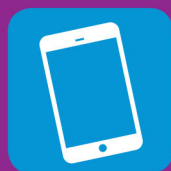


Gateways to Democracy

An Introduction to American Government



EDITION

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Gateways to Democracy

AN INTRODUCTION
TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

JOHN G. **GEER**

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

RICHARD **HERRERA**

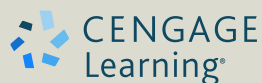
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Letter to the Instructor

Dear Introduction to American Government Instructor:

As teachers and scholars of American government, we have come together to write a textbook that engages students in both the process and the policy outcomes of U.S. government. We present an updated lens through which we can examine the theoretical and structural foundations of American democracy and the resulting political process that demands an active and informed citizenry. To help students understand American democracy and see how they can be involved in their government, we peel back the layers of the political system to expose its inner workings and to examine how competing interests can both facilitate and block the people's will. In doing so, we use the conceptual framework of gateways. We contend that there are gates—formal and informal—that present obstacles to participation and empowerment. But there are also gateways that give students a chance to influence the process and to overcome the obstacles. The gateways framework helps students conceptualize participation and civic engagement—even democracy itself. Our book is both realistic and optimistic, contending that the American system can be open to the influence of students and responsive to their hopes and dreams—if they have information about how the system works. But we avoid cheerleading by also pointing out the many gates that undermine the workings of government. Although the size and complexity of the American constitutional system is daunting, it is imperative to prepare for the demands of democratic citizenship. This has never been truer than today, when we have a rapidly changing demographic balance within our population. Today groups that were formerly underrepresented in American politics and society, such as second- and third-generation Latinos, are a powerful force in our government. It is our hope that this textbook can awaken students and motivate them not only to learn about politics but to also participate actively throughout every stage of their lives.

In keeping with the theme of gates and gateways in American politics, we also open each chapter with a **vignette** that tells the story of an individual who has successfully navigated his or her own way in politics. The important role of the vignette for the instructor is to show the students how people like them have made a difference in American political and social life; our vignette subjects vary by historical era, career choice, gender, race, ethnicity, and party affiliation. We also include landmark **Supreme Court cases** related to every chapter's subject to show students the continuous and vital role it plays in both upholding and knocking down gates to policy implementation and political participation. We include **policy features** in each chapter to illustrate how the chapter's core content operates on a real-time, real-life basis. We also have an **Election 2016 feature** in each chapter. To prepare students to evaluate the vast amounts of data present in today's political discourse, we include a **Political Analytics feature** in each chapter, which asks students to look closely at visual representations of data and to think critically about what they see.

New to This Edition

- A dedicated focus on diversity and participation that reflects the changing demographic infrastructure in America today
- Expanded information about the Tea Party, Donald Trump's presidential campaign, and factions in the Republican Party
- Coverage of Hillary Clinton's quest to become the first female U.S. president
- An expanded section on protest politics, including the Black Lives Matter movement
- Discussion of how the Supreme Court has changed and may lean differently after Justice Antonin Scalia's passing
- New information about recent Supreme Court cases and their ramifications, such as *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) and same-sex marriage



- New opening chapter vignettes featuring Oregon Governor Kate Brown, author Ta-Nehisi Coates, Utah Representative Mia Love, former President Barack Obama, Los Angeles City Administrative Officer Miguel Santana, and Iowa pollster J. Ann Selzer
- Explanatory text to accompany all figures to help students interpret data.

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Teaching American government remains a vitally important but constantly challenging task for all of us. We know that there are many books to choose from to use in your course. We believe that *Gateways to Democracy* has an innovative approach in reaching and engaging students across a range of backgrounds and enables instructors to more easily achieve their pedagogical goals in American government courses. We have seen it work for our students, and we know it will work for yours.

