

TENTH CORE EDITION

# WE THE PEOPLE

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TENTH CORE EDITION

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# **We the People**

**AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS**



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AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS

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*To Sandy, Cindy, and Alex Ginsberg*

*Angele, Anna, and Jason Lowi*

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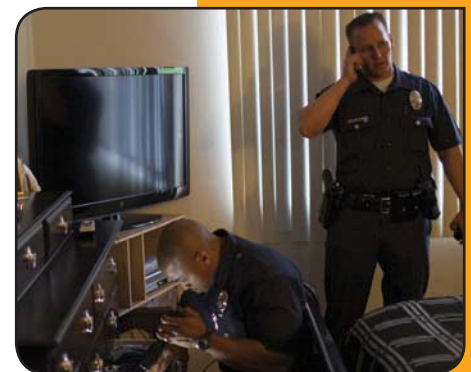
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# preface

This book has been and continues to be dedicated to developing a satisfactory response to the question more and more Americans are asking: Why should we be engaged with government and politics? Through the first nine editions, we sought to answer this question by making the text directly relevant to the lives of the students who would be reading it. As a result, we tried to make politics interesting by demonstrating that students' interests are at stake and that they therefore need to take a personal, even selfish, interest in the outcomes of government. At the same time, we realized that students needed guidance in how to become politically engaged. Beyond providing students with a core of political knowledge, we needed to show them how they could apply that knowledge as participants in the political process. The “Plug In” sections in each chapter help achieve that goal.

As events from the last several years have reminded us, “what government does” can be a matter of life and death. Recent events have reinforced the centrality of government in citizens' lives. The U.S. government has fought two wars abroad, while claiming sweeping new powers at home that could compromise the liberties of its citizens. America's role in the world is discussed daily both inside and outside the classroom. Moreover, the Internet has opened up new avenues to participation and mobilization. Reflecting all of these trends, this new Tenth Edition shows more than any other book on the market (1) how students are connected to government; (2) how digital media are changing (or not changing) the way Americans experience politics; and (3) why students should think critically about government and politics. These themes are incorporated in the following ways:

- **New “Politics and Your Future” chapter conclusions give students direct, personal reasons to care about politics.** These sections focus on the political opportunities and challenges that students will face in their lives as a result of emerging social, political, demographic, and technological change. The conclusions reprise the important point made in the chapter introductions that *government matters* and prompt students to consider how political change will impact their futures.
- **New “Plug In” sections show students how to make a difference in politics.** These boxes replace the older “Get Involved” sections with succinct,

realistic steps today's students can take—online and off—to to *inform* themselves, *express* themselves, *connect* with others, and *act* in politically meaningful ways.

- **New content on how digital media are changing politics is now incorporated throughout the text.** With the Ninth Edition, we added “Digital Citizens” boxes to explore the ways that new information technologies are shaping how we experience politics. In this Tenth Edition, the coverage of digital politics has been integrated into the body of the text, in recognition of the fact that digital media have become an integral part of American politics.
- **New “America Side by Side” boxes use data figures and tables to provide a comparative perspective.** These one-page boxes appear in every chapter and replace the older “America in the World” text boxes with a more visual presentation of comparative data. By comparing political institutions and behavior across countries, students gain a better understanding of how specific features of the American system shape politics.
- **“Who Are Americans?” infographics ask students to think critically about how Americans from different backgrounds experience politics.** These sections use bold, engaging graphics to present a statistical snapshot of the nation related to each chapter's topic. Critical-thinking questions in each unit and related exercises on the StudySpace website give students a chance to compare their own views and experiences and consider the political implications. The “Who Are Americans?” PowerPoint slides include enhanced versions of the graphics for use in lectures.
- **Chapter introductions focus on “What Government Does and Why It Matters.”** In recent decades, cynicism about “big government” has dominated the political zeitgeist. But critics of government often forget that governments do a great deal for citizens. Every year, Americans are the beneficiaries of billions of dollars of goods and services from government programs. Government “does” a lot, and what it does matters a great deal to everyone, including college students. At the start of each chapter, this theme is introduced and applied to the chapter's topic. The goal is to show students that government and politics mean something to their daily lives.
- **“For Critical Analysis” questions are incorporated throughout the text.** “For Critical Analysis” questions in the margins of every chapter prompt students' own critical thinking about the material in the chapter, encouraging them to engage with the topic. And the questions that accompany each “Who Are Americans?” unit ask students to consider how Americans from various backgrounds experience politics.

We continue to hope that our book will itself be accepted as a form of enlightened political action. This Tenth Edition is another chance. It is an advancement toward our goal. We promise to keep trying.

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# **We the People**

**AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS**

Most Americans share the core political values of liberty, equality, and democracy and want their government and its policies to reflect these values. However, people often disagree on the meaning of these values and what government should do to protect them.



# American Political Culture

**WHAT GOVERNMENT DOES AND WHY IT MATTERS** Americans sometimes appear to believe that the government is an institution that does things to them and from which they need protection. Students may wonder why they have to fill in long, often complicated forms to apply for financial assistance. They may frown when they see the payroll tax deducted from their small paycheck. Like Americans of all ages, they may resent municipal “red-light” cameras designed to photograph traffic violators—and send them tickets.

Although most people complain about something that government does to them, most everyone wants the government to do a great deal *for* them. Some of the services that people expect from government are big-ticket items, such as providing national security and keeping the nation safe from terrorist attacks. We all know that government pays for and directs the military. Students attending a state university know that state and federal public dollars help support their education.

Yet many of the other services that government provides are far less visible, and often it is not even clear that government plays a role at all. For example, students grabbing a quick bite to eat between classes take it for granted that their hamburger will not contain bacteria that might make them sick. Without federal inspection of meat, however, chances of contracting food-borne illnesses would be much higher and the everyday task of eating would be much riskier. Driving to school would not be possible if not for the tens of billions of dollars spent each year on road construction and maintenance by federal, state, and municipal authorities. Like most Americans, young people expect to get reliable information about the weather for the week ahead and warnings about dangerous