The Connecticut Constitution of 1818, regarded as a critical turning point in the history of Connecticut’s rich constitutional tradition, established a three-branch system of state government. Each branch of government was given its own independent sphere of constitutional authority and each branch was empowered to impose checks on the others. The separation of powers doctrine, combined with a system of checks and balances, was firmly embraced and maintained in the Constitution of 1965.

Beginning with the devolution of power to state governments in the early 1980s and extending to the present, the three branches of government have been modernized to accommodate the growing needs of Connecticut’s diverse population. The people of Connecticut, as public opinion polls strongly suggest, expect a high level of performance from their state government. Moreover, the public demands an array of state-supported services and programs. The three branches of government, rather than ignore and dismiss such trends, have responded to the needs of the public by modernizing their operations in practically every respect. The end result is a state government with more capacity and hence more ability to effectively meet the changing and growing needs of the state’s population.
The Connecticut State Legislature

The term "little Congress" seems quite appropriate for describing the Connecticut General Assembly. Although still a part-time legislature, the Connecticut General Assembly in many ways exhibits the same characteristics as those of the United States Congress. This can be observed in the serious structural changes that have taken place at the state Capitol during the nineteen-eighties, as well as the vast proliferation of staff personnel and support services provided to Connecticut lawmakers. Moreover, many state lawmakers, although still considered "citizen legislators," have in reality become full-time professional lawmakers. A sizeable number of state lawmakers always seem to be present at the state Capitol, regardless of whether the General Assembly is in session.

The Legislative Office Building

A tour of the Connecticut state Capitol begins in the building adjacent to the Capitol, the Legislative Office Building (L.O.B). A 500-foot underground concourse connects the L.O.B. with the main Capitol building. Completed in 1987 at the cost of $66 million dollars, the five-story L.O.B. is one of the most technologically sophisticated legislative office buildings in the United States. The offices of state lawmakers and legislative support staff are housed in the L.O.B. The ornate building is also home to ten state-of-the-art committee hearing rooms. Hearing rooms, the offices of state lawmakers, and the two legislative chambers in the Capitol building are all interconnected through an intricate and complex system of electronic cables and computer monitors. Lawmakers unable to attend legislative hearings or floor debate can follow proceedings on monitors designed for this purpose. The technology of the L.O.B. was also designed to serve the needs of the Connecticut public. Should public attendance at hearings exceed seating capacity, video screens and monitors located in additional hearing rooms permit the public to observe the proceedings. The L.O.B. is lavish in its décor and architectural detail, perhaps to the point of extravagance.
The L.O.B., more than any other government building at the state capital, symbolizes Connecticut's long-term commitment to meeting the varied and proliferating demands of the state's three million inhabitants. Although public opinion polls suggest public displeasure with the state legislature's performance in recent years, the technology offered to state lawmakers most certainly enhances the legislature's capacity for efficient and responsive lawmaking. Technological support alone may not guarantee effective legislative performance, although such technology is nevertheless a tremendous asset for the purposes of knowing, and responding to, the needs of the Connecticut public.

Support Offices and Legislative Staff

In addition to sophisticated technology and a state-of-the-art legislative office complex, state lawmakers have also come to depend quite heavily on state employed personnel located in legislative support offices and legislative staffs. The activity of support office and staff personnel has in recent years become indispensable with respect to assisting state legislators with the many complex dimensions associated with lawmaking.

Five nonpartisan support offices, which report to the Joint Committee on Legislative Management, provide an array of critical services to state lawmakers. The Office of Legislative Research serves as the research and information arm of the state legislature. The Office of Fiscal Analysis analyzes the fiscal dimensions and financial implications of legislative proposals. The Program Review and Investigations Committee assists lawmakers with the difficult task of administrative oversight. This involves the periodic review of executive agency activity to determine if in fact agencies are implementing laws in accordance with the intent of the law. In some cases, review and oversight can evolve into a full-blown investigation regarding executive agency malfeasance. The Law Review Commission, which is yet another support office, is responsible for revising, refining, and updating Connecticut's General Statutes. The Legislative Commissions Office offers consultation to lawmakers on the legal language of bills and potential conflicts between legislative statutes and the
Connecticut Constitution. The five non-partisan offices are in close and daily contact with state lawmakers throughout the legislative session and in many ways have become integral to the making and implementation of laws. Non-partisan personnel currently account for 55 percent of all full-time staff at the Capitol.

Legislative staffs, which are also under the direction of the Joint Committee on Legislative Management, have also proliferated at the state Capitol, a trend very similar to that of the United States Congress. Like congressional staffs, legislative staffs in Connecticut have assumed multiple functions related to lawmaking. Legislative staffs at the Capitol have been established to assist legislative standing committees and, more generally, the political parties within the legislature. Even the most casual observer cannot help but notice the highly visible and fast-paced movement of legislative staff personnel throughout the corridors and offices of the L.O.B. and Capitol building. Legislative staff workers, unlike those who work in support offices, are classified as partisan personnel. Partisan staff workers currently account for 45 percent of all full-time personnel at the state Capitol.

The partisan legislative staffs are formally connected to the four party caucuses in the state Capitol: the House Democrats, the House Republicans, the Senate Democrats, and the Senate Republicans. Some staffers work directly for a caucus, while others are assigned to the twenty-two legislative committees. Some staffers work at the Capitol in a full-time, year-round capacity, while others are full-time employees only while the legislature is in session. Approximately seventy-five individuals are full-time committee staffers while the legislature is in session, while approximately twenty-five to thirty individuals are full-time throughout the year. The extent to which legislative staffers have become central to the operation of the state legislature is best expressed in the words of Michael Sohn, a Republican caucus staff worker employed in the House chamber: “As staffers working in a part-time legislature, we have in many ways become the eyes and ears of our legislators. We keep our ear to the ground and help our legislators transform popular and important issues into legislation.” As Sohn notes, a large part of a staffer’s day is
devoted to constituent service and working with state agencies to resolve constituent problems. Staffers, according to Sohn, have also assumed a critical role with respect to tracking and drafting legislation and preparing lawmakers for debate and negotiation.

The number of support personnel at the Connecticut State Capitol has become quite significant. At year 2000, one discovers more than 550 paid support personnel working at the Connecticut state Capitol during the legislative session. This figure includes 393 year round, full-time non-partisan and partisan employees, and 165 full-time “temporary/sessional/intern” staff. Add to this figure the 120 or so non-paid legislative interns who also work at the state Capitol during the legislative session and one discovers that Connecticut’s 187 lawmakers are assisted in one form or another by close to 700 support personnel. Although the number of support personnel has remained fairly static over the course of the last decade, the number of persons now working at the Capitol during the legislative session clearly suggests a state legislature inundated with diverse, complicated, and pressing demands. The number of support personnel further suggests a state legislature that is equipped and prepared for the policy challenges of the new century.

The Lawmaking Chambers

The underground walkway and escalator, known as the concourse, connects the Legislative Office Building to the state Capitol building. It is within the historic state Capitol building where one finds the two legislative chambers: the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House and Senate collectively comprise the Connecticut General Assembly. Additionally, one discovers the offices of state legislative leaders, several elected administrative officers, as well as the Office of Governor. It is in the state Capitol where the laws that govern the state of Connecticut are officially introduced and passed. The state Capitol building, completed and occupied in 1879, is registered as a National Historic Landmark. Prior to construction of the Capitol building, the Old State House in downtown Hartford served as the state Capitol.
Like state legislatures across the United States with the one exception of Nebraska, like the United States Congress, and like legislatures in practically all western democracies, the Connecticut state legislature is a bicameral institution. The House of Representatives is at times referred to as the “lower house,” while the Senate on occasion is referred to as the “upper house.” Although both chambers are equal in power and both assume responsibility for passing laws, they are nevertheless very different from one another in terms of structural design, legislative procedure, and political custom.

The House of Representatives: The People’s Chamber

Located on the second floor of the state Capitol building, the Connecticut House of Representatives is in theory where the passions and will of the Connecticut citizenry are most closely represented. State representatives in Connecticut represent legislative districts consisting of approximately 21,000 people. The previously discussed Supreme Court cases of Baker v. Carr (1962), Reynolds v. Simms (1964), and Butterworth v. Dempsey (1964) have ensured that state legislative districts throughout the state consist of roughly the same number of inhabitants. Every ten years, following the federal census, a reapportionment committee established within the state legislature is assigned the responsibility of redrawing legislative districts to reflect the “one-person one-vote” principle.

Although one discovers elements of “gerrymandering” in the legislative reapportionment process, a term used to describe the redrawing of district lines to benefit the reelection chances of the party in power, Connecticut’s reapportionment process is for the most part very fair. Amendment XVI of the Connecticut Constitution, which describes in great detail the entire reapportionment procedure, requires that the final draft of a reapportionment plan be approved by at least two-thirds of each house of the state legislature. The two-thirds vote inherently prevents the majority party from dismantling the legislative power of the minority party during the reapportionment process. The minority party in the state legislature can veto the reapportionment plan. Should the
legislature fail to adopt a reapportionment plan, a bipartisan commission will be convened to resolve the matter. In the event the commission fails to develop an acceptable plan, the state supreme court under the direction of the chief justice will supervise and coordinate the reapportionment process.

A state representative, according to the state constitution, must be at least eighteen years of age. Representatives are elected to a term of two years, with no limit placed on reelection. Since 1967, the Connecticut House of Representatives, and subsequently the state’s legislative agenda, has been under the control of the Democratic Party. The only exceptions to this long period of Democratic dominance were the legislative sessions of 1973-74 and 1985-86. Name recognition of House incumbents, effective use of legislative staffs for constituent service, fundraising capabilities of incumbents, as well as elements of gerrymandering have secured for the Democratic Party many years of political control over the state House of Representatives. In the 2001 legislative session, the Democratic Party controlled 99 seats (66%), while the Republican Party occupied 51 seats (34%). There was one vacancy.

