CHAPTER ONE

POLITICS IN STATES AND COMMUNITIES

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1.1 Explain how the problems that governments address are inherently political in nature.

1.2 Compare the public policies of various states and communities in areas such as population growth, income, and education.

1.3 Describe both the current racial and ethnic composition of the United States and how it has changed over time.

1.4 Identify those who immigrate to the United States, current and proposed immigration policies, and the politics underlying legal and illegal immigration.

1.5 Compare the ideological profiles of liberal and conservative states.

1.6 Explain how differences in states' political cultures affect their ideological profiles.

1.7 Describe how the religious profiles of states affect the politics and attitudes about wedge issues such as abortion.

1.8 Assess how political leaders influence politics in states and communities through policy entrepreneurship.

1.9 Describe the major policy responsibilities held by states and communities, including education, health and welfare, transportation, public safety, civil rights, the physical environment of our communities, and taxes.

1.10 Trace the admission of states into the union, and explain the political status of the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. territories.
A POLITICAL APPROACH TO STATES AND COMMUNITIES

Politics is the management of conflict. Disagreements are often fierce at the state and local levels over everything from the death penalty, stem cell research, and student testing, to which neighborhood will get a new park, what taxes to impose, and how to deal with race and religious controversies. An understanding of “politics” in American states and communities requires an understanding of both the major conflicts confronting society and the political processes and governmental organizations designed to manage conflict. State and local governments do more than provide public services such as education, highways, police and fire protection, sewage disposal, and garbage collection. These are important functions of government to be sure; but it is even more important that government deal with racial tensions, school disputes, growth problems, economic stagnation, minority concerns, poverty, drugs, crime, and violence. These problems are primarily political in nature; that is, people have different ideas about what should be done, or whether government should do anything at all.

Moreover, many of the service functions of government also engender political conflict. Even if “there is only one way to pave a street,” political questions remain. Whose street will get paved? Who will get the paving contract? Who will pay for it? Shouldn’t we build a new school instead of paving the street?

THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF STATES AND COMMUNITIES

The task of political science is not only to describe politics and public policy in American states and communities, but also to explain differences through comparative analysis. We want to know what is happening in American politics, and we want to know why. Which states allow their citizens to vote directly on controversial issues and which states don’t? Which states place limits on abortion? Which states tax their citizens heavily and which states have no income tax? What are the most influential lobbying groups in the states? Which states generally vote Democratic and which states can usually be counted on by Republicans? In which states are women most successful in winning office? Which states spend the most on schools? Which states have the death penalty and actually use it? Which cities are leading the “green” revolution and which metropolitan areas have the most traffic congestion? Why do some states lead while others lag in tackling tough issues? What we really want to understand are the “whos, whats, whens, wheres, hows, and whys” of state and local politics. Most of us will move to vastly different locations several times in our lifetimes and will likely encounter situations that upset us to the point where we want to get involved and hold somebody accountable. It is hard to fix blame if we do not have a clue about how politics works in different states and communities.

In the past, the phrase “comparative government” applied to the study of foreign...
governments, but American states and communities provide an excellent opportunity for genuine **comparative study**, which compares political institutions and behaviors from state to state and community to community in order to identify and explain similarities or differences.

Comparison is a vital part of explanation. Only by comparing politics and public policy in different states and communities can we arrive at any comprehensive explanations of political life. Comparative analysis helps us answer the question *why*.

American states and communities provide excellent “laboratories” for applying comparative analysis. States and communities are not alike in social and economic conditions, in politics and government, or in their public policies. These differences are important assets in comparative study because they enable us to search for relationships between different socioeconomic conditions, political system characteristics, and policy outcomes. For example, if differences among states and communities in educational policies are closely associated with differences in economic resources or in party politics, then we may assume that economic resources or party politics help “explain” educational policies.

