conscious aspects of the VRA were highly contentious in 1982 and remain so, which may in part explain why Congress chose not to belabor them in 2006. Juxtaposing Congress in 2006 against two moments when it was far less compromising might have made King-Meadows' critique of the most recent reauthorization more resonant. One could also argue that the Johnson Framework came not so much from LBJ but from the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

Overall, this book is a very valuable contribution to political science. It is especially valuable to the study of institutional dynamics, federalism, voting rights, and race and representation. It also offers important insights to scholars of law, and it clearly illuminates the intersection of law and politics. Instructors, graduate students, and advanced law students will surely benefit from this volume. Its interdisciplinarity will also enlighten readers from various academic backgrounds; the book would serve well as an essential text for seminars on institutions (particularly the presidency or Congress), federalism, and voting rights law. Moreover, while the book focuses on the tensions between executive and congressional visions of the VRA, its thorough attention to key voting rights cases makes it a fitting choice for courses on law and courts. Given its level of detail, and that it tends to presume a strong knowledge of voting rights case law, it might present a considerable challenge to undergraduates.

*When the Letter Betrays the Spirit* is informative, thoughtful, thorough, and compelling. Tyson King-Meadows sheds valuable light on aspects of the Voting Rights Act that demand but—as he demonstrates so well throughout the book—fail to garner sufficient and honest deliberation at the highest



levels of government. Those aspects, and the author's careful analysis of them in this volume, merit our full attention.

Christina Rivers  
DePaul University

**Oppenheimer, Danny, and Mike Edwards.** *Democracy Despite Itself: Why a System That Shouldn't Work at All Works So Well.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012. ix, 245 pp. (\$24.95 cloth).

In *Democracy Despite Itself: Why a System That Shouldn't Work at All Works So Well*, Danny Oppenheimer and Mike Edwards examine a number of arguments against and then later for democracy (defined by the authors as a political system with regular free, fair, and meaningful elections). The first part is a critique of democracy rooted in irrationality and procedural bias. The second part attempts to salvage democracy by discussing the value of participation and legitimacy, large N sizes, system support and how occasionally voters do matter.

***Part I: Why Democracy is Flawed***

Part of the bedrock of democratic theory is that people make decisions in accordance with their interests and beliefs. In order for individuals to make such decisions it is considered necessary to possess adequate and accurate information to be able to choose amongst alternatives the one that most closely corresponds with those interests and beliefs. However, according to the authors what people know is “. . . often biased, incomplete, lacking, or downright false” (p. 10).

The authors' open by examining the empirical evidence surrounding this lack of knowledge. They show that we (used throughout in the broad sense of “we” the people) rarely get the general facts correct and even if we do, the level of knowledge necessary to fully understand even one substantive issue is overwhelming. Further, we are often unable to attribute positions, policies, or actions to the correct candidates. Once we acquire information we tend to forget it quickly; and we tend to overestimate our confidence in our knowledge by virtue of our ignorance. Compounding these problems are: the prevalence of both intentional and unintentional misinformation, and news biases that, even discounting for outright partisanship, tend to distort information due to selectivity and sensationalism.

The focus then turns to how we are not only unlikely to make informed decisions but rather are likely to make our decisions on much less than rational grounds. We are regularly admonished not to judge books by their

covers; however, psychologists have shown that we make very rapid judgments about candidates based on “sights, sounds, and other environmental factors” (p. 49). Characteristics such as facial structures, height, and whether candidates resemble someone can have a major impact on our judgments. Other influencing factors include 1) subtle environmental priming effects that register subconscious cues and 2) linguistic framing effects that attempt to spin information by linking disparate issues.

The argument then shifts from rationality to structural biases in the democratic process. The authors’ review a range of issues including: gerrymandering, incumbency advantage, election factors (timing, ballot design, ballot ordering, and vote counting), strategic voting compounded by pluralistic ignorance, and how primaries structure candidate selection.