**House Leadership**

A small group of party leaders controls the legislative business of the House of Representatives. The key leadership posts include the Speaker of the House, the House majority leader, House majority whip, House minority leader, and House minority whip.

The Speaker of the House is the presiding officer of the entire House of Representatives. The Speaker controls floor proceedings, interprets parliamentary rules of procedure, recognizes lawmakers during floor debate, and refers bills to committee. Unlike other legislative leaders in the House, the Speaker is required to perform a dual role. The Speaker is first and foremost the chief representative and symbol of the Connecticut House of Representatives. In this capacity, the Speaker must ensure fairness during floor debate and, more important, protect the autonomy and integrity of the House chamber. As the presiding officer of the House of Representatives, the Speaker is formally elected by a vote of the entire House membership, although he or she is always a member
of the majority party. The Speaker, therefore, will undoubtedly advance the interests and agenda of the majority party, while at the same time ensuring fairness to the opposition party. The post of Speaker of the House is a complex office. Speakers are normally individuals with many years of legislative experience, political savvy, and a broad network of allies within the House chamber.

For many years, tradition dictated that the Speaker of the House would serve for one two-year term. The one-term tradition ended in 1971 with the reelection of Democratic House Speaker William Ratchford to a second consecutive term. Since Ratchford’s reelection, it is not unusual for Speakers to serve two consecutive terms, with two terms now considered the norm for House Speakers.

The extent to which state lawmakers guard against encroachment of the two-term tradition was more than evident in 1989, when Speaker of the House Irving J. Stolberg, a Democrat from New Haven, decided to seek a third consecutive term. In response to this unprecedented development, an anti-Stolberg faction of Democrats, who had become extremely weary of Stolberg’s leadership style, liberal politics, and political ambitions, secretly colluded with House Republicans to deny the controversial Speaker the necessary majority needed for reelection. This most unusual political alliance of anti-Stolberg Democrats and Republicans, unthinkable in years past, coalesced to elect Democrat Richard Balducci to the post of Speaker. This was the first time in Connecticut history that a Speaker of the House was elected by a bipartisan coalition of Democrats and Republicans. The bipartisan alliance was further proof that party membership no longer dictates legislative behavior in the Connecticut General Assembly. Republicans working with Democrats to elect the Speaker is in some respects a reflection of a much larger phenomenon regarding the declining significance of political parties as governing instruments.

The House majority leader is the floor manager for the majority party and serves as the key spokesperson for the majority party’s legislative agenda. The majority whip is responsible for maximizing attendance during legislative roll calls and for persuading party members to work as a team. The term “whip” is
an old British term used to describe the person responsible for managing the foxhounds during a fox hunt: "the whipper-in" of the hounds. The term was subsequently applied to those persons responsible for promoting party cohesion within the British Parliament. Both the majority leader and majority whip are elected in the party caucus prior to the start of a new legislature.

The minority leader and minority whip have functions similar to those of the majority leader and majority whip. Representing the legislative agenda of the minority party, speaking on behalf of the minority party, and maximizing party cohesion among minority party members are among the principal tasks associated with the minority party leadership posts. Minority party leaders are elected in the minority party caucus at the start of a new legislature.

In addition to the chief leadership posts within the majority and minority parties, both party caucuses in the House of Representatives elect deputy leaders and several assistant leaders. Deputy and assistant leaders perform a number of specific legislative tasks designed to help promote the agenda of the party hierarchy. Deputy and assistant leadership positions are normally reserved for lawmakers who have demonstrated loyalty to the party's legislative leadership. In the view of one lawmaker, who wished to remain anonymous, the post of assistant leader is also useful for the purpose of advancing political careers: the title is impressive, yet the position seldom involves substantive responsibilities.

Any House Democrat or House Republican who wishes to introduce a legislative proposal is advised to secure the backing of legislative leaders within his or her respective party. In the Connecticut House of Representatives, a significant portion of the legislative agenda is controlled by a relatively small hierarchy of legislative leaders. Freshmen lawmakers are quick to learn that legislative proposals, including those of great merit, must obtain the approval of their party's legislative leadership in order for the proposal to be deemed viable. Moreover, the legislative agenda is established fairly early in the legislative session, and for all intents and purposes reflects the goals of legislative leaders. This is not to suggest that newly elected representative are powerless with respect to lawmaking. Freshmen lawmakers do introduce bills and receive important committee assignments. However, to have a
meaningful voice in the Connecticut House of Representatives, it is essential for the newly elected lawmaker to work with and gain the support of the party's legislative leadership.

The State Senate: The Upper House

The state Senate is located on the third floor of the state Capitol building. With respect to structure, procedure, and custom, the state Senate is quite unlike that of the House of Representatives. Compared to the House, the Senate is a much smaller chamber consisting of only thirty-six members, less than one-fourth the size. In terms of structure, the Senate has the appearance of a deliberative council, with senators positioned in a large circle, as opposed to the formal rows of desks found in the House chamber.

Like House members, state senators are elected to two year terms, with no limit placed on reelection. Any individual who seeks a Senate seat must be a minimum of 18 years of age. A Connecticut state senator represents a legislative district consisting of approximately 91,000 persons. In both population and geographical size, senatorial districts are substantially larger than House districts. State senators must therefore understand the needs of diverse constituencies in several contiguous towns. Compared to House members, senators, due to the nature of their districts, must acquire a broader working knowledge of state and local policy matters.

Like the House of Representatives, the Democratic Party has controlled the business of the state Senate for many years. Democratic dominance appears to have begun as far back as 1959, with only two exceptions, 1973-74 and 1985-86, the same years in which the Republican Party won a majority of seats in the state House. In the elections of 1972 and 1984, Republican presidential candidates Nixon and Reagan won enormous landslides, both in terms of the popular and electoral vote. Nixon's and Reagan's political coattails were very much responsible for Republican victories in the Connecticut General Assembly during those years. In the 2001 legislative session, the Democrats controlled 21 seats (58%), while the Republicans held 15 seats (42%).
Similar to the House of Representatives, incumbents in the state Senate tend to be reelected with relative ease. Like House incumbents, incumbents in the Senate can employ legislative staffs for constituency service and have higher name recognition compared to challengers. Moreover, Senate incumbents have a clear advantage over challengers with regard to fundraising. Thus, many state senators have safe seats. The power of incumbency and the emergence of safe legislative districts in both House and Senate elections does not bode well for two-party competition.

Indeed, the severity of the problem becomes even more pronounced when examining recent trends concerning the competitiveness of state legislative elections in Connecticut. One study generated by the National Conference of State Legislatures regarding legislative competition in the United States from 1992-96 discovered that more than 80 percent of state legislative seats in Connecticut were won by more than 60 percent of the popular vote. Landslide elections appear to be the norm in state legislative elections.

Legislative process in the state Senate is more informal than that of the House of Representatives. Rules of procedure are not as formal, and there is more reliance on "folkways" rather than strict parliamentary procedure. Unlike the party caucuses in the House, the party caucuses in the Senate are where many crucial policy decisions are made. Indeed, Wayne Swanson's definitive study of the Connecticut state legislature discovered that it was in the party caucus, not on the floor of the Senate, where major decisions were reached regarding the fate of bills. Due to the intimacy of the Senate chamber, freshmen senators, compared to their counterparts in the House, were also discovered to have more of a voice in the legislative process.

### Senate Leadership

Although the state Senate is a more intimate and informal legislative chamber than the House, and freshmen senators exert more impact in the lawmaking process than House freshmen, there is nevertheless a small group of party leaders in the Senate who exercise considerable power over the chamber's internal
affairs. Senate leaders, like House leaders, perform important managerial and leadership functions.

The president of the state Senate is the state’s lieutenant governor. As the official presiding officer of the Senate, the lieutenant governor interprets rules of Senate procedure, recognizes senators who wish to speak, and refers bills to legislative committees. The lieutenant governor only votes in the event of a tie. Unlike the Speaker of the House, the lieutenant governor’s position in the Senate is more ceremonial as opposed to political. The lieutenant governor is elected with the governor on the same ticket, and thus presides over the Senate by virtue of his or her constitutional position. The lieutenant governor is not elected from among the ranks of the Senate membership, nor while presiding over the Senate is he or she considered a member of the “club.” The lieutenant governor will serve as the “eyes and ears” of the governor with respect to the business of the Senate, but the lieutenant governor normally does not direct the business of the Senate.

The true power in the Connecticut Senate is found in the several leadership posts elected by the two party caucuses. These posts include the president of the Senate pro tempore (usually referred to as the pro tem), the majority leader, majority whip, minority leader, and minority whip. The senate pro tem presides over the Senate when the lieutenant governor is absent. The pro tem is elected by the majority party caucus at the start of a new legislature, and normally steers the agenda of the majority party. Although the pro tem at times is expected to speak for the entire Senate, the reality of the matter is that he or she is the leader of the majority party. The pro tem has considerable control over Senate committee appointments, exercises control over the legislative agenda, and without a doubt is the pivotal and most powerful figure in the entire Senate chamber.

The majority leader, majority whip, minority leader, and minority whip, perform functions similar to their counterparts in the House chamber. Elected by their respected party caucuses, the leaders and whips represent, guide, and help manage their party’s legislative agenda. The majority leader and majority whip work closely with the pro tem in advancing the agenda of the majority
party. Like the House chamber, there are also several deputy and assistant leaders in the state Senate.

**Tools of Legislative Leadership**

As noted, the days of rigid party-line voting have largely disappeared in the Connecticut state legislature. Party bosses operating “behind-the-scenes” controlling legislative voting behavior with patronage jobs and party organization money are no longer present in Connecticut politics. Christopher DePino is the chairman of the Republican Party in Connecticut, yet DePino does not control the voting behavior of Republican state lawmakers. Ed Marcus is the chairman of the Democratic Party in Connecticut, yet Marcus does not control the voting behavior of Democratic state lawmakers. State legislative leaders elected in party caucuses are also limited in terms of persuading and influencing the voting behavior of rank-and-file lawmakers. There is only so much the Speaker of the House, Senate pro tem, and the majority and minority leaders can do to foster party teamwork in the lawmaking process.

