



Gary L. Rose

**CONNECTICUT
GOVERNMENT
AND POLITICS**

AN INTRODUCTION

CONNECTICUT GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS AN INTRODUCTION

PRAISE FOR THE FIRST EDITION:

I am impressed with Professor Rose's command of the issues and how they affect the structures of state government as we enter the twenty-first century. The book is elegant in its prose, and students will gain an immediate understanding of the complexities of a government which most live under, but which few understand.

John Kenneth White
Catholic University of America

Connecticut Government and Politics: An Introduction is a thoroughly revised and updated version of the author's book, *Connecticut Government at the Millennium* (Sacred Heart University Press, 2001). Like the first edition, it is intended to introduce students and general readers to the historical development and current operation of Connecticut's political system. Individual chapters explore constitutional history in "The Constitution State," the transformation of Connecticut politics, the various mechanisms through which citizens can participate in political affairs, the structure and powers of the three branches of government, and the pivotal role of the mass media, newspapers in particular, in protecting the integrity of the political process. *Connecticut Government and Politics: An Introduction* is aimed at enhancing civic awareness among readers and also encouraging responsible citizenship through direct participation in state and local politics.

Gary L. Rose is professor and chair of the Department of Government and Politics at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Connecticut. His previous books include two editions of *Controversial Issues in Presidential Selection*, *Connecticut Politics at the Crossroads*, *The American Presidency Under Siege*, *Connecticut Government at the Millennium*, and *Public Policy in Connecticut: Challenges and Perspectives*. In addition to his teaching and writing, Professor Rose frequently serves as a political commentator for national, state, and local media. He resides in Cheshire with his wife and two children.

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To Laurie, Garrison, and Meredith

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Preface

The devolution of power to state governments is the reason why this book was written. Beginning with the Reagan era and extending to the present, a vast amount of domestic power has been transferred from the federal to state governments. For the past twenty-five years, states, not the federal government, have been responsible for formulating and delivering an array of public services that at one time seemed far beyond the capacity of state governments. Devolution also energized state politics. This resulted in state capitols being the new focal points for citizen activism.

Many states responded to devolution by modernizing governing structures and expanding the number of support staff for the three branches of government. In Connecticut, for example, a sixty-seven million dollar Legislative Office Building was constructed in 1987 for the purpose of assisting state lawmakers with their daily work. The building, which is adjacent to the state Capitol and connected to the Capitol by an underground concourse, is an impressive state-of-the-art response to the new responsibilities assumed by state governments.

The first edition of this book, *Connecticut Government at the Millennium*, was published in 2001. My goal in writing it was to publish a work that would serve as an introductory text on government and politics in Connecticut. The first edition, like the present revised version, was written with college students in mind. The first edition addressed the historical tension between

nationalists and states' rights advocates, the constitutional history of Connecticut, and the utility of the current constitution for protecting civil liberties and civil rights. Chapters were also devoted to **political** culture, party politics, interest groups, and the three branches of **government**. Each chapter in the first edition featured a lengthy interview with a political practitioner. The interviews were designed to supplement the contents of each chapter.

By 2006, however, it became clear that a revised version was **long** overdue. Within the space of **only** five years, the "land of steady habits" seemed to **plunge** into a state of unpredictability and political turmoil. **A** rash of corruption enveloped state and local government, resulting in federal indictments and prison sentences for a governor, two mayors, and a state senator. Even the chief justice of the state supreme court faced a legislative inquiry because of an ethical violation. **A** state once known for its ethical system of government was now referred to by media commentators and political pundits as "Corrupticut."

The state's two-party system, which had already been on the wane, also showed further signs of decay during the past five years. For example, in the 2006 mid-term election, Senator Joseph I. Lieberman, a lifelong Democrat, was elected as an Independent Democrat running under the party label of Connecticut for Lieberman. More generally, the political climate of Connecticut had also changed over a five year span. Known for its moderate brand of **politics**, Connecticut seemed to be moving in a decidedly more liberal direction, similar in some respects to the state of Massachusetts. In 2006, two of the three Republican members of Connecticut congressional delegation who were **seeking** reelection were defeated by liberal Democratic challengers.

The serious policy challenges that face Connecticut have also multiplied over the course of the past five years. The percentage of state residents without health care increased, proper care for the elderly remained unresolved, the state economy was less than impressive, and **gridlock** continued to afflict every major highway throughout the state. Moreover, environmental hazards caused by lightly regulated industries continued to threaten the state's air

and water supply, prison overcrowding grew to an alarming degree, and the achievement gap between suburban and urban school systems persisted, despite court rulings intended to rectify this condition. Thus, the political and policy developments that occurred in Connecticut during the past five years begged for a fresh look at Connecticut politics and government.