The final concern is how the “people’s” preferences (as distorted as they may be so far) are transmitted (or not) to elected officials so they can enact the will of the people. One vision describes a cacophony of voices that candidates randomly pick and choose from. A more rational vision would be acquiring systematic information through surveys. However, such information is not without its flaws. Notable survey problems highlighted include: representativeness, questionnaire design issues such as context, wording, and meaning that may result in intentional and/or unintentional bias, evaluating abstract concepts versus complex reality, recall and regression to the mean in answer selection, and the difficulty in interpreting contradictory survey results. Either vision provides ample room for transmission errors.

Thus, to conclude part one, we are not well informed but it doesn’t matter since our judgments are typically based on less substantive factors. Further, the process has inherent biases. And finally, even if we had informed preferences, it is unlikely that we could reliably communicate them to our elected leaders.

### ***Part II: Why Democracy Works So Well Anyway***

Part two opens with a discussion of competing political structures: absolute authoritative regimes such as monarchs and dictators and oligarchical regimes where power is shared among elites (wealthy, religious, military, etc.). The authors’ contend that when it comes to three central issues—1) liberty, 2) fostering peace and stability, and 3) providing tangible benefits to citizens—democracy is the clear winner. This leads to a central paradox: “Voters are irrational and elections are inherently flawed, but democracy is successful” (p. 129).

The authors’ begin their defense by focusing on procedural fairness and the extent to which the system is viewed as legitimate and operating in a just manner. A huge benefit of legitimacy is that it leads people to participate in society in productive (e.g., following the rules) rather than unproductive

(e.g., violent protests) ways. This legitimacy is enhanced by the democratic emphasis on participation. Participation allows 1) for at least the possibility of removing non-responsive officials and 2) inherently reinforces legitimacy since why would someone participate in what they perceive to be an illegitimate process. Socialization within the system further sustains the self-fulfilling prophecy that the system is in fact legitimate. Finally in terms of political responsiveness, our innate sense of reciprocity helps to ensure that elected leaders feel at least some sense of obligation to repay voters.

The focus then turns to the catharsis of voting. A key problem for any political structure is transitioning from one regime to another. According to the authors, "Elections act like a release valve. Without them pressure will build and societies are more likely to explode" (p. 153). The authors' then provide a decision tree that outlines the mostly negative options and outcomes for both rulers and protestors in more authoritative regimes. They then discuss two other forms of democratic regime transition: sortition (random selection of citizens to serve) and lottery voting (casting votes for candidates but randomly selecting a single ballot to determine the winner). However, they contend that neither method delivers on the need for people to feel like their contributions matter which is critical to justify participation and by extension strengthen legitimacy.

One of the more unique arguments suggests that a key to democracy's success is a large N. While individual political decisions may be poorly informed, aggregate group decisions "are a lot more knowledgeable, a lot less prone to error, a lot more stable, and a lot less prone to extremism . . ." (p. 192). When considered in the context of authoritative and oligarchical regimes (that by definition reduce the number of decision makers), democracies are able to avoid more (but not necessarily all) instances of really bad decisions (of course, really good decisions would be comparably less likely). While this argument runs contrary to our emphasis on rationality, it is plausible and resonates with Madison's ideas on why democracy works better in larger countries.

Finally, the authors' address the incumbency problem or the fact that despite much vocal displeasure with elected leaders, empirical evidence demonstrates that incumbent officials win with striking regularity. That said, people do occasionally vote even seemingly very safe incumbents out of office. The problem is that political scientists are not always entirely sure why this happens, nor can they generally predict when it will happen. However, this lack of explanation or prediction may be good since politicians therefore tend to develop a sense of paranoia about losing; and despite contrary evidence, often feel their positions are more vulnerable than they are. The upside for democracy is that this paranoia may provide greater political responsiveness. The problem with this argument is that looking at the

incumbency effect is a bit of a glass half full or half empty problem. For some, the few instances of voting incumbents out validate participation in the system; for others, the strength of incumbency suggests that participation is more symbolic than real.