State politics are often affected by unique historical circumstances. (See Figure 1–1 and Table 1–1.) Louisiana is distinctive because of its French–Spanish colonial background and the continuing influence of this background on its politics today. For nine years Texas was an independent republic (1836–1845) before it was annexed as a state by Congress. Eleven southern states were involved in a bloody war against the federal government from 1861 to 1865. Hawaii has a unique history and culture, combining the influence of Polynesian, Chinese, Japanese, and European civilizations. Alaska’s rugged climate and geography and physical isolation set it apart. Wisconsin and Minnesota reflect the Scandinavian influences of their early settlers. Utah was initially settled by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, popularly known as the Mormons, and it retains much of its distinctly Mormon culture today.

These unique historical and cultural settings help to shape state political systems and public policies. However, the mere identification of unique traits or histories does not really “explain” why politics or public policy differs from state to state. Ad hoc explanations do not help much in developing general theories of politics. For example, only Texas has the Alamo and only New York has the Statue of Liberty, but the stories about these landmarks do not explain why New York has a state income tax and Texas does not. Students of state politics must search for social and economic conditions that appear most influential in shaping state politics over time in all the states. Despite the uniqueness of history and culture in many of our states, we must search for explanations of why state governments do what they do.

Since it is impossible to consider all the conditions that might influence state politics, we must focus our attention on a limited number of variables. We can begin with economic development—one of the most influential variables affecting state politics and public policy. **Economic development** is defined broadly to include three closely related components: population growth, income, and education.

**Population Growth**

America has always been a rapidly changing society. As its people change—in numbers, race, ethnicity, income, education, culture—new conflicts arise, some old conflicts burn out, and other conflicts reignite.

The total population of the United States grew by almost 10 percent between 2000 and 2010. But states grew unevenly. The fastest growing states between 2000 and 2010 were the “Sunbelt” states of the West and South. Texas, the nation’s second largest state, gained the most numbers of new residents—4.3 million; California gained—3.4 million, followed by Florida—2.8 million, Georgia—1.5 million, North Carolina—1.5 million, and Arizona—1.3 million. These six states accounted for 54 percent of the overall population growth for the United States during the decade.
By the Treaty of Paris, 1783, England gave up claim to the 13 original Colonies, and to all land within an area extending along the present Canadian border to the Lake of the Woods, down the Mississippi River to the 31st parallel, east to the Chattahoochee, down that river to the mouth of the Flint, east to the source of the St. Mary’s, down that river to the ocean. Territory west of the Alleghenies was claimed by various states but was eventually all ceded to the nation.

In 1803 President Thomas Jefferson engineered the Louisiana Purchase from France; it was the largest acquisition of territory in U.S. history, more than doubling the size of the nation.

American invasions of Canada were failures in both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. In the Rush–Bagot Treaty of 1817, the border between the United States and Canada was demilitarized and fixed at the 49th parallel. Later, in 1846, the British relinquished their claims to the Oregon territory south of the 49th parallel.

In 1819 Spain ceded Florida to the United States in the Adams–Onis Treaty, after General Andrew Jackson and his Tennessee volunteers invaded the territory in a war with the Seminole Indians.

Following battles at the Alamo in San Antonio and at the San Jacinto River, Texas declared its independence from Mexico in 1836, but the Mexican government refused to recognize the new republic. In 1845 Congress annexed Texas at the republic’s request, ending nine years of independence. In 1846 Congress declared war on Mexico, and following the American army’s capture of Veracruz and Mexico City, the United States forced its southern neighbor to cede the territories that became California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico. Later, in 1853, the Gadsden Purchase from Mexico extended the U.S. border farther south.