Sincerely,

John G. Geer, john.g.geer@vanderbilt.edu
Richard Herrera, Richard.Herrera@asu.edu
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Letter to the Student

Dear Student:

Our book begins with a simple question: How does anyone exert political influence in a country of more than 325 million people? Students in American government classrooms across the country are grappling with this question as they develop an appreciation of their role in American public life. In our own classrooms, students ask us: What is my responsibility? Can I make a difference? Does my participation matter? How can I get my opinions represented? These are gateway questions that probe the opportunities and limits on citizen involvement in a democracy. For that reason, we not only provide you with essential information about the American political system but also show you how to become a **more powerful advocate for yourself** within that system. It is not enough to know what you want your government and society to be—you must learn how to make it happen. This course shows you how people from all walks of life have opened gates to influence public policy, and it shows you the relevance of government in your life. It is our hope that this information motivates you not only to learn about politics but also to participate actively throughout every stage of your life.

In keeping with the theme of gates and gateways in American politics, we open each chapter with a vignette that tells the story of someone who has successfully navigated his or her way in politics. These are people like you who have different gender, ethnic, racial, and partisan backgrounds and who have made a difference in American political and social life. We also include other features focusing on the Supreme Court, public policy, the 2016 election, and data analysis that show you how politics plays out in the United States. All of these special features are designed to relate specifically to you—the student—to give you a blueprint with which to navigate the political system. What makes *Gateways to Democracy* different?

- Streamlined learning objectives and outcomes help you better understand the material and prepare for the graded assignments in the course. We have key terms and guide questions throughout each chapter.
- A focus on diversity reflects the changing demographic infrastructure in America, especially among young people, by providing new coverage of the politics and issues affecting all Americans in every chapter.
- Updated accounts are included of people who are changing American politics today.
- Current policy case studies are included on issues such as voter ID laws, fracking, drone warfare, and government surveillance of citizens' communications.

As a student, the benefits of using MindTap with this material are endless. With automatically graded practice quizzes and activities, an easily navigated learning path, and an interactive eBook, you will be able to test yourself inside and outside the classroom with ease. The accessibility of current events coupled with interactive media makes the content fun and engaging. On your computer, phone, or tablet, MindTap is there when you need it, giving you easy access to flashcards, quizzes, readings, and assignments.

As teachers, our main goal both in this book and in the classroom is to empower you as active participants in American democracy. We know that you balance a lot of competing demands for your time, from other classes, to work, to family responsibilities. This book provides you with the core information you need to succeed in your American government classes, and just as important, to knock open the gates that may stand in your way to achieve your goals within the political system.

Sincerely,

John G. Geer, john.g.geer@vanderbilt.edu
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Wendy J. Schiller, Wendy_Schiller@Brown.edu
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Reviewers

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Career Opportunities: Political Science

Introduction

One of the most important decisions a student has to make is the choice of a major; many consider future job possibilities when making that call. A political science degree is useful for a successful career in many different fields, from lawyer to policy advocate, pollster to humanitarian worker. Employer surveys reveal that the skills that most employers value in successful employees—critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and clarity of verbal and written communication—are precisely the tools that political science courses should be helping you develop. This guide is intended to spark ideas about careers you might pursue with a political science degree and the types of activities you can engage in now to help you secure one of those positions after graduation.

Careers in Political Science

LAW AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Do you find that your favorite parts of your political science classes are those that deal with the Constitution, the legal system, and the courts? Then a career in law and criminal justice might be right for you. Traditional jobs in the field range from lawyer or judge to police or parole officer. In the past decade, there has also been tremendous growth in the area of homeland security, including jobs in mission support, immigration, travel security, and prevention and response. A former political science student of at least one of the authors is now an FBI agent.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The many offices of the federal government combined represent one of the largest employers in the United States. Flip to the bureaucracy chapter and consider that each federal department, agency, and bureau you see looks to political science majors as future employees. A partial list of such agencies would include the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Federal Trade Commission. This does not even begin to account for the multitude of similar jobs in state and local governments that you might consider.