Thus, democracy's success (despite itself) is rooted in: 1) belief in its legitimacy, 2) large populations cancelling out poor knowledge and extreme positions while providing relatively stable outcomes, 3) those with power supporting the system, and 4) voters occasionally exercising their power over elected leaders.

### ***Evaluation***

Oppenheimer and Edwards do an excellent job of leading the reader to the sense that there are fundamental problems with democracy and then salvaging it from the mess they created. This is not to say that the arguments put forward in defense of why democracy works so well are ironclad but are certainly sufficient for an introductory text of this nature. Overall, *Democracy Despite Itself* is an enjoyable and fast read. By using the clever format of tearing down before building up, the authors' do a nice job of gaining the reader's interest and drawing them into the material. The writing style is straightforward and easy to follow; consequently, it could appeal to lay audiences as well as beginning students. In terms of classroom use, it would seem to fit as a nice complementary text for undergraduate courses in American Government and current political issues as well as the obvious connection to classes specifically on democracy and democratic theory.

Thomas Shaw  
*University of South Alabama*

**Greg Weiner.** *Madison's Metronome: The Constitution, Majority Rule, and the Tempo of American Politics.* Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012. xii, 194 pp. (\$29.95 cloth).

The valuable, if often distortive, new book on James Madison's Constitutional theory is written by an Assistant Professor at Assumption College. The author received his Ph.D. from Georgetown University, studying with George Carey and Patrick Deneen, and served as an aide to three U.S. Senators, including Democrat Bob Kerrey. This brief book (140 pages of text) is published in a series on American Political Thought, originally edited by Lance Banning and Wilson Carey McWilliams.

The book's primary thesis (repeated several times) is that Madison's Constitutional theory is one of "temporal republicanism." This is a new way

to view the familiar understanding of Madisonian “checks and balances,” federalism, pluralism, etc.. Weiner maintains that Madison’s democratic theory is not anti-majoritarian. He believed majorities would (and should) always prevail in America; but a system that “slows down” their decisions ensures that the people’s dangerous impulses (“passions”) allows their reason to determine ultimate (and just) policy. Weiner argues that this Madisonian Constitutional mechanism is not merely formal, but contains the normative values of public spiritedness and human rights (formulated and implemented by a wise majority slowed down sufficiently to be reasonable). He also applies this view of Madisonian gradualism to contemporary American politics, including Obamacare.

Weiner’s discussion of this Madisonian ideology is the most valuable part of the book. Though hardly original (or warranting a book-length study), his construction of American Constitutionalism as “temporal republicanism” makes one see this familiar idea in new and fresh ways. How a large republic as the United States avoids the “tyranny of the majority,” as Tocqueville puts it, concerned most of the Founders. Mob violence and mass hysteria after the declaring of Independence confirmed and strengthened this concern in Madison, Adams, and Hamilton, especially.

For popular, majority rule is essential to a democratic system of government. Unfortunately, Madison learned from his study of ancient republics and the American experience, majorities are often swayed by immediate, impulsive passions (emotions) and prone, therefore, to hasty, erroneous views, violence and extreme actions. Madison compares these popular impulses as a kind of madness, fire, contagion and destruction. After Aristotle, Madison sees human emotions as volatile, hectic, acting quickly, wild, unpredictable and dangerous. They are impatient and demand instant gratification. Human reason, the faculty of viewing ends or purposes (*telos*) takes a long-view and is cool, calm and deliberate. The American Constitutional system of checks and balances, staggered terms, division of authority and power between branches (executive, legislative and judicial) and levels (federalism—national and states) is designed to slow down political decision and policy, to give reason time to inform and calm down emotional impulses. Time dissipates passions, facilitates deliberation and leads to better, more thoughtful policy, while also protecting rights.

Individuals ruled by impulsive passion (like John Adams for Madison—short-tempered and extreme) or policies rushed through in a fast and furious manner, need the moderating influence of the Constitutional system to avoid tyranny and costly disasters.

