

**No Child Left Behind and the Transformation of Federal Education Policy, 1965-2005** by Patrick J. McGuinn. Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 2006. 260 pp. Cloth, \$40.00; paper, \$19.95.

Washington's increasing attention to American schools suggests three interesting puzzles that Patrick McGuinn explores in this study of federal education policy. Why have liberals and conservatives both supported a more active federal role in education? Why did this expanded role unfold during a period when devolution and deregulation were gaining momentum? How does one account for major policy changes that often seem unlikely to occur in the American political system?

McGuinn answers those questions by focusing on the evolution of federal education policy since 1965. Analytically, he uses a "policy regimes" approach that he argues is better at capturing change than other models such as punctuated equilibrium theory (pp. 11, 209) or approaches that focus narrowly on specific causal mechanisms (pp. 16, 17). The book is informed by rich sources, including elite interviews, primary and secondary documents, and public opinion polls. McGuinn marshals his evidence to briefly summarize policy changes from 1965 to 1988, before offering detailed chapters on the 1988 to 2005 period, the book's primary focus.

McGuinn argues that the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) signaled the clear emergence of a new policy regime that had been building since 1988. No longer do federal policymakers simply focus on ensuring equity for disadvantaged students and monitoring policy inputs, he says. Rather, McGuinn sees a fundamentally new regime that now stresses excellence for all students, backed by high-stakes accountability for results. That shift, McGuinn notes, was built by conservatives and liberals who charted a middle path while sidestepping the preferences of key interest groups in their respective coalitions.

This book is required reading for students, scholars, and policymakers who seek a historical account of the evolving federal role in education. McGuinn provides great launching pads for several discussions about the policy and politics that Washington's efforts have fostered. Consider, for example, his view that the equity regime guiding the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act was "eviscerated" (p. 50) by events during the 1980s and eventually replaced by a new regime focused on educational excellence for all students. While federal officials now discuss achievement for all, it may be that excellence has not replaced, but rather joined, equity as an additional federal concern in a hybridized equity-excellence policy regime. Even today, leaders such as President George W. Bush, Representative George Miller (D-CA), who was a key architect of NCLB, and others who McGuinn quotes (for example, pp. 136, 141, 142, 159) emphasize the need to eliminate glaring achievement gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged student groups. Also, NCLB's authorizing provisions still distribute funds based primarily on economic need. In short, an equity impulse remains, even as excellence has

become more important. McGuinn's account will help focus debates over the tensions between equity and excellence and the government's ability to promote both.

The book will also inform discussions about how federal education policy has influenced the American federal system more generally. McGuinn argues that NCLB represents a "new educational federalism," in which Washington is now a "national schoolmarm . . . watching those states that fail to record satisfactory and timely progress toward federal education goals" (p. 195). Clearly, federal policymakers now act more aggressively in K-12 education. But some authors (myself included) have argued that Washington's willingness to offer the states flexibility on NCLB's key requirements, and its reliance on the states to develop curriculum standards and tests, illustrate how state preferences remain powerful forces that help shape federal policy. By addressing the federalism issue, though, McGuinn provides a great vehicle for informing debates about how subsequent federal education efforts will likely affect relationships across the American federal system.

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**School's In: Federalism and the National Education Agenda** by Paul Manna. Washington DC, Georgetown University Press, 2006. 209 pp. \$26.95.

The case for a new view of federalism is given credence through an exhaustive analysis of the national education agenda in the twenty-first-century United States. The author's "borrowing strength" (p. 5) model highlights a new way to view the politics of power within the federal system. In the past, power was often studied in terms of its distribution and use. The preferences of those with a significant amount of power tended to sideline the preferences of those with little or no power. Even developments in network theories of federalism have a tendency to look at significant hubs as loci of power and influence, implicitly identifying weaker network regions and areas of minimal influence.

Paul Manna's analysis, however, invites the reader to consider federalism at a more complex level. The "borrowing strength" model argues that while actors within a federal system can be identified nominally, power can be shared for greater influence at particular policy moments. According to Manna, borrowing theory can be studied by focusing on two dimensions of policy: the capacity and the license of government to act. When a government has both the capacity and the license to act, then government is likely to create policy. When a government has neither the capacity nor the license to act, then policy entrepreneurs are "standing by" (p. 34), anticipating the opening of a policy window. In most instances, however, the distinctions are not as sharp. A government may have the capacity but lack the license to act or vice versa; government then seeks to borrow strength from other actors who are likely to

possess the capacity or the license to act and essentially lend influence to actors who are in need of it in promoting a policy.