Beginning with South Carolina on December 20, 1860, 11 southern states seceded from the United States of America, forming their own Confederate States of America. After their defeat, they were readmitted to the Union after they agreed to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment that abolished slavery (1865), and later the Fourteenth Amendment that guaranteed equal protection of the laws (1868), and the Fifteenth Amendment that prevented denial or abridgment of the right to vote on account of “race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”

Twice the size of Texas, Alaska was purchased from Russia for $7.2 million in 1867. (At the time Secretary of State William Henry Seward was criticized for his extravagance, and Alaska was dubbed “Seward’s folly” and “Seward’s icebox.”) Hawaii was annexed as a territory to the United States by congressional resolution in 1898 without consulting its residents.

Following victories in the Spanish–American War in 1898, Spain ceded Puerto Rico, Samoa and Guam, and the Philippines, which remained a U.S. territory until granted independence in 1946. The Virgin Islands were purchased from Denmark in 1917.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Capital</th>
<th>Date Admitted to Union</th>
<th>Chronological Order of Admission to Union</th>
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<td>Albany</td>
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<td>North Dakota</td>
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<td>Nov. 2, 1889</td>
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<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Columbus</td>
<td>March 1, 1803</td>
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<td>Vermont</td>
<td>Montpelier</td>
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<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>June 25, 1788a</td>
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</table>
| Washington    | Olympia     | Nov. 11, 1889          | 42                                        | (continued)
Population growth rates—the percentage of population increase over the decade—may be better indicators of the changing requirements of state governments to provide public services, as well as the changing politics in the states. Nevada, the fastest growing state for five decades, grew by 35 percent, followed by Arizona (25 percent), Utah (24 percent), Idaho (21 percent), and Texas (21 percent). The slowest growing were Rhode Island, Louisiana, and Ohio—all of which grew by less than 2 percent. Michigan actually lost 0.6 percent of its population over the decade. The top five fastest growing states between 2000 and 2030 are projected to be Nevada (114 percent), Arizona (109 percent), Florida (80 percent), Texas (60 percent), and Utah (56 percent). (See “Rankings of the States: Population Size and Projected Growth Rate, 2010–2030.”) The Census Bureau predicts that soon Florida will edge past New York into third place in total population.

**Income**

Rising personal income indicates increased worker productivity and the creation of wealth. Per capita personal income in the United States grew from about $4,000 in 1970 to about $39,791 in 2010. Income is not evenly distributed throughout the states (see “Rankings of the States: Income and Education”). Per capita personal income in Connecticut is more than $56,000, but it is less than $32,000 in Mississippi.

**Education**

Many economists have asserted that economic growth involves an upgrading in the workforce, the development of professional managerial skills, and an increase in the volume of research. These developments involve a general increase in the educational levels of the adult population. In 1970 about 11 percent of the U.S. adult population had completed four years or more of college; by 2011 that figure had risen to 30 percent. But high levels of educational attainment do not prevail uniformly throughout the states (see “Rankings of the States: Income and Education”).

The extent to which economic development—population growth, income, and education—affects the politics of the states is an important question, which we return to again in the chapters that follow.

**RACE AND ETHNICITY**

Differences in the racial and ethnic composition of state populations account for much of the variation in the politics of states and cities throughout the nation. Later we examine racial and ethnic cleavages in voting behavior and political participation (Chapter 4), state legislative politics (Chapter 6), community politics (Chapter 11), and civil rights policy (Chapter 15).

**African Americans**

Today the nation’s 41 million blacks comprise 13 percent of the total population of the United States. (The distribution of blacks among the 50 states is shown in “Rankings of the States: Hispanic and African American Populations.”) In 1900, most African Americans...
Rankings of the States

Population Size and Projected Growth Rate, 2010–2030

Resident Population

1. CA
2. TX
3. NY
4. FL
5. IL
6. PA
7. OH
8. GA
9. MI
10. NC
11. NJ
12. VA
13. WA
14. MA
15. AZ
16. IN
17. TN
18. MO
19. MD
20. WI
21. MN
22. CO
23. AL
24. SC
25. LA
26. KY
27. OR
28. OK
29. CT
30. IA
31. MS
32. AR
33. KS
34. UT
35. NV
36. NM
37. NE
38. WV
39. ID
40. HI
41. ME
42. ND
43. RI
44. MT
45. DE
46. SD
47. AK
48. ND
49. VT
50. WY