Thus, Weiner’s “temporal republicanism” reveals a Burkean respect for tradition, deliberateness, prudence and order. Complaints that the American state is ineffective, slow, in gridlock, etc., miss the point that this was the

Founders' intention; that they believed we had more to fear from hasty, fast action than frustrated slow processes. If legislation is rushed through before the public has a chance to read and digest it, corrupt minority interests are probably behind it and we will regret the haste, even if it is encouraged by high sounding ideals like equality, civil rights or universal health care.

This causes Weiner (after making the unfortunate observation that Madison was not "the Father of the Constitution," but merely its "attending physician") to declare that the U.S. Constitution is a "living" document, but that it has an extremely "slow metabolism." As Burke observed, a constitution that does not have the means of changing, albeit slowly and cautiously, does not have the means of its own preservation. But Weiner's "temporal republicanism" insures not only thoughtful, just policy, but the finest means for protecting rights.

At this point in Weiner's thesis, the book, in my opinion, begins to go off the rails and presents some extremely distorted views of Madison's political thought, while exhibiting the very passion and haste Madison warns against. This problematical and embarrassing aspect of this book occurs in the author's discussion of the content of those rights the Madisonian system is designed to protect. His discussion of *Federalist #10*, the Bill of Rights, property, and Locke's *Second Treatise* shows an alarming lack of understanding and, in my opinion, error. While the author tries to qualify these questionable interpretations with the caveat that he does not intend a "complete narrative" on Madison's thought, a much more thorough study and defense is required for the heterodox arguments he advances. If one is to make innovative assertions on the Madisonian meanings of rights, property, the Bill of Rights, and majoritarianism, much more evidence and argument is needed. Otherwise, the thesis, while novel, is superficial and deceptive.

Weiner attempts to show that the rights and government which Madison's "temporal republicanism" preserves and advances are of a Progressive, Liberal Democrat, even Communitarian variety. Madison, in this view, does not conceive of pre-existing Natural Rights that the government is formed to protect, but those rights are part of the slow, public deliberation that time preserves. He goes so far as to assert (p. 104) that for Madison "If the legislature violates rights anyway, the result is 'disappointing,' but not illegitimate." In any ultimate sense, for Madison, no violation of rights is legitimate, even if done by a majority and temporarily. But in Weiner's Liberal, Communitarian interpretation of Madison, the Founder has ceded timeless Natural Rights to a reasonable, deliberative majority.

This inventive interpretation displays a common pattern in the latter half of this book: a brief quotation from Madison followed by a fanciful misinterpretation. His prefacing of these misreadings with the words "Notice that . . ." or "Note that," are signals that mischief is about to commence.

Professor Weiner begins by revising the famous *Federalist* #10. While acknowledging that Madison is not a “proto-Marxist,” he believes the Founder viewed property as a “political invention” justly controlled by the state, not a Natural Right to be protected by the government. He even cites John Locke to support this extraordinary claim (p. 74). Thus, the author blithely redefines both Madison and Locke: “. . . Madison’s obvious debt to Locke, indicates that when the former spoke of the right to property, it was a civil as opposed to a natural right” (p. 75). This belies the clear and obvious description of rights, property and the role of the government in both Madison and Locke. Mr. Weiner and his Progressive ilk have plenty of “proto-Marxists” in the American political thought tradition without inappropriately expropriating Madison. Locke plainly states in the *Second Treatise* that humans have rights from Nature (not the state or community) of “Life, Liberty and Estate,” and “the great and chief end . . . of Mens uniting into Commonwealths . . . is the Preservation of their Property.” That right is not abrogated by the procedural due process Weiner claims ceded it; it is protected by that legal system. Madison actually writes in *Federalist* #10 (paragraph 4) that the “diversity of faculties” in men, which leads to different amounts of wealth, is to be *protected* by the government. “The protection of these faculties is the first object of government,” Madison writes, and from that “the protection of different and unequal faculties of acquiring property. . . .” Mr. Weiner twists this into a minor procedural right allowing the society to regulate and even violate the Natural right to property so long as the means are not “arbitrary.” But Locke (and Madison) use the term “arbitrary” government to denote a state or ruler (“tyranny”) which violates the Natural right to property, regardless of the means used to do so. Locke writes plainly that “though Men when they enter into Society, give up the . . . Executive Power . . . yet it being only with an intention in every one the better to preserve himself his Liberty and Property . . . [against] Arbitrary Power of another.”