CAMPAIGNS, ELECTIONS, POLLING, AND ELECTED OFFICE

Are campaigns and elections the most exciting part of political science for you? Then you might consider a career in the growing industry based around political campaigns. From volunteering and interning to consulting, marketing, and fundraising, there are many opportunities for those who enjoy the competitive and high-stakes electoral arena. For those looking for careers that combine political knowledge with statistical skills, there are careers in public opinion polling. Pollsters work for independent national organizations such as Gallup and YouGov or as part of news operations and campaigns. For those who are interested in survey methodology, there are also a wide variety of non-political career opportunities in marketing and survey design. You might also consider running for public office yourself, as did Democratic political scientist Woodrow Wilson (who eventually became president) and Republican political scientist Dick Cheney (who eventually became vice president).

INTEREST GROUPS AND INTERNATIONAL AND NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Is there a cause that you are especially passionate about? At least one interest group is likely working to see progress made on that issue. Many of the positions that one might find in for-profit companies also exist in their non-profit interest group and nongovernmental organization counterparts, including lobbying and high-level strategizing. Don't forget that there are also major international organizations—such as the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and the International Monetary Fund—where a degree in political science could be put to good use. While competition for those jobs tends to be fierce, interest in and knowledge about politics and policy will give you an advantage.

FOREIGN SERVICE

Does a career in diplomacy and foreign affairs, complete with the opportunity to live and work abroad, sound exciting to you? Tens of thousands of people work for the State Department, both in Washington, D.C., and in consulates throughout the world. They represent the diplomatic interests of the United States abroad. Entrance into the Foreign Service follows a process, starting with the Foreign Service Officers Test—an exam given three times a year that includes sections on American government, history, economics, and world affairs. Being a political science major is a significant help in taking the FSOT.

JOURNALISM

Much of the content of online, newspaper, and television news concerns politics. Expert knowledge in the world of politics plus the ability to write well can land students in journalism positions where they can make a difference. Famous examples are *Washington Post* journalists Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, who uncovered the Watergate scandal, and *Boston Globe* reporters Robby Robinson, Michael Rezendes, and Sacha Pfeiffer, who helped uncover the priest child-abuse scandal in Boston. Public speaking ability can then make radio or television careers more likely.

GRADUATE SCHOOL

While not a career, graduate school may be the next step for you after completing your undergraduate degree. Earning a PhD or master's degree in political science could open additional doors to a career in academia as well as many of the professions mentioned here. If a career as a researcher in political science interests you, you should speak with your advisors about continuing your education.

Preparing While Still on Campus

INTERNSHIPS

One of the most useful steps you can take while still on campus is to visit your college's career center in regards to an internship in your field of interest. Not only does it give you a chance to experience life in the political science realm, it can lead to job opportunities later down the road and add experience to your résumé.

SKILLS

In addition to your political science classes, these skills will prove useful as a complement to your degree:

Writing: Like anything else, writing improves with practice. Writing is one of those skills that is applicable regardless of where your career might take you. Virtually every occupation relies on an ability to write cleanly, concisely, and persuasively.

Public Speaking: Presenting your ideas clearly and effectively is a vital skill in the modern economy. You can practice this skill in a formal class setting or through extracurricular activities that get you in front of a group.

Quantitative Analysis: As massive amounts of information are collected digitally, the nation is facing a drastic shortage of people with basic statistical skills to interpret and use this data. A political science degree can go hand in hand with courses in introductory statistics.

Foreign Language: One skill that often helps a student or future employee stand out in a crowded job market is the ability to communicate in a language other than English. Solidify or set the foundation for your verbal and written foreign language communication skills while in school.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP

One attribute that many employers look for is “leadership potential,” which can be tricky to indicate on a résumé or cover letter. What can help is a demonstrated record of involvement in clubs and organizations, preferably in a leadership role. While many people think immediately of student government, most student clubs allow you the opportunity to demonstrate leadership skills.

