

model (17 elections) with presidential approval, evaluations of the economy, and seat exposure on the right-hand side raises estimated R^2 from .45 to .78. They clearly have found something here.

Their final chapter does a nice job of pulling the various pieces together to tell a story in which public evaluations of the ideological directions of congressional policy play a substantially larger role than in major extant accounts. If their story is right, then the substantial legislation passed in the first years of the Obama administration (the stimulus package, health care, and financial reform) should yield a drop in congressional approval (more policy distant from the voters) and, indeed, the run-up to the 2010 election has congressional rating at an all-time low. According to their analysis, this should add substantially to Democratic midterm losses, even if Obama were able to regain some of his popularity and the economy improved. [*Editor's note:* This review was written before the Republicans regained control of the House in the 2010 elections.]

Jones and McDermott accept the limited information-processing proclivities of the average citizen and show that within these, the public glean adequate impressions of congressional policy to alter, via elections, the general directions of national policy. The account is fully compatible with the general picture of the mutual responsiveness of voters, the institutions of national policymaking, and policy outputs offered by Robert S. Erikson et al., in *Macro Polity* (2002). Jones and McDermott's book is more narrowly focused on the role of congressional performance evaluations. The findings alter our accounts of congressional elections in ways that strengthen the hand of those who believe that the democratic process works reasonably well.

Any good analysis raises new questions, and this book is no exception. One is that responses to the congressional job performance question seem to be in reaction to the House rather than the Senate. This odd asymmetry is noted but not explored. One wonders whether the Senate somehow has no effect on the public, or perhaps that when asked about "Congress," many citizens think of the House of Representatives. That possibility opens up a further question of what the congressional job item actually measures. Specifically, how much do responses to the items reflect ideological judgments about policy directions (which the authors emphasize) versus process dissatisfaction, scandals, or generalized frustration with the partisanship and intensity of conflict? Is this the best measure of the public's policy judgments about Congress? Future work might ask, for example, whether other variables that seem not to have made their way into the congressional prediction models—such as whether the country is moving in the "right/wrong direction" or public responses to the "generic ballot" about which party respondents would prefer to control Congress—might pick up the policy evaluations perhaps even more cleanly than the congressional job performance item. But these are questions, the answers to which would

most likely only underline and reinforce the authors' main argument about the important role of policy evaluations of the majority party and how they deserve a place right next to presidential evaluations and the state of the economy in our explanations for the makeup of Congress and changes in congressional policymaking. This is an important book, and it will change how we think about the linkages among congressional policymaking, elections, and the public's policy preferences.

Reforms at Risk: What Happens After Major Policy Changes Are Enacted. By Eric M. Patashnik. Princeton:

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— Michael T. Heaney, *University of Michigan*

Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky's (1973) classic book *Implementation* illustrates how failures of policy implementation are an important reason why the aims of many public policies are never realized. It demonstrates "[h]ow great expectations in Washington are dashed in Oakland." In advancing this argument, Pressman and Wildavsky laid the foundation for what would become an expansive literature in public policy studies on how organizational and political factors often instigate the failure of public policies in a federal system of government.

In *Reforms at Risk*, Eric M. Patashnik advances an argument that is a close cousin of that of Pressman and Wildavsky, yet offers a distinctly new angle. Patashnik points out how great expectations in Washington are often dashed . . . in *Washington*. He offers examples of elected officials who undo their own work by passing laws that reverse or unravel earlier general-interest reforms. Thus, he highlights the fact that reforms sometimes fail to achieve their goals because the coalition that originally supported them breaks down over time. Accordingly, "the passage of a reform law is only the beginning of a political struggle. . . . By itself . . . the passage of a reform act does not settle *anything*" (p. 3; original emphasis).

Patashnik investigates seven cases of general-interest reforms that were enacted between 1974 and 1996. He defines a general-interest reform as a "non-incremental change of an existing line of policymaking intended to rationalize governmental undertakings or to distribute benefits to some broad constituencies" (p. 2; emphasis removed from original). The cases are selected because of their importance to public policy, as well to ensure variation in the tools of government action, the perceived costs of reform, and the ultimate success of reform. These criteria led Patashnik to select the following cases: the Tax Reform Act of 1986, the Freedom to Farm reforms of 1996, the Employment Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, the Medicare Catastrophic Coverage Act of 1988, a series of federal procurement reforms from 1994 to 1996, the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978, and the

introduction of emissions trading in the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. For each of these reforms, he asks whether it was sustained over time, as well as what political factors contributed to its perpetuation or disassembly.