Weiner’s extraordinary argument becomes most bizarre and tortured when he involves “tacit” consent to abandon one’s natural rights to “the community’s right to regulate property” (p. 75), invoking the dubious fragments of Madison’s “Detached Memorandum” to prove that “far from protecting an aristocratic class, Madison’s few writings about the propertied elite support preventing them from accumulating wealth (p. 76).” This fragment of Madison’s “Detached Memorandum” actually refers to *monopolies* supported by government and advocates their dissolution to allow the free market to operate effectively to the benefit of all. This is hardly an attack on *all* accumulated wealth or a confirmation that “Madison explicitly endorsed the regulation of property.” One wonders if Mr. Weiner does not recognize the difference between state-monopoly-generated wealth and free

market-generated wealth, or if something else is going on. He similarly distorts Madison's championing of free speech and press rights as merely instrumental to the working of a deliberative democracy, not derived and cherished as some fundamental *human* right. Weiner correctly notes that Madison's classic defense of free speech and press against the Sedition Acts in his Virginia Resolutions is to protect the right essential to democracy, but it is not admitted as an a priori right apart from its political utility. Here Weiner is his most "communitarian," echoing Benjamin Barber's classic *Strong Democracy*, where the right to free speech is not so much to express individual ideas as to reach a "consensus" (p. 115) or Rousseauist General Will. Again, hardly a standard reading of the American Founders. (Perhaps, we could have a truce, a kind of Democrat "compromise:" I will not try to turn Karl Marx or FDR into Libertarians if the Left agrees not to try to turn Locke, Jefferson and Madison into socialists.)

But seriously, Professor Weiner may benefit here from an acquaintance with the Catholic theologian St. Thomas Aquinas. Not that Madison was a Thomist, but Aquinas's Natural Law philosophy forms a particularly clarifying portion of the long Western tradition of Natural Law and Natural Rights philosophy. The Doctor's formulation of Divine Law, Natural Law and Human Law admits change and variability in the last, given historical and social conditions; but just governmental laws must always conform with "higher" Natural and Divine Laws to be functional and just. For Madison and other Founder's, American statutory law must conform with essential Constitutional Law and its premises in Natural and God's law (rights from "Nature and Nature's God"). For the state (even a majority) to legislate contrary to Natural rights, even for seemingly laudable purposes, will create more problems than they solve.

Ironically, the one Constitutional right that Mr. Weiner allows this inviolate ("inalienable") status is religious liberty or the state not interfering with the church or "liberty of conscience." This is presumably because religion is a purely private matter, not affecting politics or society. Of course, if the Faith ever does get in the way of social interests (say, traditional teachings on marriage) the state can regulate it. The danger, here, of course, as recently revealed in the controversy between the Catholic Church and Obamacare, is that once religious freedom conflicts with the state, guess who wins? All of which shows the slippery slope of state control of Natural Rights. Once a society violates one set of rights (economic) it soon, by a majority, "over time" violates others (political and religious). These rights, ontologically, go together; to violate one inevitably leads to violating (and losing) them all.

Finally, this fascinating and fantastic tome concludes on a contemporary note. The author, Weiner, almost redeems himself by returning to his



original theme of “temporal republicanism” (which probably explains its endorsement by George F. Will). Such slow, deliberate change, our author concludes, requires the virtue of “patience.” Ironically, this Constitutional mechanism, which was to replace the need for Classical “civic virtue,” requires an underlying culture of the Christian virtues of humility and patience. Which is exactly what Madison believed. Sadly, Professor Weiner’s application of “temporal republicanism” misses the mark on the contemporary Obamacare legislation. Weiner claims that after decades of indecision, rational Americans finally reached a consensus on health care reform. Oh, well. Perhaps his analysis will provide solace and resignation to reformers who sought to change so many laws in a fast and furious manner.