Conclusion

We hope that reading this has sparked some ideas about potential future careers. As a next step, visit your college's career placement office to further explore what you have read here. You might also visit your college's alumni office to connect with graduates who are working in your field of interest. Political science opens the door to a lot of exciting careers—have fun exploring the possibilities!



Gateways to Democracy

AN INTRODUCTION
TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

1 Gateways to American Democracy

Need to Know

- 1.1** Identify the successes we have achieved and the obstacles we face in establishing a “more perfect union”
- 1.2** Analyze how the constitutional system balances liberty and order
- 1.3** Describe the political values and ideologies Americans share
- 1.4** Evaluate American democracy in terms of responsiveness and equality
- 1.5** List the responsibilities of individuals in a democracy

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”¹

BARACK OBAMA
Columbia College



It is an American story. Barack Obama was not born into wealth or privilege, yet he secured fame and success. There are not many countries where it is possible for someone of humble origins to rise to the pinnacle of power and influence in the world. But in America it is possible because of the many gateways open to citizens.

Obama’s life was not just one of modest beginnings but one defined by diversity—an ever-increasing aspect of American life in the twenty-first century. Obama is multiracial, with a white mother and a black father. He spent his formative years in Indonesia following the divorce of his parents and his mother’s remarriage. At age 10, Obama went to live with his grandparents in Hawaii, where he experienced many different cultures.

Obama faced his share of hardships growing up. Not having his father around was difficult, and the moves he made to Indonesia and Hawaii were inevitably unsettling. But his family focused on securing him a good education, which was part of the motivation for his moving back to the United States in the early 1970s.

In 1979, Obama enrolled at Occidental College in Los Angeles. During this time he became active in student organizations opposing South Africa’s practice of apartheid—his first effort at using a gateway to influence public policy. After his sophomore year, Obama transferred to Columbia University in New York, completing a bachelor’s degree in political science. His interest in politics and the pursuit of gateways of influence continued. After graduating, Obama moved to Chicago to work as a community organizer in Chicago’s largely poor and black South Side.

Eventually, Obama enrolled in Harvard Law School, where he became the first African American president of the Harvard Law Review. This recognition drew national media attention and a contract from Random House to write a book about race relations, ultimately titled *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*. This memoir touched on themes of race and racial identity. It was also during Obama’s stint at Harvard that he met Michelle Robinson, a Chicago South Side native and fellow lawyer who worked for the firm where he completed a summer internship. They married in 1992 and decided to live in Chicago to raise their family.

Obama immersed himself in the African American community in Chicago. He directed the Illinois Vote Project,

which increased black turnout in the 1992 election and registered hundreds of thousands of people to vote. Obama continued to pursue the gateway offered by elections. In 1996, Obama ran for and won an Illinois state senate seat, representing the 13th District of Illinois.

During his time as a state senator, Obama worked with both Republicans and Democrats. He helped to pass substantial amounts of legislation on issues ranging from health care and welfare reform to a bipartisan effort to monitor racial profiling in police activity.

Obama decided to run for U.S. Congress against Chicago alderman and incumbent congressman Bobby Rush in the 2000 Democratic primary. But Obama was not nearly as well known as Rush, and he lost by 30 percentage points in the Democratic primary. It was stinging defeat, yet it did not deter Obama. Four years later, he ran for an even bigger prize—the U.S. Senate. This time the well-known and potentially well-financed Democrats chose not to run, making it possible for him to win the primary. Obama’s luck continued when the GOP nominee, Jack Ryan, faced a scandal involving his ex-wife and sex clubs, forcing him out of the race. That development opened wide a gate for Obama to win the Senate seat.