Nevertheless, despite the decline of party authority in the General Assembly, there are mechanisms, or “tools” that legislative leaders do employ to cultivate a network of political support among party members. Such tools, when skillfully and strategically employed, can have the effect of drawing rank-and-file lawmakers closer to the goals of the party hierarchy. Two important sources of persuasion are preferential appointments to legislative standing committees and the distribution of campaign dollars to legislative candidates.

**Committee Appointments**

Appointments to legislative standing committees remain one of the most important sources of leverage exercised by party leaders in both chambers of the General Assembly. House and Senate members, by serving on key standing committees can often serve the needs of their constituents in a most direct fashion. Indeed, the policy areas that fall under the jurisdiction of standing
committees often have direct bearing on a representative’s or senator’s constituents. A House or Senate member with many teachers in his or her legislative district would necessarily want to serve on the legislature’s Education Committee. A lawmaker who represents a legislative district with many small businesses would most likely prefer an appointment to the legislature’s Commerce Committee. At the same time, there are standing committees that go well beyond the unique needs of individual districts and which affect the state’s population as a whole. The Appropriations Committee and the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee are examples of legislative committees that have statewide impact. Lawmakers who support the goals of legislative leaders are thus rewarded with choice committee assignments.

Campaign Finance Committees

Another leadership tool for house and senate leaders emanates from the campaign finance committees that have been established by both parties in the House and Senate chambers. Campaign finance committees were established in the Connecticut state legislature to help finance the costs associated with House and Senate campaigns. To help alleviate the increasing demands of fund raising, campaign finance committees were established for the express purpose of supplementing the campaign budgets of House and Senate candidates. Legislative campaign finance committees are under the control of legislative leaders and the leaders determine which legislative candidates will be the recipients of campaign dollars. This is not to suggest that legislative candidates depend exclusively on legislative campaign committees to win election or reelection. As discussed in chapter five, this is now an era of candidate-centered politics and legislative candidates depend on their own network of individual contributors and special interest groups to finance campaigns. Nevertheless, party leaders in the legislature do distribute substantial sums of money to legislative candidates, normally to those candidates in highly competitive contests. By distributing campaign dollars to candidates in closely contested elections, legislative leaders are able to cultivate a network of loyalists who feel obliged to support the agenda of the
legislative hierarchy. There is a sense of appreciation and indebtedness that follows from campaign assistance.

Legislative campaign finance committees in the Connecticut General Assembly exist in two different forms. One form is directly associated with and established by individual legislative leaders. These are the legislative leadership PACs discussed in chapter six. The leadership PACs normally have broad partisan titles, yet the reality of the matter is that they have been established to serve the goals of individual legislative leaders.

The second form of campaign finance assistance emerges from the broader and more party-oriented legislative campaign finance committees. Such committees have been formed by both parties in both legislative chambers. The legislative campaign finance committees are different from the leadership PACs in that campaign dollars are normally distributed among a broader array of legislative candidates, as opposed to a select group of candidates. Some legislative candidates are the recipients of more assistance than others, but in general there seems to be more concern with improving the strength and competitiveness of the party as a whole compared to the more selective contributions from the leadership PACs. Taken together, campaign dollars from the legislative leadership PACs and dollars distributed from the legislative campaign finance committees are instrumental in cultivating allegiance to the party's legislative hierarchy. When added to the power over committee appointments, it becomes clear that legislative leaders, while by no means omnipotent, still have political tools at their disposal to lead and direct the internal affairs of the Connecticut state legislature.

The Lawmaking Process

Lawmaking in the Connecticut General Assembly, like lawmaking in all legislatures, is an intriguing affair. Practically all bills introduced into the state legislature encounter hurdles, unexpected obstacles, and in most cases "brick walls." Indeed, it is more common for bills to die in the Connecticut General Assembly than it is for bills to be passed. To surmount political opposition, proponents of bills must skillfully forge legislative coalitions,
negotiate compromises on key sections of bills, and be willing to cut deals to placate and appease the political opposition.

The Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution reserves to states those powers that are not delegated to the federal government, as well as those that are not specifically prohibited to the states. The policy areas in which the Connecticut state legislature can legislate are not specifically enumerated in the state constitution, thus allowing the state legislature considerable latitude to legislate on a wide variety of issues, albeit within constitutional limits. The policies of education, housing, transportation, and criminal justice are examples of policy areas that belong to the Connecticut state legislature. Taxation and appropriations also belong to the state legislature, although such powers are exercised concurrently with the federal government. The Connecticut state legislature, in other words, can pass many laws in many policy areas, as long as such policies do not belong exclusively to the federal government. The state legislature, for example, cannot pass laws that regulate interstate commerce or trade with foreign nations, nor can the legislature pass laws involving foreign policy. Such areas, as defined in the federal constitution, are the domain of the federal government, not the states.

For the 2000 legislative session, the Connecticut state legislature passed a variety of laws. These included among others a tax rebate program for Connecticut taxpayers, the appointment of special juvenile prosecutors, the regulation of fishing in the waters off the Connecticut shoreline, and a mandatory civics course for all students in Connecticut public high schools. As in previous years, the legislative agenda of 2000 consisted of diverse and complex policy issues.

Table 21 documents the number of proposed House and Senate bills in the Connecticut state legislature from 1990 to 1999, as well as the raw number and percentage of bills eventually signed into law by the governor. The reader should be aware before reviewing this data that the Connecticut state legislature during odd numbered years is in session from the Wednesday following the first Monday in January to the Wednesday following the first Monday in June, slightly more than five months. In even-
numbered years, the state legislature is in session from the Wednesday following the first Monday in February to the Wednesday following the first Monday in May, slightly more than three months. Legislative sessions during odd-numbered years are thus longer and hence the volume of proposed bills tends to be greater compared to the sessions in even-numbered years. It should also be noted that only bills related to fiscal matters may be introduced in the even numbered years.

Table 21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Proposed Bills</th>
<th>Public Acts</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1646</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>3353</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1453</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>3432</td>
<td>435</td>
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<td>1994</td>
<td>1296</td>
<td>247</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1995</td>
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<td>360</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>1364</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>3530</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Law Department, Connecticut State Library.

As the data show, whether it is a large volume of proposed bills in the odd numbered years or the smaller number of bills in even numbered years, a relatively small percentage of proposals are ever enacted into law. The highest percentage of proposed bills enacted into law during this ten year period was 20 percent in 1990, while only 8 percent were enacted in 1999. The average for the ten year period was 14.6 percent.

The number of proposed bills tends to be greater in the House chamber because the House contains 151 members, compared to 36 members in the Senate. Hence there is more legislative business transacted in the House. However, although the number of proposed
bills is higher in the House, and while the House chamber tends to pass a greater quantity of bills, the percentage of bills that are passed in the House is quite similar to that of the state Senate. Table 22 documents the number of proposed bills in both chambers, as well as the number and percentage of bills passed by each chamber.

Table 22
Proposed and Passed Bills in the House and Senate Chambers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>House</th>
<th>Senate</th>
<th></th>
<th>House</th>
<th>Senate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>Passed</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>Passed</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990</td>
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<td>2121</td>
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<td>8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Law Department, Connecticut State Library.

The Committees

Although bills can die in several places, it is clear that the legislative standing committees in the Connecticut General Assembly are the “graveyard” for the vast majority of legislative proposals. Indeed, most proposed bills die in legislative standing committee and never make it to the House or Senate floors. As Swanson notes:

It is often surprising to the new lawmaker to see the number of bills referred to committees that are never discussed and simply die in committee. The time factor in the legislature is such that committees, in conjunction
with leadership, must select the bills which they consider the most important, denying to the "less important" legislation a place on the committee's agenda. It often takes a number of assembly sessions for a bill which the leadership considers to be of "marginal importance" to get a committee hearing. The new legislator should not be discouraged if his bills do not make it out of committee the first time that they are introduced.8

Legislative standing committees in the Connecticut General Assembly are joint committees. Membership on standing committees consists of members from both the House and Senate chambers. Each standing committee is headed by co-chairpersons. One co-chairperson is appointed from the House by the House Speaker, while one is appointed from the Senate by the Senate president pro tempore. The co-chairpersons alternate as presiding officers over committee hearings. Each co-chairperson is a member of the majority party in his or her respective legislative chamber. Appointments to joint committees are based on a proportional formula, with seats allocated to members based on the strength of both parties in the House and Senate.

At present, there are twenty-five joint committees in the Connecticut General Assembly. This number includes the permanent standing committees responsible for passing bills, the small number of permanent committees that do not process bills but instead are assigned specific non-legislative tasks, as well as the non-permanent select committees established to perform very special functions related to narrow policy areas.

True power in the General Assembly lies within the legislative standing committees. Lawmakers normally serve on two or perhaps three legislative standing committees during a legislative session. Examples of legislative standing committees include the Appropriations Committee, the Commerce Committee, and the Transportation Committee. The political careers of state lawmakers are advanced by serving on key standing committees, and it is within the standing committees that the laws affecting the state of Connecticut are ultimately shaped. Table 23 lists all of the committees currently at work in the Connecticut General Assembly.
This list includes legislative and non-legislative standing committees, as well as the select committees.

Table 23
Standing and Select Committees
in the Connecticut State Legislature: 2000

Aging (Select)
Appropriations
Banks
Children (Select)
Commerce
Education
Energy and Technology
Environment
Executive and Legislative Nominations
Finance, Revenue and Bonding
General Law
Government Administration and Elections
Housing (Select)
Human Services
Insurance and Real Estate
Internships
Judiciary
Labor and Public Employees
Legislative Management
Planning and Development
Program Review and Investigations
Public Health
Public Safety
Regulation Review
Transportation


Legislative Procedure

Proposed bills have many origins. Bills can originate with the governor, individual lawmakers, lobbyists, executive branch
officials, or individual constituents. For a bill to be introduced into either the House or Senate chamber, there must be a lawmaker or group of lawmakers who sponsor the bill. A bill can be introduced into either chamber of the state legislature.