Garrett Ward Sheldon

*University of Virginia’s College at Wise*

**Elizabeth Price Foley.** *The Tea Party: Three Principles.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. xvi, 238 pp. (\$25.00 cloth).

It is largely liberals who have paid scholarly attention to the Tea Party. Now from the right, or at least a libertarian and sympathetic point of view, we have Elizabeth Price Foley’s interesting new book to put on the shelf alongside Jill Lepore’s and Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson’s work. With a focus on the movement’s ideas rather than organization and strategy, it is a provocative addition.

Foley’s premise is that the disparate Tea Party is pulled together by three principles, each of which is guided by a deep reverence for the Constitution. This is to the movement’s great credit. Ignorance of our founding document is pervasive and any effort to have policymakers think about it should be applauded. The Constitution’s continued centrality to American life is critical.

The book demonstrates, however, the Tea Party’s embrace of the Constitution borders on fanaticism. The result is often a misunderstanding of the document and, in turn, some contorted logic. The Tea Party’s position, at least as explained by Foley, is interesting and important. It just does not always make sense.

There are numerous examples. Three come quickly to mind. At the heart of Foley’s first principle is that the federal government is one of enumerated and therefore limited authority whereas the states have general police powers that allow them to more legitimately regulate behavior and enforce order. The Tenth Amendment, however, reserves powers to the people and implies states cannot violate them, a point made clear by the Fourteenth

Amendment. When added to the supremacy clause in Article VI you get the distinct impression the Constitution creates a rather ambiguous and balanced relationship between Washington and the states. Current intergovernmental relations may not quite be what the Framers envisioned, but they are about as close to the Constitution in any spatial model of preferences on the matter as the Tea Party's position. Indeed, given the Constitution created our national government to begin with, the Tea Party ought to venerate the Articles of Confederation—a document under which each state had equal power, unanimity was required for action, and the national government had no executive capable of exercising any powers, let alone of the police variety. If Tea Party adherents were alive during the founding period, they would surely have been Antifederalists.

Second, Foley makes “originalism” one of the Tea Party's principles. She argues the movement dislikes the judicial activism permitted by the idea that the Constitution is a “living” document. But the originalism of the Tea Party is an invitation for a robust judiciary. Whereas many conservatives believe the Constitution circumscribes governmental action but legislatures should be permitted to act freely within these boundaries, the Tea Party demands Congress find explicit constitutional justification before it acts. The former philosophy calls on judges to give legislatures the benefit of the doubt. The Tea Party seems to want every congressional action subject to judicial permission.

Third, Foley makes much of the Tea Party's desire to protect American sovereignty from international law. Once the United States signs agreements with other countries it relinquishes authority and essentially compromises the Constitution. This is one of her three principles and constitutes an “un-apologetic defense” (p. 76) of American interests. It seems to me, however, that the United States generally enters into international accords for its own benefit—as well it should. Take intellectual property. Clearly one of the country's most important exports, the American economy would suffer tremendously without a global commitment to respect patents and copyrights only made credible by a pledge to honor the same rules within its own borders. We can argue about how effective enforcement mechanisms are but there is no doubt international institutions frequently serve fundamental American goals.

Foley betrays the limits of Tea Party thought in addition to its inconsistencies. The first third of the book is dominated by a discussion of the Tea Party's vehement opposition to Obamacare, a position lacking any sensitivity to policy and politics. When the Democrats first put the issue on the agenda, many conservatives argued for legislation to bring market forces to bear on health care. This would have the salubrious effects of increasing transparency and competition and reducing costs. It has largely been aban-

done. Now instead of arguments infused with empiricism and founding principles like individual freedom, the Tea Party reflexively waves the Constitution. I understand Foley is a law professor, but there is more to policymaking than legal analysis. Using generally accepted metrics, bad policies ought to be refuted on the basis they are not in the public interest and will worsen the *status quo ex ante*. They can also be replaced with something that would markedly improve matters. The Tea Party's rather vengeful and unimaginative repeal obsession is therefore similarly unsatisfying.