As he ran for Senate in 2004, he continued to gain national attention, so much so that he was invited to deliver the keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. On this huge stage, he gave an inspirational speech that propelled him to the top ranks of possible presidential candidates in 2008. He made the most of that opportunity, running a successful campaign that beat the formidable Hillary Clinton in the primary and then went on to defeat the Republican nominee and war hero, Senator John McCain.

Holding aside one’s personal beliefs about President Obama, his story is compelling, speaking directly to how the U.S. political system can work. You can be born into modest circumstances and yet, with grit, determination, and resilience, have a chance to do great things. Not everyone will become president, but everyone can make a real difference by getting involved just as Obama did. Obama’s career is proof that the steps you take as a student to be involved in your community can take you places you cannot even imagine right now. The key is to start by walking through one of the many gateways of American politics.

Gateways: Evaluating the American Political System

Identify the successes we have achieved and the obstacles we face in establishing a “more perfect union”

This text, *Gateways to Democracy*, explains how citizen involvement has expanded American democracy and how each of you can also influence the political system. We call the avenues of influence “gateways.” This text serves as a handbook for democratic citizenship by peeling back the layers of American government to reveal the ways you can get involved and to explain the reasons you should do so. The American political system is complicated, large, and sometimes frustrating. As the term *gateways* implies, there are also *gates*—obstacles to influence, institutional controls that limit access, and powerful interests that seem to block the people’s will. We describe these as well because to be a productive and influential member of American society, you need to understand how the hurdles and portals of American politics work.

Key Questions

Have you encountered any political gates or gateways?

Through citizen involvement, American democracy has achieved many successes:

- Our institutions are amazingly stable.
- The government has weathered many severe crises, yet it has peaceful transitions of power.
- Citizens are able to protest those policies they oppose.
- Americans enjoy substantial freedom.
- American society has offered a gateway to millions of immigrants.
- Americans exhibit more commitment to civic duty than do citizens in nearly all other major democracies.²
- Americans show more tolerance of different political views than do citizens in other major democracies.³
- Americans’ support of marriage equality has surged over the past few years, underscoring a broadening commitment to civil rights.

These successes do not mean that there are not problems:

- Government does not always respond to public opinion.
- Racial tensions persist across the country.
- There is growing poverty in the country.⁴
- The public’s trust in the institutions of government has never been so low.⁵
- The rate of turnout in elections is among the lowest of the major democracies.
- Distrust of some religious minorities, such as Muslims and Mormons, remains.⁶
- America has sought at times to erect gates to keep certain groups out.
- Political polarization is on the rise.⁷
- The U.S. national debt in 2016 is approaching \$20 trillion.⁸

To solve these and other problems and achieve the “more perfect Union” promised in the Constitution, the nation’s citizens must be vigilant and engaged. We have framed our text with the goal of demonstrating the demands and rewards of democratic citizenship. As we explore the American political system, we place special emphasis on the multiple and varied connections among citizenship, participation, institutions, and public policy. Our focus is on the following gateway questions:

- How can you get yourself and your opinions represented in government?
- How can you make government more responsive, and responsible, to citizens?
- How can you make American democracy better?

The laws that regulate the American economy, social issues, and even political participation are examples of **public policy**—the actions by government to achieve a goal. In the arena of public policy, we determine who gets what, when, and how, and with what result. In each chapter of this book, we will examine a major public policy issue related to the topic. You will find that the public policy process is often divided into five stages:

1. Identifying the problem
2. Placing the problem on the agenda of policy makers
3. Formulating a solution
4. Enacting and implementing the solution
5. Evaluating the effectiveness of the solution.

These stages combine to form an ideal model of the process; however, this process does not always unfold so neatly. You will also find that individuals, organizations, and political institutions all work together to determine public policies: Congress, the president, the executive branch agency that deals with the issue, the courts, political parties, interest groups, and interested citizens. In each chapter, you will learn about an important public policy, analyze who the stakeholders are and how the policy is formed, evaluate the policy, and, finally, construct your own solution (see Public Policy and Gateways to Democracy).