The present book unfolds in the following manner. In Chapter One, I examine the historical and ongoing struggle between those who favor a more centralized and powerful national government and those who favor decentralized power and a stronger system of states' rights. This issue has divided Americans into political factions and political parties for more than two hundred years.

In Chapter Two, I explore the constitutional history of Connecticut. In this chapter, the Fundamental Orders of **1639**, the Royal Charter of **1662**, the Constitution of **1818**, and the state's current constitution adopted in **1965** are described. I also include recent court rulings to demonstrate how the **1965** constitution has been harnessed to protect the civil liberties and civil rights of the Connecticut citizenry.

In Chapter Three, I examine the political complexion of Connecticut. I present a large **body** of evidence which demonstrates that the state has become more liberal over the years. Federal and state election results, **along** with the results of public opinion polls, are discussed in this chapter.

In Chapter Four, I focus on the three traditional mechanisms through which citizens can participate in the political process. These mechanisms include elections, political parties, and interest groups. The current health of such mechanisms is also reviewed in this chapter.

I devote Chapter Five exclusively to the state legislature. Special emphasis is placed on the bicameral structure of the legislature, the role of legislative leaders, and the procedure for passing legislation. Support staff and the Legislative Office Building are also described. The increased autonomy of the legislative branch in the age of devolution necessitates a separate and very full chapter devoted to this institution of government.

I explore the office of governor and the state judicial system in Chapter Six. The constitutional powers of the Connecticut governorship are presented, along with a discussion regarding the importance of a governor's public approval ratings for effective leadership. One will discover that the office of governor in Connecticut is similar to that of the American presidency **only** on a smaller scale. The structure of the state judicial system is also examined in this chapter. I describe the current workload of the court, the procedure for appealing a case to the state supreme court, and the method by which cases are heard and opinions written. **As** in the preceding chapter on the state legislature, support staff for the office of governor and the courts are also discussed.

In Chapter Seven, I pay homage to investigative journalists and argue in no uncertain terms **why** a free press is vital to **good** government. This chapter also gives a broad overview of the various forms of media in **Connecticut** that provide citizens with political information, including newspapers, television and radio stations, and the so-called blogosphere.

Those familiar with *Connecticut Government at the Millennium* will notice some major differences between that work and the present version. In addition to revising and updating information, I have also reorganized and added material. The new text features two entirely new chapters. I also consolidated four chapters into two, eliminated one chapter, and divided one lengthy chapter on the three parts of the government into two distinct and detailed chapters. The new version adds a substantial amount of current commentary from political practitioners, but is also a more concise work compared to the first, especially because of the omission of the interviews that concluded each chapter, with an eye toward making it more focused and user friendly. (I believe that those interviews are still valuable, and interested readers can still consult them in copies of the first edition.) The new title, *Connecticut Government and Politics: An Introduction*, more precisely reflects the thrust of the revised work and suggests that my subject matter is not just the immediate present but also the history of Connecticut government – and our prospects for the future.

Acknowledgments

Anthony J. Cernera, president of Sacred Heart University, is the first individual that I would like to acknowledge, for his exemplary leadership of our University and for his key role in founding and sustaining the Sacred Heart University Press, which has published three of my books on Connecticut government and politics. I am grateful for this opportunity and very much appreciate Dr. Cernera's continuing support for my academic endeavors.

I also want to thank Sidney Gottlieb, director of editorial and production activities for the Sacred Heart University Press, for his meticulous attention to my work and efficient organization of everything it takes to turn a manuscript into a book.

Several other individuals were also very helpful with respect to the publication of this work's first edition. My friend Melanie M. Spencer offered exceptional editorial and stylistic suggestions. Former work-study students Megan Flood and Patricia Clarke assisted me in various ways with research. Loretta Winter, my former administrative assistant, efficiently assisted me with multiple production details. John K. White, of Catholic University, was also instrumental in providing feedback and insightful commentary.

While writing the revised edition, I was most fortunate to have two dedicated and industrious individuals assist me in numerous ways. My new departmental assistant, Colette Rossignol, is a terrific asset to the political science program, and her attention to departmental details has allowed me to write with focus and

concentration. Teresa Fennell, my current work-study student, has proven to be a superb proofreader and research assistant. I deeply appreciate Teresa's excellent editorial suggestions and her assistance with tracking down facts and figures relevant to Connecticut politics, and thank her for all of her excellent efforts.

My family, as always, is my source of energy and love.

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