National education policy initiatives such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) prove to be a solid case for study to demonstrate the utility of borrowing strength theory. Through a longitudinal analysis of education policy interest and influence, the author illustrates the growing interest of the national government in K-12 education policy over the last four decades. National interest has been buttressed by fairly steady presidential support for a national policy solution. National budget commitment to education has grown tremendously, although political parties differ over specific educational priorities. Consider the history of U.S. federalism: national influence relies on state and local strength; their role cannot be ignored in analyzing education policy.

Manna's thesis, therefore, has very important implications for how to best study the implementation of NCLB. Critics of the sweeping education policy reform often view it as a national-level effort to further enhance the national influence in K-12 education policy. If Manna is correct, then national education policy entrepreneurs must borrow strength from state and local actors in order to implement policy. The presidency must also maintain efforts to borrow strength from Congress. Manna's interviewees indicate that the effort to maintain these strength-borrowing ties contracted over time, limiting the capacity to borrow needed influence.

Manna has developed a novel way to consider the nature of federalism. His analysis of NCLB and other national education policies should be required reading for individuals interested in pursuing education policy as a course of study.

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**Common Ground: Committee Politics in the U.S. House of Representatives** by John Baughman. Palo Alto, CA, Stanford University Press, 2006. 272 pp. \$50.00.

Often in politics, jurisdiction is power. Within the U.S. Congress, for example, legislators influence public policy largely through their committee assignments, which grant them important first-mover advantages in the crafting of legislation and oversight of the executive branch. Most major policy issues are wide-ranging in scope, however, and thus not especially conducive to clear-cut lines of responsibility. On Capitol Hill, jurisdictional boundaries often overlap, and conflict over turf is commonplace. In this valuable new book, John Baughman identifies the conditions associated with conflict and cooperation between House committees over turf and sheds valuable new light on inter-committee bargaining, the role of party leaders in managing the committee system, and the consequences of jurisdictional fragmentation for policy making in the modern House. The book is essential reading for congressional scholars for several reasons.

First, Baughman exhibits a nuanced understanding of the history of jurisdictional politics and an insider's knowledge of how committee leaders and staff deal with jurisdictional issues. For instance, he provides the most compelling description that we have of the effects on inter-committee relations from the Bolling reforms of 1974 and the GOP rules changes of 1995. In preparing the book, Baughman conducted dozens of interviews with legislators, committee aides, and parliamentary staff, and it shows. His book is a great illustration of the benefits to be derived from a "multi-method" approach to gathering data.

Second, the book breaks important new theoretical ground for conceptualizing about legislatures. Baughman applies concepts from transaction costs economics to generate predictions about when jurisdictional conflict will break out between House panels. Some that counter-intuitively, regular interactions between committees over shared jurisdictional responsibilities are conducive to more, rather than less, cooperation over turf and legislation. Baughman's conceptual framework also helps us understand the conditions under which partisan, distributive, and informational models will have the most explanatory power over inter-committee politics, helping to clarify perhaps the central conceptual controversy in recent congressional scholarship.

Third, the author subjects the predictions of his conceptual framework to a wide range of rigorous and substantively interesting empirical tests. There is a wealth of new evidence about committee bargaining and leadership strategy in this book. To my knowledge, he is the first scholar to simultaneously model the determinants of legislative success at the committee and floor stages (using bivariate probit). He conducts a multivariate analysis of the use of committee "waiver letters," which serves as an imaginative and useful indicator of inter-panel reciprocity. Baughman uses a number of case studies, such as an analysis of trade legislation during the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, to add rich perspective about how potentially competing committees can work together to build majority coalitions. The chapter on the role of party leaders includes a first-rate analysis of the mechanisms and strategies used by the House leadership to coordinate policy making when jurisdiction over issues is shared by two or more standing committees.

In short, *Common Ground* raises and answers some important normative questions about committee politics. It features insightful theorizing about inter-committee bargaining. And it marshals extensive evidence about the consequences of overlapping jurisdictional boundaries for member behavior and the content of legislation. Although the analysis is systematic and rigorous throughout, Baughman does a great job of integrating anecdotes and examples, and the book is extremely well written. It should be of value to any informed reader with an interest in the congressional legislative process.

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