The principal argument of the book is that reforms are most likely to be sustained when they reconfigure political dynamics. This argument envisions the initial legislative passage as the first of two stages of a reform. In the first stage, reform proponents struggle to put their proposal on the agenda and enable it to pass through multiple veto points. In the second stage, reform proponents must resist challenges from proponents of the status quo ante if they are to sustain the reform. To do so, they must raise awareness among uninformed citizens of the reform's benefits, modify the procedural context of decision making to the advantage of the reform, and make tactical concessions to the reform's opponents. These strategies may not work in the long term, however, if the media push alternative issue definitions, opponents find routes around procedural tricks, and opponents become dissatisfied with, and unwilling to live by, the compromises that they made during the first stage. Reforms are likely to survive these challenges when they build political structures that strengthen the reform's governing capacity, successfully break up the political order of the status quo ante, and generate policy feedbacks that create constituencies, undermine the cohesion and alter the mind-set of opponents, and stigmatize the beneficiaries of the status quo ante.

Patashnik's argument is well illustrated by his chosen cases. For example, the Tax Reform Act of 1986 was an impressive general-interest reform that streamlined the tax code and eliminated myriad special-interest exemptions. Yet the reform did not reconfigure political dynamics that favor particularized tax deductions, thus allowing a plethora of new tax breaks, such as the rise of corporate tax shelters in the 1990s, which eroded the goals of the reform. In contrast, airline deregulation survived as a reform by fundamentally changing the political dynamics surrounding the airline industry. The reform shattered the preexisting regulatory framework established by the Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938. The airline industry accepted the new legal framework by investing in hub-and-spoke networks, and consumers came to enjoy lower prices of airline tickets. As evidence of its durability, the reform survived the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which could have been an opportunity for opponents to unravel it.

In his concluding chapter, Patashnik sets out to explain patterns of reform sustainability. Which types of reforms are likely to be sustained, and which types are likely to be eroded? One of his conclusions is that market-based reforms are "an especially powerful mechanism for reconfiguring the interest group pressures that impinge on government over time" (p. 169; emphasis removed from original). However, the reader is left to wonder whether this conclusion

is an artifact of the relatively narrow time window for cases that were included in the research. It may appear that market-based reforms are more sustainable because the study was based on data from a period when they were particularly prominent. Further, market-based reforms, such as airline deregulation and emissions trading, have been observed for a relatively brief period when placed against the full range of American history. If a different 22-year period had been selected, perhaps market-oriented reforms would have been found equally (or less) likely to reconfigure interest group pressures than other reforms. For example, a study conducted using data from the 1940s might have found that the market-based initiatives of the 1920s appeared to be less amenable to interest groups than the big-government reforms of the 1930s.

My point is not to criticize too harshly Patashnik's decision to select cases from a relatively narrow slice of history. Indeed, he should be praised for his skill at systematic qualitative comparison of historical cases. Rather, it is to point out that his conclusions are affected by the specific historical period on which the research focuses. The reader might, thus, make a mental note that these conclusions seem to hold reasonably well for policies enacted between 1974 and 1996. Extrapolation beyond this period may not be wise. Rather than viewing this as a limitation of the study, however, the reader might view it as opening a window to future research. Specifically, how have the determinants of reform sustainability changed over time? As a case in point, we might view rate-and-route regulations enacted through the Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938—which lasted for 40 years before being dismantled—as a highly sustainable reform. Technically, rate-and-route regulation demonstrated greater sustainability (40 years) than has so far been demonstrated by deregulation (32 years). What made the regulations of the New Deal era so sustainable? We would be unlikely to list their unleashing of market-based forces as one of the primary explanations.

My criticisms of the book are truly minor in nature. Patashnik has once again demonstrated excellence in policy scholarship. His effort to compare diverse reforms over a number of years is unusual and worthy of imitation by a wider range of scholars. He speaks instructively to literatures on punctuated equilibrium, American political development, interest group politics, regulation, and policy reform. As a result, *Reforms at Risk* deserves careful attention from any serious scholar of American public policy.

Presidential Rhetoric and the Public Agenda. By

Andrew B. Whitford and Jeff Yates. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009. 217p. \$55.00.

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Studies of presidential leadership have focused heavily on the ability of presidents to sway public opinion and shape