Once a bill is introduced, it is then forwarded to one of the legislative standing committees cited above. Assuming that the bill has a modicum of support, the committee will schedule a public hearing on the bill. The general public is allowed to attend such hearings and individuals along with group representatives are allowed to voice their concerns before committee members. Following the committee hearing and often much discussion and debate among committee members, the committee will vote on the bill. Should the committee vote against the bill, it will issue an “Unfavorable Report.” Should the committee vote in favor of the bill, it will issue a “Favorable Report,” or “JF” ("Joint Favorable") Report. Should the committee decide to take no action on the bill, the bill will be “boxed” and automatically die. When the committee decides to box a bill, it will issue “No Report.” A simple majority vote among committee members is needed for the bill to pass a standing committee.

Once a bill has passed the committee stage of the lawmaking process, it is then placed on the legislative calendar. Bills deemed non-controversial by members of the standing committee and which are expected to pass the House and Senate floors without discussion are placed on the Consent Calendar. All other bills are assigned to the regular legislative calendar and scheduled for floor action.

Bills that pass the standing committee stage of the process and that require funding, as most do, are forwarded to the Appropriations Committee or the Committee on Finance, Revenue, and Bonding. The “money committees” as they are known, decide whether or not to authorize funds for the program outlined in the bill. Practically all legislative programs require funding, and it is the responsibility of the money committees to explore and discuss the financial ramifications of the proposed policy. The money committees have the authority to pass or reject the bill. Should funding be denied, the bill will die at this stage of the process. Should the money committees approve funding for the proposed
program, the bill will then be forwarded to the Office of Fiscal Analysis for a detailed financial analysis of the bill. Once the work of the Office of Fiscal Analysis is completed, the bill will proceed to the House and Senate floors for a vote. Prior to the floor vote in both chambers, amendments can be added to the bill and lawmakers can engage in extensive floor debate. Should the bill pass the House and Senate floors but in two different versions, a conference committee will be convened to resolve House and Senate differences. A conference committee is a special joint committee assembled from both chambers to iron out the differences between the two legislative chambers. Should the bill pass the conference committee and still be approved by both legislative chambers, it is then forwarded to the governor for executive action.

_The Governor’s Desk_

The concept of checks and balances is evident when the bill is sent to the governor. During a normal legislative session, the governor has a total of five calendar days to respond to a bill passed by the state legislature. During this period, the governor can sign the bill into law, in which case the bill will become an official Public Act, or the governor can veto the proposed legislation. Should the governor veto the bill, it will be returned to the legislature with the governor’s veto message. A gubernatorial veto can be overridden by a two-thirds vote of each legislative chamber, although this is extremely difficult to do. The governor can also decide to take no action whatsoever, in which case, after the five day period, the bill will automatically become law without his signature.

In addition to exercising a regular veto, Connecticut’s governor can exercise the line-item veto as well as the pocket veto. The line-item veto can be employed only in conjunction with appropriations legislation. The governor can veto specific spending items in an appropriations bill, while signing the remainder of the bill into law. Forty-five state governors can exercise the line-item veto. Like the regular veto, the line-item veto can be overridden by a two-thirds vote of both legislative chambers. In theory, the
line-item veto is supposed to allow state governors the opportunity to more carefully scrutinize and control wasteful state spending.

The pocket veto comes into play if the governor takes no action on the bill and the state legislature adjourns within five calendar days after having sent the bill to the governor’s office. Should the legislature adjourn within five calendar days without gubernatorial action, then the bill is automatically vetoed. The governor, rather than vetoing the proposed bill, might decide to let the legislature adjourn within the five day period, thereby avoiding the possibility of a veto override.

The veto is one of the most powerful tools exercised by the Connecticut governor. Indeed, the veto is perhaps one of the most direct methods of constraining the actions of the state legislature. Table 24 documents the extent to which the gubernatorial veto has been employed in Connecticut during the decade of the nineteen-nineties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Vetoes</th>
<th>Overridden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Law Department, Connecticut State Library.

As the evidence suggests, 1991-94 was a particularly contentious and strained period for executive and legislative relations. It was precisely during this period that the governorship was occupied by Connecticut’s maverick politician Lowell P.
Weicker, Jr. Weicker, a former Republican and U.S. Senator, was the founder and leader of the short-lived A Connecticut Party (ACP). Relations were antagonistic between the Democratic-controlled legislature and the third-party governor, resulting in an unusually high number of gubernatorial vetoes. Budget-making in particular proved to be exceptionally difficult during the first year of the Weicker administration, with Weicker vetoing any budget bill that did not include a state income tax. Amid great strain and political pressure, the state legislature eventually capitulated to the governor's tax plan, resulting in a tax on personal incomes.

Following Weicker's controversial tenure as governor, relations improved between the state legislature and the governorship with the election of Republican Governor John G. Rowland in 1994. Although Rowland, like Weicker has been forced to confront a Democratic-controlled state legislature, it appears that compromise, bargaining, and cooperation have returned to the Connecticut lawmaking process. The number of gubernatorial vetoes has declined dramatically and there appears to be less confrontation between the two branches of government. Rowland was reelected to the governorship in 1998.

The governor of Connecticut plays a pivotal role in the lawmaking process, and the veto power is one of the most important methods of shaping and controlling the outcome of public policy. Even the threat of a veto can at times result in key compromises and modification of bills during the lawmaking process. At the same time, however, the veto is not by any means the one and only power exercised by the governor. Indeed, the scope of gubernatorial powers has become so vast in recent decades that the Connecticut state governorship now resembles, to some extent that of "a little presidency."

The State Governorship and Executive Branch

The Connecticut Constitution of 1965 maintained a three-branch system of government. The executive branch includes the office of governor and lieutenant governor, both of whom are elected on the same ticket. In addition to the governor and lieutenant governor, there are four high level and independently
elected administrative officers. These include the attorney general, the state treasurer, the secretary of state, and the state comptroller. Such positions are explicitly established in the state constitution. The remainder of the executive branch includes a number of executive departments, such as the Department on Aging, Department of Corrections, Department of Education, and Department of Children and Youth Services. Such departments are headed by commissioners. There are also a number of agencies, boards, and commissions established within the executive branch. Like the state legislature, the executive branch of government has grown in proportion to the needs and demands of the state’s citizenry.

Whether or not the executive branch has become too large and perhaps too bureaucratic has become the topic of considerable debate in Connecticut politics. Indeed, this issue seems to arise with every gubernatorial election. Republican candidates routinely criticize the growth of state government and the power of public employee unions while Democratic gubernatorial candidates express firm support for government agencies and the rights of state employees. The size of the state government and the power of public employee unions will undoubtedly remain a political issue well into the twenty-first century. Table 25 gives a view of the size of Connecticut’s state government compared to the other states in New England.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>State Employees per 10,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As reported in the *Book of States: 1999*, there was a total of 72,877 full- and part-time state employees in the state of Connecticut in 1994. The vast majority of state employees were employed in the executive branch of government. The total number of full-time state employees was 63,224. The number of full-time state employees per 10,000 persons in Connecticut was 193. This is a higher ratio than in other New England states, with the exception of Vermont.

As of August 18, 2000, the comptroller's office recorded a total of 76,411 full and part-time state employees, of which 72,327 (94 percent) were in the employ of the executive branch. Full and part-time employment in the legislative and judicial branches of government was recorded at 586 and 3,516 respectively.

*Public Expectations of the Governor*

The governor presides over the executive branch. Elected for a four year term, with no limitation on reelection, the Connecticut governor, now more than ever, is expected to be the driving force behind the policy-making process. The citizens of Connecticut, state lawmakers, and the mass media expect the governor to be a creative, energetic, and imaginative problem solver. Public expectations of those who seek the governorship and of those who occupy the office of governor are clearly documented in the results of public opinion polls.

In 1994, 48 percent of persons polled responded that it makes "a lot" of difference with respect to who is elected governor of Connecticut, 27 percent replied "some" difference, while only 14 percent replied "only a little" difference. Fifteen percent of persons polled in 1990 believed that it makes "a lot" of difference who is elected governor, while 26 percent replied "some" difference, and 13 percent "only a little" difference. The voting age population in Connecticut perceive the office of governor as occupying a central and pivotal place in state government. Seventy percent of persons polled in 1994 perceived the experience of gubernatorial candidates as "very important" as it pertains to job performance, while 24 percent of persons polled perceived prior experience as "somewhat important."
Fifty-six percent of persons surveyed in 1989 responded that it was “very important” how a candidate for governor stood on the issue of abortion, 22 percent replied that a candidate’s abortion position was “somewhat important,” while only 8 percent responded that a gubernatorial candidate’s abortion stance was “only a little” important. Sixty-two percent of respondents in 1989 believed that it was “very important” for a newly elected governor to bring “fresh new ideas” to the office, while 32 percent of persons replied that new ideas were “somewhat important.” In 1994, 64 percent of persons considered fresh ideas to be “very important.”

In 1994, a gubernatorial candidate’s position on the state income tax was deemed “very important” by 53 percent of persons polled, while 32 percent replied that a candidate’s state income tax position was “somewhat important.” More broadly, 57 percent of respondents in 1994 perceived the positions of gubernatorial candidates on “other state issues” to be “very important,” while 33 percent considered such positions “somewhat important” to state leadership.

**Formal Powers**

Public expectations regarding gubernatorial performance are high and the constitutional powers delegated to the office of governor are designed to allow governors to lead. This is not to suggest that constitutional powers alone dictate the extent to which a Connecticut governor can shape the outcome of public policy, although broad constitutional authority is certainly beneficial for those governors with aggressive policy agendas.