Projected Growth Rate (Percentage Change):

1. NV
2. AZ
3. FL
4. TX
5. UT
6. ID
7. NC
8. GA
9. WA
10. OR
11. VA
12. AK
13. CA
14. CO
15. NH
16. MD
17. TN
18. DE
19. SC
20. MN
21. AR
22. HI
23. VT
24. NJ
25. MT
26. NM
27. MO
28. WI
29. OK
30. KY
31. IN
32. ME
33. KS
34. RI
35. AK
36. KS
37. MS
38. CT
39. IL
40. MI
41. LA
42. NE
43. SD
44. WY
45. PA
46. NY
47. OH
48. IA
49. WV
50. ND

Note: Data are for 2012. In thousands.

Note: Data are for 2010. In current dollars.

Note: Data are for 2009. Most recent data available at time of publication.
(89.7 percent) were concentrated in the South. But World Wars I and II provided job opportunities in large cities of the Northeast and Midwest. Blacks could not cast ballots in most southern counties, but they could “vote with their feet.” The migration of blacks from the rural South to the urban North was one of the largest internal migrations in our history. But blacks have steadily been moving back to the South. Today, 55 percent of the nation’s black population lives in the South.2

African American candidates have been increasingly successful in winning city and county offices and state legislative seats. (See Chapter 4 for a discussion of voting rights laws and their impact on the election of minorities.) The largest numbers of black elected officials are found in the southern states. In 1989 the nation’s first elected black governor, Douglas Wilder, moved into Virginia’s statehouse, once the office of Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy. Black candidates have also been increasingly successful in winning elections in large cities throughout the nation and community organizer, Barack Obama, became the first black president of the United States. Later in this book we describe black representation in city councils (Chapter 11) and in state legislatures (Chapter 6), as well as civil rights policy (Chapter 15).

Hispanics

Perhaps the most significant change in the nation’s ethnic composition over the last decade is the growth in the numbers and percentage of Hispanic Americans. In 2000, Hispanics became the nation’s largest minority. More than one in six people in the United States are of Hispanic origin. (The term Hispanic refers to persons of Spanish-speaking ancestry and culture, regardless of race, and includes Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, Central and South Americans, and Puerto Ricans.) Today Hispanics outnumber African Americans in the U.S. population (see “Rankings of the States: Hispanic and African American Populations”). The largest subgroup is Mexican Americans, some of whom are descendants of citizens living in Mexican territory that was annexed to the United States in 1848 (see Figure 1–1), but most of them have come to the United States in accelerating numbers in recent years. The largest Mexican American populations are in New Mexico, California, Texas, and Arizona. The second largest subgroup is Hispanics from Central and South America, who are concentrated in the Northeast, South, and West. Third largest is Puerto Ricans, many of whom retain ties to the island and move back and forth to the mainland, especially to New York City and now central Florida. Fourth largest are Cubans, most of whom have fled from Castro’s regime and live in the Miami metropolitan area. While these groups share a common language and faith (Catholic), they often differ in their political leanings and participation rates due to varied cultural backgrounds and length of residency in the United States3 (see Chapter 15).

Asians and Pacific Islanders

The Asian population, nearly 16 million (5 percent of the nation’s total), is actually growing more rapidly than any other minority. One-half of Asians and Pacific Islanders live in the West. California has the largest Asian population (4.7 million), but Asians are a majority of the population of Hawaii, the only state with a “majority minority” population. Asians, like Hispanics, are not a monolithic group either

Ethnic-based holidays are often adopted by the community-at-large. In Texas, Cinco de Mayo (5th of May) celebrations, commemorating the victory of the Mexicans over the French at the Battle of Puebla in 1862, are quite popular. Cinco de Mayo festivities feature music, dance, food, and beverages unique to Mexico and reflect the influence that Mexican American immigrants have had on the culture and politics of the state.
Note: Data are for 2010. In thousands.