In her treatment of Obamacare, Foley explains the logical limit to the administration's interpretation of the commerce clause is that only the federal government can regulate economic activity. That may be true, in theory. But public policy is enacted and applied in the real world. The American public cares little for abstractions. It desires practical policies and often moderates extreme proposals. This is a fact Foley frequently ignores. Indeed, she has a tendency to exaggerate threats to the republic. There are far fewer globalists, advocates of a living Constitution and denigrators of the Founders than she would have us believe.

Perhaps the biggest failing of this, and for that matter all of the work on the Tea Party, is that the movement is presented as something it is not. Foley rightly criticizes those on the left who see it merely as a very conservative arm of the Republican Party or a bunch of racists. It is not just a reflexive repudiation of President Obama. Yet neither does the rank-and-file hold a coherent political philosophy. They are, instead, a loose collection of individuals with a deep fear of the future and an attachment to the past—and by that I mean the 1950s not the 1770s and 1780s. Most Tea Party adherents are white, non-college educated, and middle class. In middle age and beyond, they have seen their values ridiculed by contemporary social practices and their standard of living drop in the face of new technologies and global competition. They dislike elites and those they believe form the “entitlement” class. They are reaching for change, something for which it is difficult to blame them. Twenty years ago, when things were not quite as bad, many of them flocked to Ross Perot. Today they have found, in the Tea Party, a new outlet for their frustration.

Andrew J. Taylor  
*North Carolina State University*

**Martin A. Levin, Daniel DiSalvo, and Martin M. Shapiro, eds.** *Building Coalitions, Making Policy: The Politics of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Presidencies*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012. vii, 205 pp. (\$65.00 hardcover, \$30.00 paperback).

In an era of highly partisan and polarized politics, it is easy for observers of American political affairs to lose faith in governmental institutions amid the tension and gridlock that often seems to foil policy making progress in the Washington beltway. Americans rarely feel optimistic about the prospect of strong policy solutions arising from the so-called “Do Nothing” Congress, and presidential appeals for bipartisan cooperation on Capitol Hill are seldom taken seriously. Nevertheless, legislators do—now and then—manage to set aside their partisan bickering to produce important pieces of legislation, with presidents often at the helm in proposing and promoting key policy initiatives that stand to have a major impact on society.

In their latest edited volume, Martin A. Levin, Daniel DiSalvo, and Martin M. Shapiro bring together a talented roster of scholars to explore the extent to which presidential coalition building efforts in the legislative arena aid the policy making process, with a particular emphasis on understanding the key dynamics that help lead to policy success. Focusing on the Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama presidencies, the volume delves into the history behind some of the most noteworthy coalition building efforts that have resulted in the passage of major policy programs as well as other failed, if commendable, efforts towards compromise with lessons to be learned. In doing so, the authors bring to light various avenues of success that presidents may turn to for “getting past no” in the legislative arena. Such avenues are vital at a time when partisan opponents not only squabble vigorously on the House and Senate floors (hardly a new occurrence), but also increasingly shun common courtesy in a manner that departs considerably from previous eras.

Picking up from a previous volume, *Seeking the Center: Policymaking at the New Century* (Georgetown University Press), the authors point to the 1990s when President Clinton sought to maintain support from the left base while reaching out to the center and various new constituencies as a means of expanding support, a strategy which serves in this volume as a baseline comparison to the Bush and Obama years. In assessing each administration, they focus on the party politics involved in coalition building and the challenges presidents face in trying to bring together disparate constituencies to make things happen. The resulting dilemma represents the crux of the puzzle presidents continually struggle to solve: how can one successfully develop the kind of *interparty* coalition that leads to bipartisan compromise and success without deteriorating one’s *intraparty* coalition base of support? As

well, congressional leaders face the same dilemma, which is particularly difficult to overcome in instances of divided government where House and/or Senate leaders of the majority party speak from the opposite side of the ideological spectrum from the president. Add to that the recent tensions caused by movements outside of the standard two-party dynamic (e.g., the Tea Party movement), and the situation is further complicated.