The Connecticut governorship is constitutionally empowered in several ways. For example, there are no term limits imposed on the office of governor, which tends to protect a governor from becoming a “lame duck.” This is to the advantage of the governor, as state lawmakers and the general public often perceive an outgoing chief executive as “old news.” Moreover, when a governor becomes a lame duck, the media redirect their focus toward potential gubernatorial candidates and fresh policy platforms. A lame duck status does little to maintain the power of a chief executive. In Connecticut, however, the governor can seek
an unlimited number of terms and keep political opponents uninformed regarding his or her reelection plans. Although two-term governorships seem to be the norm, there is absolutely nothing in the state constitution that prohibits Connecticut's governor from seeking continued reelection. In this respect, the Connecticut governor is afforded a very important degree of political leverage within the policy-making process.

The Connecticut governor also has considerable power with respect to the appointment of executive branch personnel. Under the Rowland administration, thirty-six individuals are directly appointed by the governor to serve on the governor's personal staff. Such staff positions include, among others, the chief of staff, legal counsel, press secretary, legislative director, and director of constituent service. The governor's staff is in close and daily contact with the governor regarding a range of policy related and public relations matters. Beyond the personal staff, the governor in Connecticut appoints thirty-seven commissioners, all of whom require legislative confirmation, and approximately 1,700 individuals to serve on the various boards and commissions. Among the 1,700 appointments, only 10 percent require legislative confirmation. The Connecticut governor therefore has considerable appointment power, which in turn allows the governor to exercise considerable leverage and control over executive branch activity and policy making.

Somewhat problematic for the Connecticut governor are the four independently elected administrative offices created by the state constitution. As previously noted, the four offices include the office of attorney general, secretary of state, state treasurer, and state comptroller. Such office holders have been known to develop power bases of their own and pursue political agendas independent of the governor. Such individuals often have aspirations for higher political office as well. While one can identify several individuals who have used such offices as launching pads to more prestigious political positions, perhaps the best example is Joseph Lieberman. From his post as Connecticut's Attorney General in 1988, Lieberman was able to win election to the United States Senate. During the presidential election of 2000, Lieberman was selected by the Democratic Party's presidential nominee Al Gore to be his vice-
presidential running mate. There are indications that Lieberman will seek the presidency in election year 2004.

The lieutenant governor in Connecticut, unlike the four administrative officers, is elected on the same ticket with the governor and is always a member of the governor’s political party and team. In some states, the governor and lieutenant governor are elected on separate ballots, which inherently lends itself to political rivalry and administrative conflict. This, however, is not the case in Connecticut.

The state’s biennial operating budget is shaped almost entirely by the governor in conjunction with the Office of Policy Management. The Office of Policy Management (O.P.M.) is a support office within the executive branch that reports directly to the state governor. Although the governor’s budget must be approved by both chambers of the state legislature, which always results in negotiation and compromise, particularly during periods of divided government, it appears as if the broad goals of the governor’s budget, for the most part, are accepted.\(^{17}\)

The Connecticut governor’s veto power, previously discussed, includes the regular blanket veto, the pocket veto, as well as the line-item veto over appropriations bills. The veto power allows the Connecticut governor to be a central actor in the legislative process.

The extent to which the Connecticut governorship is constitutionally empowered becomes evident when placed in comparative context. When assessing and comparing the scope of gubernatorial powers, political scientists normally examine those constitutional powers described above.\(^{18}\) Governorships are classified as “weak” if the governor is constitutionally prohibited from seeking reelection, has little formal control over the appointment and removal of executive branch personnel, is constrained in the formulation of the state’s operating budget, and has a limited veto power over proposed bills. Those governorships with a respectable, but not vast, amount of constitutional powers are regarded as “moderately strong offices,” while those governorships with a full complement of constitutional powers are classified as “strong.” When evaluated according to such criteria, the Connecticut governorship emerges as one of the stronger state
governorships in the United States. In one study, the Connecticut
governorship was ranked 3.8 on a scale ranging from 2.3 (weak)
to 4.1 (strong). Only thirteen state governorships (26 percent) were
ranked 3.8 or above, suggesting that the Connecticut governorship
is currently among a minority of broadly empowered guberna-
torial offices.\textsuperscript{19}

\textit{The Governor’s Job Description}

The Connecticut governor’s job description unfolds from the
state constitution. The constitutional duties of the Connecticut
governor described in Article IV are quite substantial, and in many
ways parallel those of the American president. Indeed the parallel
is common in most states. As Louis W. Koenig states, “If a typical
early governor were compared with a typical contemporary
governor, the influence of the presidency upon gubernatorial
change would become evident.”\textsuperscript{20}

Similar to that of the president, the governor in Connecticut
is expected to “wear many hats” and have the ability to perform
several tasks simultaneously. The state constitution assigns an
important legislative duty to the governor. In this capacity, the
governor is allowed to introduce bills to the state legislature, sign
bills into law, and exercise the power of veto. The constitution
also requires the governor to deliver a “State of the Government”
address to the state legislature. This address, more popularly
known as the “State of the State” address, attracts extensive media
coverage. Like the president’s “State of the Union” message, the
“State of the State” address broadly outlines the governor’s
legislative agenda for the forthcoming legislative session. The
governor’s address sets the legislative process in motion.

In addition to broad legislative responsibilities, the
constitution requires the governor to perform a range of executive
duties. As the state’s chief executive officer, the governor is
expected to “faithfully” execute the laws of the state. In this
regard, it is the governor’s legal responsibility to oversee the
implementation of state laws and state judicial rulings. Guberna-
torial appointments within the executive branch are crucial in this
respect, as the successful execution of laws depend heavily on the
ability, motivation, and orientation of personnel working within executive agencies and commissions. In the broadest of terms, the executive branch executes laws, and thus it is the governor’s constitutional duty to see to it that this task is successfully accomplished. In the interest of executing the law, the governor can encourage and direct executive branch subordinates to implement laws. If needed, the governor can issue executive orders to subordinates which provide detailed instructions and guidelines for law execution. Governors who fail to execute the law are in violation of the state constitution.

The Connecticut Constitution also identifies the governor as the “captain of the state militia.” In his military role, the governor presides over the Connecticut National Guard. The Guard can be deployed by the governor to assist the state during times of natural disasters, such as devastating hurricanes and floods. The governor can also mobilize the National Guard in the interest of preserving law and order. However, should the Guard be needed to bolster the regular army during time of war or national emergency, the President of the United States can federalize the National Guard and deploy units according to the national interest. Thus, while the governor can direct the Guard to perform a variety of functions, the National Guard is ultimately under the jurisdiction of the President. The governor’s military power is therefore subject to limitations.

A quasi-judicial role is also afforded to the governor by the state constitution. The governor has the sole authority to grant a reprieve to persons after they have been convicted of a crime. According to the constitution, a reprieve issued by the governor is valid only “until the end of the next session of the general assembly, and no longer.” Gubernatorial reprieves in Connecticut are thus a temporary and somewhat short-lived respite from punishment. The power to grant reprieves is seldom exercised by the governor.

A ceremonial role for the state governor is not explicit in the state constitution, although such duty is most certainly implied in Article IV. In this regard, the governor is expected to engage in a wide range of symbolic activity, which includes cutting ribbons and making speeches at the opening of new schools, bridges, and
highways. The governor is also expected to participate in Memorial Day parades, issue proclamations during state or federal holidays, attend the funerals of political dignitaries, and meet with student field trips to the state Capitol. Public image, poise, and style are important to the performance of ceremonial duties.

Like the President of the United States, the governor of Connecticut is expected to participate in several tasks not designated by the state constitution. Perhaps the most important task in this respect is that of party chief. It is expected that in addition to performing several constitutional duties, the governor should devote time and energy to promoting the goals and objectives of his or her political party. As party chief, the governor is expected to appoint the chairperson of the party’s state central committee. The governor is also expected to raise funds for the party, appoint party loyalists to several administrative posts and judgeships, and campaign for the party’s candidates during federal, state, and local elections. Although no governor can possibly perform every duty with an equal amount of vigor and skill, it is reasonable to expect occupants of the governor’s office to be flexible and multi-talented individuals.

Job Approval Ratings

A deep reservoir of constitutional power is certainly to the advantage of a state governor. Equally, if not more, important is the extent to which a governor can cultivate a high level of support from among the state’s population. Indeed, a governor’s popularity among the general electorate is a critical source of power, particularly for those governors with a bold legislative agenda. State lawmakers are more inclined to support the legislative agenda of a governor with high job approval ratings, as opposed to one who has little support or respect among the general public. High job approval ratings are therefore essential to working effectively with the General Assembly. A state governor might very well be afforded a broad set of constitutional powers, but in the absence of high job approval ratings such authority is for all intents and purposes diminished. High approval ratings are
especially important to those governors who do not enjoy the luxury of a partisan majority in the state legislature. Over the course of the past twenty years, job approval ratings for Connecticut’s governors have fluctuated considerably (table 26).

Table 26
Approval Ratings for Three Governors: 1981-99

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Exc./Good</th>
<th>% Fair/Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>34</td>
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<td>1988</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>41</td>
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<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Governor Lowell P. Weicker, Jr.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Exc./Good</th>
<th>% Fair/Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Governor John G. Rowland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Exc./Good</th>
<th>% Fair/Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As reflected in table 26, there have been periods of high public support and periods marked by very low approval ratings. Public perceptions of governors seem to be tied quite closely to the condition of the state's economy, although variables beyond the economy have also affected public perceptions.

Governor "Bill" O'Neill: The End of an Era

In Governor O'Neill's case, there was a four year period, 1985-88, in which a plurality or majority of persons polled rated the governor's job performance as "excellent or good." The state's economy at the time was quite robust. Job approval ratings during O'Neill's first four years of office and his last two years were, however, substantially different, with a plurality or majority of voters routinely rating the governor's performance as "fair or poor." Again, public perceptions seem to have been related to the condition of the economy. Toward the end of O'Neill's second term, an enormous and unexpected budget deficit emerged, resulting in very low support for the governor.

Governor O'Neill was a former state lawmaker and lieutenant governor who succeeded to the governor's office in 1981 following the death of the very popular Governor Ella T. Grasso. In some respects, the leadership of Governor O'Neill represented the last appearance in Connecticut politics of Connecticut's Democratic party machine. O'Neill, a very seasoned and practical politician who rose through the ranks of the Democratic party organization, was the last in a line of Democratic governors whose political career was tied to party bosses and machine politics. O'Neill's decision not to seek reelection in 1990 signified the end of an era in Connecticut politics.