Persons of Hispanic origin may be any race.


Note: Data are for 2010. In thousands.

ethnically or politically. There are significant language and cultural differences among Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Cambodians, Malaysians, Pakistanis, Filipinos, Thais, Hmong, Laotians, and Vietnamese Americans. Pacific Islanders, those with origins in Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands, also have unique heritages.

**Native Americans**

It is estimated that 10 million Native Americans (American Indians and Alaska Natives) once inhabited the North American continent. By 1900 the Native American population had been reduced to barely a half million by war, disease, and forced privations inflicted upon them. Today, Native Americans number nearly 4 million, or 1 percent of the U.S. population. There are more than 562 Indian tribes and Alaska Native groups that speak more than 250 languages. Each tribe has its own culture, history, and identity. The 10 largest American Indian tribal groups are the Cherokee, Navajo, Latin American Indian, Choctaw, Sioux, Chippewa, Apache, Blackfeet, Iroquois, and Pueblo. The four largest Alaska Native tribal groups are Eskimo, Tlingit-Haida, Alaska Athabascan, and Aleut. The 11 states with the largest Native American populations are, in descending order, California, Oklahoma, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, New York, Washington, North Carolina, Michigan, Alaska, and Florida (see Chapter 15). Approximately half of all Native Americans live on semiautonomous reservations in various states.

**THE POLITICS OF IMMIGRATION**

America is a nation of immigrants, from the first “boat people,” the Pilgrims, to the latest Haitian and Cuban refugees. Continuing immigration, together with differences in birth and death rates, is expected to change the ethnic composition of the nation considerably over the next half century (see Figure 1–2). The Census Bureau predicts that the United States will become a majority-minority nation for the first time in 2043. By 2060, minorities are projected to comprise 57 percent of the population.

Most immigrants come to the United States for economic opportunity. Others come to escape oppression and discrimination. Most personify the traits we typically think of as American—enterprise, ambition, perseverance, initiative, and a willingness to work hard.

**FIGURE 1–2 Projected Racial and Ethnic Characteristics of U.S. Population**

![Projected Racial and Ethnic Characteristics of U.S. Population](chart)

*Note: Current and future population figures are from a 2011 estimate based on 2010 Census. Figures may not add to 100 due to rounding.

*Persons of Hispanic origin may be any race.

As immigrants have always done, they frequently take dirty, low-paying, thankless jobs that other Americans shun. When they open their own businesses, they often do so in blighted, crime-ridden neighborhoods long since abandoned by other entrepreneurs.

**National Immigration Policy**

Immigration policy is a responsibility of the national government. Today, roughly a million people per year are admitted to the United States as “lawful permanent residents” (persons who have needed job skills or who have relatives who are U.S. citizens) or as “political refugees” (persons with “a well-founded fear of persecution” in their country of origin). Another 36 million people are awarded temporary visas to enter the United States for study, business, or pleasure.

The easiest way to become a U.S. citizen is to be born here, regardless of whether your parents are here legally or not. If you were born outside of the United States, the golden ticket is the “green card”—the U.S. government–issued document granting you permanent residency status allowing you to live and work in the country. Green cards are issued for family reasons and for special employment. A person may apply for a green card if a spouse, child, or sibling is a U.S. citizen. Persons may also apply if an employer is willing to hire them and to assert that their job skills are crucial. Preferences are given to medical professionals, advanced degree holders, and executives of multinational corporations.

Persons who have resided in the United States for at least five years, who are over age 18, who can read and speak English, who possess “good moral characters” (no felony convictions), and who can pass a modest citizenship test are eligible for naturalization as citizens.