For each president, there is also the challenge of balancing the desires of electoral politics in the short-run with the prospect of one's long-term policy goals. For instance, President George W. Bush's "compassionate conservatism" was an active interparty strategy employed in key policy realms such as education, immigration, and health care. Meanwhile, Bush simultaneously employed bare-knuckle tactics to satisfy the Republican base with numerous economic and social policies targeting key business and social conservative constituencies. Though effective in passing certain programs such as the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act and the 2003 Medicare prescription drug reform bill, the strategy ultimately led to waning support from conservative circles that hurt the Republican Party and helped ignite the Tea Party movement, which has since defied the Republican establishment and shifted the party platform in subsequent elections. On the one hand, Bush's legacy as a stalwart conservative of the Reagan era took a hard hit. On the other hand, the president had managed to get past the naysayers in Congress to score legislative victories. The experience was not altogether different from Clinton's experience with the Democratic Party with one exception: while the Clinton era had been free from an all-encompassing national security crisis, George W. Bush, initially a domestic policy-centered candidate, quickly transformed into a full-time war president following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001. Thereafter, Bush began framing his arguments around national security, which raised the salience of foreign policy issues over the conservative base's misgivings about some of the more moderate domestic policies being proposed, thereby somewhat subduing a major backlash from the right-wing.

The authors likewise investigate President Obama's first term, during which he has experienced some difficulties, both in building intraparty coalitions under a unified government as well as in reaching out to conservatives to build interparty coalitions, particularly since the 2010 midterm elections. In examining such developments, the authors go to great lengths to evaluate the advantages and pitfalls that may befall an administration seeking support from various constituencies, how they can lead to coalitions in the House and Senate that produce policy successes, and what the implications of such successes might be, both with respect to impending elections as well as to a president's overall legacy on policy reforms.

For modern presidents, a memorable legacy is largely built on having key policy programs successfully moved through the legislative arena. Though presidents often face innumerable obstacles in getting their legislative initiatives passed, such obstacles are grounded in the core dynamics of a system of separated checks and balances, and have long been a source not only for tension and gridlock, but also for producing legislation that is responsive to the national electorate. As such, the insights provided in this volume concerning the role that coalition building plays in mediating the policy making process are apt for generating valuable discussion and debate. Undoubtedly, this volume is a useful tool for academics and practitioners alike that deserves a wide readership throughout the discipline and across political circles.

José D. Villalobos  
*University of Texas at El Paso*

## *The American Review of Politics is Seeking a New Editor*

*The American Review of Politics* is currently published through the Department of Political Science at the University of Arkansas. The journal covers an array of topics in American politics, but has focused in recent years more heavily on political parties and Southern politics.

Given the wide range of articles included in the journal, the editor is expected to be an established scholar who understands the breadth of the American politics field and be conversant and knowledgeable about the diverse scholarship of this field. The editor is expected to be responsive to the individuals who submit manuscripts to the journal and able to provide constructive feedback to those individuals. In addition, the editor will be responsible for a variety of organizational and managerial functions associated with editing a journal. These will include appointing members of the editorial board, appointing associate or co-editors, appointing a book review editor, soliciting manuscripts for publication, and maintaining subscription and financial records for the journal.

The current publication cycle includes one print run that combines both spring and summer issues and a second printing including the fall and winter issues. The current editorial team will publish the journal through Volume 34, which will cover the Fall 2013 and Winter 2014 issues. The new editor and staff will be responsible for soliciting manuscripts for and publication of the Spring and Summer 2014 issues.

Interested individuals should provide a vita, a statement of interest describing their vision for the journal, and a letter of support from the host institution. Please contact Andrew Dowdle, 428 Old Main, Department of Political Science, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR 72701 or via email to [adowdle@uark.edu](mailto:adowdle@uark.edu).