Governor Lowell P. Weicker, Jr.: The Maverick Leader

Following the O'Neill era, the office of governor was occupied by Lowell P. Weicker, Jr., a former three-term United States Senator. Weicker, as previously noted, was a nationally recognized political figure. Known throughout the land for his brash and "maverick" style of politics, Weicker, under the banner
of A Connecticut Party, was elected to the governorship with 41 percent of the vote in a three-way contest. This was the first time in Connecticut since the Civil War that a candidate of a third-party had been chosen governor.²¹

Weicker, as the previous table revealed, was consistently unpopular with Connecticut residents. The sustained pattern of negative job approval ratings was due to a confluence of variables, including a stagnant economy, the budget deficit, as well as public perceptions that Weicker was arrogant and consciously antagonistic. During his days as a United States Senator and during his tenure as governor, Weicker polarized voters and lawmakers; voters seemed to either love or despise Weicker. There could be no middle ground for such a blunt speaking and independent-minded politician.

In addition to serious fiscal problems and Weicker's antagonistic leadership style, many Connecticut residents felt fundamentally betrayed by the governor's unexpected decision to propose a state income tax as a means of resolving the budget crisis. Weicker's income tax, which in retrospect may very well have been the only practical response to the state's budget deficit, resulted in a mass protest of historic proportions on the grounds of the state Capitol. On October 5, 1991, more than 40,000 angry state residents converged at the Capitol in Hartford to protest "Weicker's tax." Vitriolic speeches against the governor filled the air, signs and placards depicted Weicker as a ruthless dictator, and the controversial governor was hung in effigy. The anger and sense of betrayal never subsided during Weicker's four years in office. His average job approval ratings, as measured through public opinion polls, were the lowest of all Connecticut governors since 1981.

Governor John G. Rowland: The New Breed

After one tumultuous term, Weicker chose not to seek reelection. Thus, in 1994, voters in Connecticut looked to the leadership of John G. Rowland, a young and combative former Republican Congressman from Waterbury. This was Rowland's second campaign for the governorship, having lost his first bid to
Weicker in the three-way contest of 1990. In many respects, John Rowland represented the new style of gubernatorial leadership depicted by Professor Larry Sabato in Goodbye to Good-time Charlie: The American Governorship Transformed. Indeed, Sabato’s descriptive summary of the “emerging new breed” of state governors fit Rowland perfectly:

The governors themselves are much younger, better educated than ever, and more thoroughly trained for their specific responsibilities. Greater numbers have concentrated beforehand on developing legislative expertise, while fewer come to the executive post directly from minor offices in law enforcement or local government that have less relationship to the challenges a governor faces. A more attractive and prestigious governorship has even induced more members of Congress to trade their Washington offices for governors’ chairs.\textsuperscript{22}

In 1980, at the age of 23, John G. Rowland was elected to the Connecticut General Assembly, where he served until 1984. Following two terms in the state legislature, Rowland was elected to the United States Congress at the age of 27, where he represented Connecticut’s fifth congressional district until 1990. At age 27, Rowland was the youngest member of Congress. In 1990, Rowland lost his first bid for the governorship to Weicker. In 1994, at the age of 37, Rowland was elected as Connecticut’s governor, and was reelected in 1998 in a landslide election.\textsuperscript{23}

As the data in table 26 indicate, slightly less than a majority of Connecticut residents rated Rowland’s performance as “excellent or good” during his first term of office. Voters were certainly more pleased with Rowland’s performance than that of his predecessor, although average ratings of slightly less than 50 percent suggested considerable displeasure with Rowland’s performance. The Connecticut economy was still recovering from the budget deficit and was in a slight recession during this time period. During Rowland’s second term, however, the governor’s job approval ratings increased dramatically, with over 60 percent of voters routinely rating the governor’s performance as “excellent or
good." One must attribute Rowland's high job approval ratings during his second term of office to the most robust economy since World War II. Several years of steady and impressive economic growth, low inflation, and very low unemployment levels have most certainly contributed to John Rowland's public image as a creative and dynamic chief executive. Indeed, so strong was the state's economy and so large was the budget surplus that Rowland was able to issue tax rebates in 1998 and 1999 to Connecticut taxpayers. Budget surpluses since 1995 totaled over one billion dollars.

In addition to unprecedented economic prosperity, Rowland's high job approval ratings also reflected innovative and creative public projects launched from the governor's office. Rowland's job approval ratings therefore reflect more than just a growing and healthy state economy. Indeed, unlike Weicker's income tax, which to many residents seemed punitive and vindictive, Rowland's agenda seemed uplifting, imaginative, and creative. In this respect, the most obvious example of Rowland's bold agenda involved a comprehensive development plan to renovate the city of Hartford. The plan, formally titled "Adriaen's Landing" (named after the Dutch explorer Adriaen Block), included a new football stadium for the University of Connecticut to be built in East Hartford, and a sparkling state-of-the-art $771 million convention and entertainment center constructed on Hartford's historic riverfront. Two hundred apartment dwellings were also a component of the master plan. As the Hartford Courant noted, "Adriaen's Landing represents the most significant effort to remake Hartford since Constitution Plaza opened in 1964." After lengthy negotiations, compromises, and political bargaining, the state legislature eventually voted to subsidize the plan with $455 million in public funds. The vote in the state Senate was 30-6, while the House vote was 117-34. Protection of labor union personnel employed at Adriaen's Landing was the principal point of contention during passage of the bill. Although Adriaen's Landing will be built largely on the back of Connecticut taxpayers, the gleaming project nevertheless is indicative of a governor with vision. Rowland has proven to be a driving and creative force within the context of Connecticut government.
Although the governorship has been the principal source of energy in Connecticut government for several decades, it appears that recent governors, most notably Weicker and Rowland, have employed the powers of the governorship in ways that at one time might be considered inconsistent with Connecticut’s tradition of limited and restrained government. Recent governors have not by any means exceeded their constitutional authority, but instead have broadly interpreted gubernatorial roles and responsibilities to the point where the governorship in Connecticut now mirrors, only on a smaller scale, the presidency of the United States. Like the presidency, the Connecticut governorship has become the fount of policy innovation and aggressive leadership. This is not to suggest that the state legislature has been completely overshadowed by the governor’s office, although at times it does appear that state lawmakers are reacting to gubernatorial initiatives, rather than proposing creative solutions to policy problems. The state governorship, not the state legislature, is clearly the energizing force of Connecticut government.

The State Judiciary

Article Five of the Connecticut Constitution establishes the state’s judicial system. Over the years, the structure of the state’s judicial system has been reorganized and streamlined into what is now a unified and efficient system of courts. The state’s judicial system is also professionally administered and staffed. Courts in Connecticut perform a vital role, and since the Constitution of 1818 the judiciary has functioned as an independent and equal branch of state government.

Superior Courts

Any discussion of Connecticut’s judicial structure must begin with the state superior courts. These are the courts located at the base of the judicial system. Superior courts are trial courts of original jurisdiction. Criminal and civil cases in Connecticut begin in superior court. Superior courts are located in thirteen judicial districts, twenty-two geographical areas, and fourteen juvenile
districts throughout the state. It is within the superior courts of Connecticut where the vast amount of day-to-day and routine judicial activity takes place. Superior courts are truly the “workhorses” of Connecticut’s judicial system. There are approximately 170 superior court judges working at this level of the judicial system.

As a result of recent court reform efforts, superior courts are subdivided into five divisions, with cases processed into one of the five divisions depending on the class of the case. The Civil Division of superior court is where personal disputes are resolved. Lawsuits that seek monetary compensation are often the subject of civil cases. Insurance claims resulting from automobile or motorcycle accidents, claims regarding contract violations, charges of libel and slander, and claims concerning faulty appliances or purchased goods are typical of cases routinely heard in the Civil Division of superior court. A jury can be impaneled in civil court, or the case can be decided by the judge assigned to the case. In Connecticut, as in other states, financial settlements are normally reached before the case is formally tried.

The Criminal Division of the superior court system is where individuals are prosecuted for committing crimes against the state of Connecticut. Punishment in criminal cases can range from community service or probation to a lengthy prison sentence. In a murder case, the person convicted can be sentenced to life in prison without parole or sentenced to death. At the time of this writing, six individuals in Connecticut are awaiting execution on death row. Although Connecticut is one of thirty-eight states that still provides for the death penalty, the last execution in Connecticut took place in 1960. Governor Rowland, a proponent of the death penalty, has publicly stated that a “more workable” death penalty statute is needed.

Assault with a deadly weapon, murder, grand theft, drug possession, arson, sale of liquor to a minor, and drunken driving are examples of cases heard in criminal court. As in civil cases, a jury can be impaneled or a case can be tried before a judge. Plea bargaining is very common in state and federal trial courts. Over 90 percent of criminal cases in Connecticut result in a plea bargain and are never tried before a jury.
The Family Division of superior court resolves conflicts involving divorce, alimony, and child custody disputes, while the Juvenile Division handles cases involving young persons who are accused of a crime. In Connecticut, a “child” is defined as a person under the age of sixteen, while a “youth” is defined as an individual sixteen to eighteen years of age. Cases involving children and, in most instances, youths are heard in juvenile court. Court records involving juveniles are kept confidential and juvenile cases are not open to the public.

The Housing Division of superior court decides cases concerning rental disputes that erupt between landlords and tenants. Although family, juvenile, and housing courts normally do not hear the most intriguing or publicized cases, such courts are nevertheless essential to the administration of justice within the state of Connecticut.

Intermediate Appellate Court

Decisions rendered in superior court are normally final and in most instances bring closure to a particular case. In some cases, however, one of the parties, either the defendant or plaintiff, might chose to appeal the jury’s or judge’s verdict. Should this occur, an appeal will be processed to the state’s intermediate appellate court. A special category of cases can be appealed directly from superior court to the state supreme court, although in most instances the case will first be appealed to the intermediate appellate court. In Connecticut, a person is normally granted one appeal.

