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POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY

Volume 121 · Number 3 · Fall 2006

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Political Science Quarterly

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is the result of their ability to please constituents and to ward off quality opponents. These distinctions become critical when the data show that the least secure members of the House engage in uptake, consistent with the inoculation hypothesis, whereas the most secure Senators engage in uptake, consistent with the election selection hypothesis. Sulkin carefully shows that the differences between the chambers are the result of meaningful differences in behaviors rather than statistical flukes.

In many ways, this book is exploratory. Sulkin has invented the issue uptake concept, so we really don't know how frequently to expect it to occur, whether members of the House and Senate will behave differently, and so on. Similarly, sometimes there are potentially competing expectations (the inoculation versus election selection hypotheses), and we often have to delve deeply into the data to get a clear picture of what behavior is occurring. The temptation is to imply that the data support a particular hypothesis, when multiple expectations are available to explain a variety of patterns in the data. Documenting the existence of uptake and its patterns and effects is a tremendous contribution in itself.

Issue Politics in Congress will be a substantial contribution to the literature because it goes to the core of the nature of republican democracy: how legislators respond to constituents' electoral signals of their priorities. It is an extremely creative and meticulously empirical approach to studying representation. It shows that elections matter in setting the policy agenda in Congress—even when the candidate who highlighted the issue loses the election.

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Failing Grades: The Federal Politics of Education Standards by Kevin R. Kosar. Boulder, CO, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005. 259 pp. \$55.00.

The story of education policy in America is rich with irony. Liberalism is premised on the belief that government can be a tool to fix many social problems, yet many liberals resist the idea that schools—the most prevalent government-run institution—can be expected to improve academic outcomes, particularly among the socially disadvantaged. On the other hand, conservatives, who generally see government as “the problem and not the solution,” see schools as the means to raise academic achievement for all. Kevin Kosar's *Failing Grades: The Federal Politics of Education Standards* ably chronicles the political developments that have led to this intriguing irony, by way of explaining how the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act came to be. As explained in Kosar's book, NCLB is itself rooted in irony. Here is an act that dramatically expands the federal government's role in education, promoted by a president whose party has long advocated limiting the role of the federal government in education. *Failing Grades* convincingly argues that efforts at education reform have been stymied by a standoff between two opposing ideological camps. On

one side are anti-statists who are suspicious of federal involvement in setting education policy but who want to hold schools accountable for their students' academic performance through testing. On the other are liberals, who welcome the federal government's role in education but disapprove of testing. Splitting the difference between them is the Quality Schools Advocacy (QSA) Movement, a motley assembly of business leaders, compassionate conservatives, and New Democrats, who have adopted accountability as an organizing principle for education reform. Schools, they argue, respond to incentives. Set the incentives correctly, and schools will improve. When candidate George W. Bush decided to make education reform the signature issue of his 2000 presidential campaign, he adopted the philosophy underpinning QSA.

From this description, it may appear that the long-standing antipathy toward the expansion of the federal role in education has been overcome. Anti-statism is dead—but long live anti-statism! Although under NCLB, schools face federally imposed penalties if their students do not meet academic standards, the federal government has not actually specified what those standards ought to be. Instead, states are left to develop their own exams and thus arrive at their own performance standards. In perhaps the greatest—and most troubling—irony of all, the same reformers who see incentives as the lever for improving schools were apparently blind to the fact that state policymakers respond to incentives too. In his concluding chapter, Kosar effectively describes how states are free to set their own levels of academic proficiency, which, in many cases, are suspiciously low. In Kosar's opinion, as well as my own, this is a perverse incentive indeed.

In telling its tale, *Failing Grades* both describes and prescribes. It begins with a brief in favor of rigorous standards, describes the rise of education to the top of the national policy agenda, details the reform proposals of previous administrations, and concludes with Kosar's proposals for fine-tuning NCLB. As a work of policy analysis, Kosar's book succeeds. However, if you are looking for a book that situates NCLB in the wider context of American politics and policy making, *Failing Grades* falls short. Another book will need to be written to explain NCLB's place in the broader policy environment. But when it is, *Failing Grades* will serve as an authoritative source on the ironies that characterize contemporary education policy.

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Popular Efficacy in the Democratic Era: A Reexamination of Electoral Accountability in the United States, 1828-2000 by Peter F. Nardulli.
Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2005. 284 pp. \$39.95.

In an era of widespread political alienation, American voters should take heart. They have more control over their political destiny than they might re-