Jim West/Age fotostock/Superstock

IMAGE 1.1 The current generation of college students is very interested in giving back to the community, as shown in this picture of a Habitat for Humanity project.

Key Questions

Should government be responsive to all citizens or only to those who participate in politics in ways such as voting? What are some specific examples of public policy that might affect you as a college student?



Linda Moon/Shutterstock.com

IMAGE 1.2 The United States has great wealth, but far too many citizens face poverty and homelessness.

Democracy and the American Constitutional System

Analyze how the constitutional system balances liberty and order

Today democracy is presumed to be a good form of government, and most would say it is the best form. Democracy is the type of government to which many nations aspire, but it has not always been true. Only in the past two centuries—partly through the example of the United States—has democracy gained favor. Let us sketch some of the fundamental aspects of American democracy.

Liberty and Order

Literally and most simply, **democracy** is rule by the people, or **self-government**. In a democracy, the citizens hold political authority, and they develop the means to govern themselves. In practice, that means rule by the majority, and in the years before American independence, **majority rule** had little appeal. In 1644 John Cotton, a leading clergyman of the colonial period, declared democracy “the meanest and worst of all forms of government.”⁹ Even after American independence, Edmund Burke, a British political philosopher and politician, wrote that a “perfect democracy is . . . the most shameless thing in the world.”¹⁰ At the time democracy was associated with mob rule, and mobs were large, fanatical, ignorant, and dangerous. If the mob ruled, the people would suffer. There would be no **liberty** or safety; there would be no **order**. Eighteenth-century mobs destroyed private property, burned effigies of leaders they detested, tarred and feathered their enemies, and threatened people who disagreed with them. In fact, such events occurred in the protests against British rule in the American colonies, and they were fresh in the minds of those who wrote the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

John Adams, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and later the nation’s second president (1797–1801), was not a champion of this kind of democracy. “Democracy,” he wrote, “is more bloody than either aristocracy or monarchy. Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There is never a democracy that did not commit suicide.”¹¹ Adams knew about mobs and their effects firsthand. As a young lawyer before the Revolution, he agreed to defend British soldiers who had been charged with murder for firing on protesters in the streets of Boston. The soldiers’ cause was unpopular, for the people of Boston detested the British military presence. But Adams believed that, following British law, the soldiers had a right to counsel (a lawyer to defend them) and to a fair trial. In later years, he considered his defense of these British soldiers “one of the best pieces of service I ever rendered my country.”¹²

Why? In defending the soldiers, Adams was standing up for the **rule of law**, the principle that could prevent mob rule and keep a political or popular majority under control so it could not trample on **minority rights**. An ancient British legal principle, the rule of law holds that all people are equal before the law, all are subject to the law, and no one

is above it. Adams and the others who wrote America's founding documents believed in a **constitutional system** in which the people set up and agree on the basic rules and procedures that will govern them. A constitutional system is a government of laws, not of men. Without a constitution and rule of law, an unchecked majority could act to promote the welfare of some over the welfare of others, and society would be torn apart.

The American constitutional system, therefore, serves to protect both liberty and order. The Constitution sets up a governmental structure with built-in constraints on power (gates) and multiple points of access to power (gateways). It also has a built-in means for altering the basic rules and procedures of governance through amendments. As you might expect, the procedure for passing amendments comes with its own set of gates and gateways.

The Constitution as Gatekeeper

"If men were angels," wrote James Madison, a leading author of the Constitution and later the nation's fourth president (1809–17), "no government would be necessary. . . . In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men," he continued, "the great difficulty lies in this: You must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself" (see *Federalist* 51 in the Appendix). Madison and the other **Framers** of the Constitution recognized that the government they were designing had to be strong enough to rule but not strong enough to take away the people's rights. In other words, the Constitution had to serve as a gatekeeper, both allowing and limiting access to power at the same time.