Established in 1982 by Amendment XX of the state constitution, the intermediate appellate court was established to relieve the heavy and growing workload of the state supreme court. Prior to the establishment of the intermediate appellate court, cases would be appealed directly from state superior court to the state supreme court. Although the supreme court was under no obligation to grant a hearing to every appeal, the court’s docket was nevertheless overcrowded. The intermediate court has thus served to reduce the workload of the supreme court, thereby allowing supreme court judges to concentrate on the most important and difficult judicial issues that arise in the state of Connecticut.
The intermediate appellate court, like the state supreme court, is located in Hartford. Nine judges are assigned to the intermediate court. One appellate judge, designated by the chief justice of the state supreme court, serves as the chief judge of the intermediate court. A three judge panel normally hears an appeal, although in special cases the court will sit \textit{en banc}, i.e., all nine judges will hear the case. A majority of judges on the appellate panel will decide whether or not to sustain the superior court verdict or reverse the lower court’s judgment.

When a panel of judges is evaluating a case on appeal, the panel’s primary concern is not with the facts of the case, nor with the guilt or innocence of the person appealing the case. The court instead is concerned with matters of law and constitutional procedure. The intermediate appellate court does not call witnesses, nor is a jury impaneled. The main concern is whether or not the lower court’s decision was based on proper rules of constitutional procedure. Should a majority of the panel conclude that constitutional procedure was not followed, regardless of the facts, then the lower court’s decision will most likely be reversed and either a new trial will be ordered or the case will be dismissed. Should the panel conclude that the lower court’s decision was reached fairly and properly without constitutional infringement, then the judgment of the superior court will be sustained.

\textit{State Supreme Court}

The court of last resort in Connecticut is normally the state supreme court. The supreme court hears cases that are appealed from the intermediate appellate court, and as previously noted, will hear a very select body of cases that are appealed directly from the superior courts. The Connecticut Supreme Court consists of seven judges, which includes six associate justices and the chief justice. Five justices will sit for a case, although in certain instances the chief justice will request that the court sit \textit{en banc} (the full bench). Like the intermediate appellate court, the state supreme court is not a trial court. There are no witnesses called to testify, there is no jury, and the justices are not particularly concerned with the facts of the case. Rules of evidence,
constitutional procedure, and matters of law are what the state supreme court is primarily concerned with when hearing an appeal.

Cases arrive at the state supreme court in several different ways. One method is for an individual to appeal the ruling of the intermediate appellate court directly to the state supreme court. This is known as “petitioning for certification.” Should two of the seven supreme court justices upon review of the petition decide that the appeal is worthy of a hearing, the court will grant the petition and request that all records of the case be forwarded to the court. With regard to petitions for certification, the Supreme court has full discretion whether or not to grant the appeal.

The second way for a case to arrive before the supreme court is for the court to transfer a pending case that is before the intermediate appellate court. Any case filed in the intermediate appellate court can be directly transferred to the state supreme court upon the supreme court’s request. A third route of appeal is for the decision of a superior court to be appealed directly to the state supreme court. State law carefully identifies which body of cases can be appealed directly to the state supreme court. Such cases include rulings involving the death penalty, legislative reapportionment, or those in which interpretation of the state constitution is required.28

When a case is brought before the state supreme court, there is a well-established system of procedure that unfolds. Lawyers for both sides of the case are allowed to argue their positions before the court. Both parties are allowed a half-hour for “oral argument.” The court hears oral arguments during eight two-week sessions between the months of September and June of each year. The supreme court listens to as many as three or four cases during days scheduled for oral argument. During oral argument, the justices ask the lawyers representing the two parties a wide range of probing questions pertaining to judicial precedent and matters of law. Lawyers for both sides are expected to be well-prepared for oral argument and ready to field difficult questions from the sitting justices.

Following oral argument, the justices will meet in the conference room located within the supreme court building to
discuss the case. A preliminary vote is taken during the conference. One of the justices who is in the majority will be asked to draft a “majority opinion.” Writing the court’s majority opinion can be a difficult and delicate task, as the final opinion must be deemed acceptable to those justices who originally voted with the majority.

One or more of the justices who voted with the minority might feel compelled to draft a dissenting opinion, although this is not a formal requirement. A dissenting opinion reflects points of disagreement with the court’s majority. Moreover, in addition to majority and dissenting opinions, one or more of the justices who voted with the majority might decide to draft a concurring opinion. A concurring opinion will be written by a justice who agrees with the majority’s position with respect to the outcome of the case, but not necessarily with the specific reasons expressed in the majority opinion. One of the justices in the majority might agree with the majority view that a statute passed by the Connecticut state legislature is in violation of the Connecticut Constitution and should therefore be deemed unconstitutional. At the same time, however, the justice might not agree with the reasons expressed in the majority opinion regarding the invalidation of the law. In this instance, the justice may write a concurring opinion.

Drafts of majority, dissenting, and concurring opinions are circulated to the justices involved in the case. The justices will carefully read the drafts and evaluate the legal arguments. After the opinions have been circulated, read, and digested, the justices will meet once again in the conference room to cast their final vote. It is possible, but not probable, that a member of the majority might have been so impressed with the logic of the dissenting opinion that he or she will part company with the majority and affix his or her name to the dissenting opinion. Conversely, a justice who originally sided with the minority might be pulled to the side of the majority as a result of a compelling and persuasive majority opinion. Only after the separate opinions are drafted and reviewed does the position of the supreme court solidify. When supreme court rulings are issued, they are immediately made public by way of the Electronic Bulletin Board.
Shortly thereafter, the decision is printed in the *Connecticut Law Journal*.29

Table 27 documents the workload of the Connecticut Supreme Court during two recent terms, 1996-97 and 1997-98.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 27</th>
<th>Supreme Court Caseload</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>July 1, 1996—June 30, 1997</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Civil</td>
<td>264</td>
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<tr>
<td>Criminal</td>
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<td>Caseload</td>
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<td>Appeals Disposed</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>July 1, 1997—June 30, 1998</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil</td>
<td>288</td>
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<tr>
<td>Criminal</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>Appeals Disposed</td>
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As the data show, the state supreme court’s yearly docket currently consists of approximately 450-500 cases. This figure includes fresh appeals as well as appeals carried over from the previous term. The data also show that the court will issue rulings for approximately 50 percent of the cases on the docket. In a typical term, approximately two-thirds of the rulings involve civil appeals.

The state supreme court is normally, but not always, the court of last resort. If a case involves interpretation of the federal constitution, the losing party has the right to appeal the case directly to the United States Supreme Court by petitioning the high court for a *writ of certiorari*. In essence, the party appealing
the case is asking the Supreme Court to "make more certain" of the lower court ruling. It is doubtful, however, that the Supreme Court will agree to hear the case, as approximately 98 percent of petitions for certiorari are routinely denied. Should the case involve interpretation of the state constitution, the decision of the state supreme court is final. As discussed in chapter three, the United States Supreme Court cannot review the ruling of a state supreme court regarding interpretation of the state constitution.

Judicial Selection

The judicial selection process in Connecticut was at one time a political and partisan process. The governor would nominate judges and the state legislature would confirm the governor's choice. Judicial posts were part of the patronage system, with party affiliation and political loyalty at the heart of the selection process. The judicial selection process in Connecticut was very similar to that of the federal judicial selection process.

Connecticut's judicial selection system underwent significant reform in 1986 with passage of the twenty-fifth amendment to the state constitution. Passage of the twenty-fifth amendment reflected a national trend regarding court reform at the state level of the federal system. In many states, the process of judicial selection had theoretically been depoliticized, reflecting the public's antipathy toward politics, patronage, and political parties. Reform proposals were adopted across the land which placed greater emphasis on the merit of judicial nominees as opposed to partisanship and political connections.

The roots of the reform effort can be traced to Missouri's pioneering efforts in 1940 regarding state judicial selection procedures. The "Missouri Plan" established a system that incorporated a mixture of merit, gubernatorial involvement, as well as popular referendum in the selection of state judges. A number of states, Connecticut included, have since followed the lead of Missouri by either adopting the Missouri Plan in its entirety or certain elements of the system.

The twenty-fifth amendment to the Connecticut Constitution established a Judicial Selection Commission for the purpose of
developing a short list of potential judicial nominees. The Selection Commission is required to review and evaluate the credentials of lawyers and sitting judges who have expressed an interest in serving on either the superior, appellate, or state supreme court. The Commission will narrow the list of qualified candidates to three or four and present the list to the governor. The governor will then select a candidate from the Commission's short list and forward the name to the state legislature for confirmation.

The process in the state legislature begins with hearings in the Judiciary Committee followed by a Committee vote. Should the Judiciary Committee recommend the nominee, the state legislature will then vote to confirm or reject the candidate. Judges in Connecticut must have earned a law degree and be a member of the Connecticut bar. Superior, appellate, and supreme court judges are appointed to eight year terms and are eligible for reappointment. State judges must retire at the age of seventy, although judges seventy or older can serve as state referees.

The screening of judicial candidates by the Judicial Selection Commission and the development of a short list based on merit is a radical departure from the previous system of judicial selection. Under the new system, the governor still has some discretion in deciding which name to send to the legislature for confirmation, but is formally obligated to nominate a judge from among the list of candidates proposed by the Commission. The governor's role in the selection of state judges has thus been diminished.

