

Alvarez, Michael R., and Bernard Grofman, eds. *Election Administration in the United States: The State of Reform after Bush v. Gore*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, xxxii, 247 pp. (\$29.99 paper)

Election Administration in the United States: The State of Reform after Bush v. Gore offers a well written, informative, and insightful set of essays on the current state of election reform. Editors Michael Alvarez and Bernard Grofman assemble a collection of eleven chapters that nicely distinguishes between what we know, what we think we know, and what we do not know about the consequences of such reform.

Election Administration in the United States places *Bush v. Gore* as the center-point around which develops a dialogue on the nature of election administration and reform in the United States. The authors employ *Bush v. Gore* to highlight the problems experienced in administering the 2000 presidential election, particularly those in the state of Florida. These issues include long lines at polling places, questions about voter fraud, questions about votes not being counted, difficulty in voting, and citizens being turned away from polling places due to problems with registration lists. Accordingly, the chapters in this volume address reforms designed to make voting and registration more convenient. These reforms include early voting, voting by mail, and a centralized voter registration database to ensure that each vote counts via modern voting machines. The authors also examine friendly ballot designs and the need to examine the training provided to poll workers in order to alleviate voter confusion caused by ballot format or the voting environment. Lastly, they examine efforts to eliminate voter fraud through a consideration of mandated voter identification and felon disenfranchisement.

A particular strength of this volume is its breadth of scope. Collectively, the eleven chapters can be understood as analyzing the consequences of *Bush v. Gore* along several dimensions. One of these involves where the *Bush* decision has had the greatest impact, whether in the realm of state or federal legislative activity, judicial decision making, or mass public opinion. A second involves the connection between the *Bush v. Gore* decision and reform. To what extent did *Bush v. Gore*, including the election problems associated with this decision, lead to reform? In answer to this, consideration is given both to reform motivated as a more-or-less result of the *Bush* decision, as exemplified by the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA), as well as to reform that may have been given added impetus by the 2000 presidential election, but, as in the case of early voting, was independent of it. This volume's broad scope is also seen in the range of approaches to this issue reflected in the readings, from thorough descriptive accounts of the 2000 presidential election, particularly in Florida, to a focus on theory development and testing, to advocacy for changes in election administration.

The book is organized into three parts: *Bush v. Gore* in perspective, changes in election administration since *Bush v. Gore*, and remaining challenges. The three chapters that comprise Part I deal with direct results of this 2000 U.S. Supreme Court decision. These include HAVA, citations by federal and state courts of *Bush v. Gore*, and the lasting influence of this Court decision on public opinion. These descriptive chapters may offer scholars guidance regarding future study into the ramifications of the *Bush* decision, whether in the legislative, judicial, or mass opinion realms. While the legislative and mass public opinion realms may be fertile ground for future research, as many of the chapters that follow suggest, the impact on judicial

decision making cannot be overlooked. Charles Anthony Smith's essay on the frequency with which *Bush v. Gore* has been cited by federal and state courts highlights the potential for this decision to have substantial judicial ramifications in the future.

The four chapters that make up Part II, arguably the core of this volume, test for the impact of numerous election reforms that relate to issues that surrounded the 2000 presidential election, highlighted by the Florida election debacle. Using empirical data to assess the outcome of various reforms, particularly those designed to increase participation such as voting by mail, these chapters address measures that are a direct result of the 2000 election, such as HAVA, in addition to issues that were ongoing and prior to the election, such as early voting and voting accessibility for the physically handicapped. Interestingly, several findings challenge assumptions that have underpinned the call for specific reforms. One of these, from Charles Stewart's chapter on the consequences of HAVA, is the lack of compelling evidence about the existence of substantial levels of voter fraud, as opposed to mistakes; however, Lonna Rae Atkeson's analysis of voter confidence finds that perception of fraud matters in reducing levels of confidence. Another finding that may challenge some assumptions, from Jan E. Leighley's and Jonathan Nagler's examination of absentee ballots, concerns the influence of permanent absentee ballots on turnout. While turnout may generally increase when voting is made more convenient, specific reforms may not always produce this desired outcome. Voter turnout is linked with voters' ability to vote by absentee ballot, but not with a provision for permanent absentee ballot status as opposed to the provision that citizens request an absentee ballot anew for each election.

The four chapters that compose Part III consider election reform issues that have been accorded less systematic attention than those addressed in the prior sections. In contrast to the contributions in Part I that are chiefly descriptive, or those in Part II that tend to emphasize empirical tests of theory, those in part III take on an advocacy role. This is exemplified by Alvarez's and Thad E. Hall's call for state-level or even a national-level centralized voter registration database, essentially an appeal for the continuation of the process of digitizing state voter registration lists required by HAVA. Similarly, the other chapters in this section advocate for a more user-friendly ballot design, greater attention paid to the important role played by poll workers, and a reconsideration of the disenfranchisement of felons.

While not geared for the casual reader, neither is this volume directed solely at voting rights experts. The editors and various contributors make noticeable efforts to appeal to those broadly familiar and comfortable with political science research on voting behavior and voting rights; in this respect, the glossary proves helpful. It would have been ideal to have a chapter devoted specifically to a discussion of the 2000 Florida presidential election. As Amy Semet, Nathaniel Persily and Stephen Ansolabehere note in their discussion of the long-term influence of *Bush v. Gore* on public opinion, the decision over time will become historical knowledge rather than knowledge based on having lived through the experience to a growing portion of citizens. However, sufficient background on the Supreme Court's decision along with problems in election administration in the 2000 presidential election can be ascertained through the various existing chapters and through the extensive endnotes provided by the chapters. In all, this excellent volume will appeal to a broad spectrum of scholars, legal experts, graduate students, and anyone willing to devote the time to election studies and social science methodology. For

these audiences, this volume will create significant interest in and encourage thought about, the election process in the United States, and the numerous pitfalls that the complicated task of putting democracy into practice engender.

James M. Vanderleeuw
Lamar University