James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and the other **Founders** had read many of the great political theorists. They drew, for example, on the ideas of the British political philosophers Thomas Hobbes and John Locke in perceiving the relationship between government and the governed as a **social contract**. If people lived in what these philosophers called a state of nature, without the rule of law, conflict would be unending, and the strong would destroy the weak. To secure order and safety, individuals come together to form a government and agree to live by its rules. In return, the government agrees to protect life, liberty, and property. Life, liberty, and property, said Locke, are **natural (unalienable) rights**—rights so fundamental that government cannot take them away.



IMAGE 1.3 Paul Revere printed this famous engraving of the Boston Massacre in 1770. Emphasizing the shedding of innocent blood—five colonists died—it rallied Bostonians to resist British tyranny. Evidence at the trial of the soldiers indicated that they were provoked by the mob with taunts, clubs, and stones. Lawyer John Adams argued for the defense.

Key Questions

According to political philosophers, people agree to social contracts in forming a government like ours. What do you agree to do as part of our social contract?



PUBLIC POLICY AND GATEWAYS TO DEMOCRACY

The Gap Between Minimum Wage and Living Wage

The first federal minimum wage requirement was signed into law by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1938 as part of the Fair Labor Standards Act; it set the minimum wage at 25 cents per hour and established a 44-hour workweek. States could mandate pay levels above the federal minimum wage, but they could not go below it. While he was lobbying Congress and the public on behalf of the bill, President Roosevelt said that the United States should give “all our able-bodied working men and women

a fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work.”¹³ Others have also argued that individuals, families, and communities must be able to earn a living wage in order to rise above the poverty level, which would in turn give them more time and energy to participate in the democratic process.

Today the federal minimum wage is set at \$7.25, although more than twenty states require employers to pay more than that wage.¹⁴ Still, even at that wage, working full time leaves these workers still well below what is

TABLE 1.1 Minimum Wage vs. Living Wage by State

State	Wage Gap	Living Wage (1 adult)	Minimum Wage	State	Wage Gap	Living Wage (1 adult)	Minimum Wage
HI	\$6.49	\$13.74	\$7.25	MS	\$2.70	\$9.95	\$7.25
MD	\$5.82	\$13.07	\$7.25	CO	\$2.69	\$10.69	\$8.00
DC	\$5.34	\$14.84	\$9.50	IA	\$2.68	\$9.93	\$7.25
VA	\$5.11	\$12.36	\$7.25	WY	\$2.68	\$9.93	\$7.25
NY	\$4.75	\$12.75	\$8.00	MN	\$2.65	\$10.65	\$8.00
MA	\$4.60	\$12.60	\$8.00	WV	\$2.65	\$9.90	\$7.25
NJ	\$4.26	\$12.51	\$8.25	NM	\$2.63	\$10.13	\$7.50
NH	\$4.18	\$11.43	\$7.25	AZ	\$2.57	\$10.47	\$7.90
DE	\$3.93	\$11.68	\$7.75	KS	\$2.57	\$9.82	\$7.25
GA	\$3.44	\$10.69	\$7.25	ND	\$2.54	\$9.79	\$7.25
AK	\$3.42	\$11.17	\$7.75	IN	\$2.49	\$9.74	\$7.25
CA	\$3.34	\$12.34	\$9.00	KY	\$2.46	\$9.71	\$7.25
NC	\$3.28	\$10.53	\$7.25	NV	\$2.41	\$10.66	\$8.25
CT	\$3.27	\$11.97	\$8.70	VT	\$2.40	\$11.13	\$8.73
SC	\$3.24	\$10.49	\$7.25	ID	\$2.34	\$9.59	\$7.25
LA	\$3.22	\$10.47	\$7.25	AR	\$2.31	\$9.56	\$7.25
PA	\$3.15	\$10.40	\$7.25	OK	\$2.24	\$9.49	\$7.25
ME	\$3.11	\$10.61	\$7.50	NE	\$2.23	\$9.48	\$7.25
UT	\$3.04	\$10.29	\$7.25	SD	\$2.23	\$9.48	\$7.25
FL	\$3.01	\$10.94	\$7.93	MO	\$2.14	\$9.64	\$7.50
RI	\$3.01	\$11.01	\$8.00	MI	\$1.83	\$9.98	\$8.15
TN	\$3.01	\$10.26	\$7.25	MT	\$1.82	\$9.72	\$7.90
TX	\$2.95	\$10.20	\$7.25	OR	\$1.58	\$10.68	\$9.10
AL	\$2.92	\$10.17	\$7.25	OH	\$1.44	\$9.39	\$7.95
WI	\$2.88	\$10.13	\$7.25	WA	\$1.02	\$10.34	\$9.32
IL	\$2.83	\$11.08	\$8.25				