The Judicial Selection Commission is a twelve-member bipartisan commission. The Commission is at all times politically balanced, with equal numbers of Democrats and Republicans. Among the twelve Commission members, six are lawyers appointed by the governor and six are persons outside of the legal profession appointed by party leaders within the state House and state Senate. More specifically, the Speaker of the House appoints two members, the Senate pro tempore appoints two, and the minority leaders in both chambers each appoint one. Commission members are appointed for six years.32

It would of course be naive to think that all politics has been removed from the judicial selection process in Connecticut as a
result of the twenty-fifth amendment and the creation of the Judicial Selection Commission. Moreover, there is very little evidence to suggest that state judges in Connecticut since 1986 have been more competent, meritorious, and objective than judges chosen under the former selection process. The current procedure for appointing Commission members inherently lends itself to political favoritism, and Commission members undoubtedly have strong political opinions about legal issues. Moreover, those individuals recommended by the Commission and eventually appointed to the bench have often been involved in one form or another in state or local politics. It is important to note in this regard that comparative studies of state judicial recruitment have concluded that different selection methods do not alter the characteristics and quality of judges.33 State judges are strikingly similar to one another, regardless of which judicial selection system is in place.

Judicial Support Staffs

Like state lawmakers and the state governor, judges in Connecticut depend on a number of support personnel to assist with the day-to-day operation of the judicial system. Support personnel range from law clerks and high level judicial administrators to clerical personnel who process forms and file documents.

Law clerks are central to the functioning of the state’s judicial system. Fourteen law clerks currently serve the state supreme court. Law clerks are selected by the individual justices and serve for a period of twelve months. Law clerks are normally fresh out of law school and are in the top tier of their graduating class. The job description for a state supreme court law clerk suggests that an applicant be among the top quarter of his or her graduating class. In Connecticut, as in other states, it is considered an honor to serve as a law clerk for the state supreme court. The position is also perceived as a stepping stone for a successful career in law. Needless to say, the selection process is highly competitive. Law clerks perform a number of critical functions. These include helping justices screen and review petitions for certification,
researching legal precedents, preparing justices for oral argument, and writing and editing drafts of judicial opinions.

Eighteen law clerks are assigned to the intermediate court of appeals. Like law clerks for the state supreme court, such individuals are screened and personally selected by the individual appellate court judges. Several of the law clerks also work as "shared clerks" for the court and for retired appellate court judges. The functions of law clerks who serve the intermediate appellate court are very similar to those of supreme court law clerks. Screening cases, researching precedent, preparing judges for oral argument and assisting with opinions are among the normal duties of appellate court law clerks. Appellate court law clerks are expected to be among the top third of their law school graduating class.34

Law clerks are also hired to serve the needs of the state's superior courts. Superior court law clerks are not personally chosen by superior court judges, but rather are assigned to various superior courts based on the needs of superior court judges. Such law clerks assist judges by performing tasks similar to those of law clerks working in the intermediate appellate court and the state supreme court. Assistance with opinion writing and legal research are among the principal duties associated with being a superior court clerk. Superior court law clerks are hired for twelve months, and while class standing is considered relevant to the hiring process, no specific tier is designated in the job posting.35 In addition to law clerks, the Connecticut judicial system is supported by several administrative divisions which fall under the direction of the chief court administrator. The various administrative divisions are responsible for managing the state judicial system and for implementing the decisions of the courts. The Administrative Services Division is responsible for managing judicial facilities, processing data, and handling personnel matters. The Affirmative Action/Employment Discrimination Division is responsible for ensuring that citizens have equal access to the courts and that affirmative action guidelines are followed with respect to staffing the administrative components of the judiciary. The Court Support Services Division includes the Office of Adult Probation, Office of Alternative Sanctions, Bail Commission,
Family Services Division, and the Division of Juvenile Detention Services. The various components of the Court Support Services Division work very closely with superior courts regarding terms of probation, rehabilitation programs, bail requirements, and issues involving family relationships and juvenile delinquency.

The public arm of the state’s judicial system is the External Affairs Division, which is responsible for educating the public through programs regarding the structure and function of the judicial system. The Superior Court Operations Division includes a wide range of subdivisions responsible for implementing court rulings, providing legal services to superior court judges, and for ensuring ethical conduct on the part of attorneys who practice law in Connecticut.

Generally speaking, many offices and divisions have been established for the purpose of processing judicial cases, implementing judicial rulings and helping judges with the task of deciding cases and issuing opinions. As previously noted, there are over 3,500 full and part-time employees working in various capacities within the judicial branch of government. While on paper elements of the judicial administrative structure might appear unnecessary, there can be little doubt that the administrative components of the state judicial system have in multiple ways helped, rather than hindered, the efficiency of the judiciary. In many states, the judicial system seems to lag far behind that of the legislative and executive branches of government with regard to efficiency, modernization, staffing, and support services. This does not appear to be the case in Connecticut. The recent reorganization of the state superior court system, the addition of an intermediate court of appeals, the establishment of the Judicial Selection Commission, along with the addition of staff personnel and support services clearly suggest a judicial branch of government well prepared to face the legal challenges of the twenty-first century.

According to the Connecticut Constitution, the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of state government are equal in power. Each branch of government has its own sphere of authority, and each branch has the capacity to constrain the power of the other branches. Nevertheless, despite this constitutionally balanced
arrangement, it is more than evident that the governor in recent decades has emerged as the pivotal force within the three-branch structure. Clearly, the most dramatic and bold policy changes that occur in the state of Connecticut reflect the vision and energy of the governor. Thus, it seems appropriate to conclude a chapter on governing structures with the perspective of Governor John G. Rowland. At the time of this interview, Rowland was in his second term of office.
How and why did you first become involved in Connecticut politics? I would have to say family influence. Both of my parents were involved in politics during the sixties at the local level and my grandparents were involved in the early thirties. So there was always political involvement. My family would be involved in political rallies and we always had great discussions of politics and government at the dinner table. I went into politics as soon as I graduated from college and started my career in public service at the age of twenty-three. Family influence really had the biggest impact on my decision to enter politics.

Was there any one person who greatly influenced your political views? Clearly it was my parents. My dad was almost like a civil rights leader in the nineteen-sixties. He was very inclusive and aggressive in reaching out to the African American community as a local and civic leader. My mother was just to the right of Rush Limbaugh and had some very conservative views. To this day she is not shy about sharing them with anyone who will listen.

What do you consider to be your most important tasks as the governor of Connecticut? Bringing a truly bipartisan approach to governing. The success that we have had during the past six years has been due to our ability to work effectively with a Democratic legislature and to build bipartisan coalitions for the purpose of tax cuts, welfare reform, and even trying to bring the Patriots to Connecticut. In addition to developing bipartisan coalitions, my urban initiatives for Waterbury, New Haven, Bridgeport, and Hartford have also been one of my most focused objectives.
Based on your extensive experience in Connecticut politics, how in your view has the office of governor changed over the years?
If you look back approximately fifty years, the changes in government have basically gone from an older and more patronage-based system to one that is based less on patronage and more on civil service. During the days of John Bailey and even Bill O’Neill, patronage played a much larger role in the governing process. There were pros and cons to that type of system, yet there was more accountability and responsibility. Things seemed to get done and someone was always considered accountable, whether it was the state party chairman, state governor, senator, or president. In today’s government, there is less accountability among elected officials and elected officials have less power. This is because power within the process has shifted from elected officials to interest groups. Public employee unions as well as organized and sophisticated special interest groups (such as the National Education Association and the Chamber of Commerce) have had a huge impact on government. Civil service, public employee unions, and special interest groups have reduced the accountability and power of political leaders.

How does a governor in Connecticut successfully lead the General Assembly?
By building coalitions and being willing to share the credit. I keep a plaque on my desk which says, “It is amazing what one can accomplish or what one can do if they are willing to share the credit.” As a Republican governor working with a Democratic-controlled House and Senate, I have found that to be successful I have to be willing to share the credit for bills and ideas. I work very hard at this and always try to keep people included from the very beginning. I know of some governors who don’t even have a speaking relationship with legislative leaders and who have vetoed hundreds of bills. In contrast, I have vetoed a small handful of bills over the last six years, and by working with the legislature and by sharing the credit I have had budgets passed with unanimous votes.

Over the past two decades, a considerable amount of power has been transferred from the federal to state governments, a process known as
“devolution.” Does Connecticut government have the capacity to handle these new responsibilities? We not only have the capacity to handle the new responsibilities, but we have also embraced and encouraged the transfer of power. Our state can handle tax, educational, and welfare initiatives much better than the federal government. My “mantra” to the federal government has always been this: Give us the resources and the flexibility to do the job and we will do it better than the federal government. The state government can best take care of problems that are closest to home. Bureaucrats in Washington are not in touch with the local needs of people. By returning power to the states, we have improved the quality of life for people.

Looking ahead to the new century, what do you see as the principal policy challenges facing Connecticut governors? Connecticut will have some growing pains, and with growing pains there will be increased transportation needs, a need to find skilled workers for many jobs, and the development of affordable housing. Resolving the growing pains while at the same time preserving the high quality of life that Connecticut offers will be the principal challenges for future governors.

In light of the fact that you are the head of the Republican Party, could you describe what the Republican Party stands for in today’s politics? Certainly in Connecticut, as well as nationally, we are fiscally conservative and socially inclusive. The Republican Party stands for smaller government, lower taxes, and responsible regulation. The party also watches out for children and senior citizens. We do, however, have to do more to reach out to Hispanics, African American voters, and other groups who have not been a natural part of the Republican Party’s constituency.

How do you define the word “leader?” Someone who is willing to share credit; someone who is willing to share responsibility; someone who makes decisions for the right reasons rather than for self-satisfying purposes; someone who is willing to take a risk; someone who is not afraid to lose; someone willing to “think out of the box;” and someone willing to fail.
What will the “Rowland Era” be remembered for? What will be your legacy?
I would say urban revitalization. As governor I have helped revitalize Hartford, New London, Bridgeport, New Haven, and Waterbury. As governor, I have helped to revitalize our cities. My administration has also helped to empower people through welfare reform, and we have done more than any previous administration to help with higher education. By investing in education, we have been able to keep more young people in the state of Connecticut.

For students who read this book, is there anything that you would like to elaborate on?
I think students should know that Connecticut is a government that is close to the people. You can “touch” this government, and the government is not some remote object 100 miles away. Connecticut government is responsive to the needs of the individual as well as the individual communities.