Source: Amy K. Glasmeier, “Living Wage Calculator,” Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Accessed February 25, 2016, at <http://livingwage.mit.edu>.

called a “living wage.” In other words, many workers are well below the poverty level. Table 1.1 shows the gap between the minimum wage in that state and the “living wage.” In all fifty states, the formal minimum wage is below a wage that would allow these workers to climb out of poverty. In cases like the state of Washington, the gap is about \$1 (which is still about \$2,000 a year). In Virginia, the gap is \$5.11, which yields an income difference of just over \$10,000. These kinds of data underscore why there have been numerous calls for increasing the minimum wage. The case becomes even more compelling when you consider these data are only addressing workers as supporting themselves. If they are supporting a family, the gap grows considerably.

Even with the data from Table 1.1, there are reasons not to raise the minimum wage. The central argument of opponents of raising the minimum wage is that most of these jobs are located in small businesses that cannot afford to pay the higher wages. Employers may not hire more workers at a higher rate, and they may even fire existing workers, in order to keep their businesses profitable. Those who oppose raising the minimum

wage also argue that open trade policies have given an unfair advantage to foreign manufacturers that can hire workers at very low wages, and so produce and sell goods for less.

It is difficult, however, to assess the impact of raising the minimum wage on job growth or trade imbalances because there are so many other factors that affect the economy. For example, the last raise in the federal minimum wage occurred in 2009 in the midst of a major recession caused by a crash in the housing market. How many jobs were lost due to the recession, and how many resulted from the hike in the minimum wage? It is possible that the increased minimum wage contributed to a decline in jobs, but it is also possible that the increase had no effect at all in the larger context of an economic downturn. Economists and other experts have not reached a consensus on this question.

In making a policy choice, you must judge what President Franklin Roosevelt called a “fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work.” In the context of the American democracy, the minimum wage debate raises fundamental questions about the government’s role in guaranteeing equality of economic opportunity.

Construct Your Own Policy

1. Using the table, determine the wage gap in your state. Do you think the minimum wage should be increased? If you wanted to change the minimum wage laws in your area, what level of government would you have to lobby—local, state, federal, or a combination?
2. Construct a minimum wage policy that takes into account a worker’s age, education, and family circumstance.

But these ideas about government as a social contract were untested theories when Madison and others began to write the Constitution. There were no working examples in other nations. The only model for self-government was ancient Athens, where the people had governed themselves in a **direct democracy**. In Athens, citizens met together to debate and to vote. That was possible because only property-owning males were citizens, and they were few in number and had similar interests and concerns.¹⁵

But the new United States was nothing like the old city-state of Athens. It was an alliance of thirteen states—former colonies—with nearly 4 million people spread across some 360,000 square miles. Direct democracy was impractical for such a large and diverse country, so those who wrote the Constitution created a **representative democracy** in which the people elect representatives who govern in their name. Some observers, including the Framers, call this arrangement a **republic**, a form of government in which power derives from the citizens, but their representatives make policy and govern according to existing law.