Citizens of the United States are entitled to a passport, issued by the U.S. State Department upon presentation of a photo plus evidence of citizenship (a birth certificate or naturalization papers). A passport entitles holders to reenter the United States after travel abroad. A visa is a document or stamp on a passport, issued by a foreign country, that allows a citizen to enter that country.

**Illegal Immigration**

In theory, a sovereign nation should be able to maintain secure borders, but in practice the United States has been unwilling and unable to do so. Estimates of *illegal immigration* vary wildly, between official statistics provided by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and unofficial estimates provided by other organizations like the Pew Hispanic Center and the Center for Immigration Studies. The Department of Homeland Security estimates that over 11 million unauthorized immigrants currently reside in the United States. Other, unofficial estimates range from 12 to 15 million or more. The number varies depending on the economy and actions by state and local governments. Many undocumented immigrants slip across U.S. borders or enter ports with false documentation, while many more overstay tourist or student visas. Nearly 60 percent of these unauthorized immigrants were born in Mexico; the remainder come from other Latin and South American countries, Asia, and elsewhere. Eighty-five percent of all unauthorized immigrants in the United States come from 10 countries (Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, China, the Philippines, India, Korea, Ecuador, and Vietnam).

Immigration “reform” was the announced goal of Congress in the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, also known as the Simpson–Mazzoli Act. It sought to control immigration by placing principal responsibility on employers; it set fines for knowingly hiring undocumented, or unauthorized, immigrants. However, it allowed employers to accept many different forms of documentation (which, as it turned out, could be easily forged) and at the same time subjected them to penalties for discrimination against legal foreign-born residents. To win political support, the act granted amnesty to undocumented immigrants who had lived in the United States since 1982. But the act failed to reduce the flow of either legal or undocumented immigrants.

Border control is an expensive and difficult task. The federal agency responsible for border security is U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a branch of the Department of Homeland Security. Localized experiments in border enforcement have indicated
that illegal immigration can be reduced by half or more, with significant increases in ICE personnel and technology. However, political opposition to increased border enforcement and reduced immigration comes from a variety of sources. Hispanic groups have been especially concerned about immigration enforcement efforts that may lead to discrimination against all Hispanic Americans. Powerful groups benefit from the availability of undocumented immigrants, such as the agriculture, restaurant, clothing, and hospital industries; they regularly lobby in Washington to weaken enforcement efforts. Some employers prefer hiring undocumented immigrants (“los indocumentados”) because they are willing to work at hard jobs for low pay and few, if any, benefits. Even high-tech firms have found it profitable to bring in English-speaking immigrants as computer programmers.

**DREAM Act**

Congress considered but failed to pass a DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act in 2010. The DREAM Act would offer permanent residency to undocumented aliens, who came into the United States as minors, who are under the age of 30, who have lived in the country continuously for five years, and who enrolled in a college or university for two or more years or served honorably in the U.S. military. The bill failed to overcome a filibuster in the U.S. Senate, falling short of the 60 votes necessary. But in 2012, President Barack Obama announced that his administration would not deport young undocumented aliens who matched the DREAM Act's requirements. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (CIS) now accepts application under this Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

**Immigration and Federalism**

Although the federal government has exclusive power over immigration policy, its decisions have significant effects on states and communities—on their governmental budgets, on the use of their public services, on the security of their residents, and even on their social character. Immigration is by no means uniform across the states. Border states in the southwest and southeast (Florida) have the highest concentrations of unauthorized immigrants. (See Figure 1–3.) Immigration-related politics and policies often differ across the states on issues ranging from allowing undocumented immigrants to secure a driver’s license to giving in-state tuition to children of undocumented immigrants.

Increasingly, states and cities have attempted to enact their own versions of immigration reform. In 1994 California voters approved a referendum, Proposition 187, which would have barred welfare and other benefits to persons living in the state illegally. A federal court later declared major portions of Proposition 187 unconstitutional. And the U.S. Supreme Court has held that a state may not bar the children of undocumented immigrants from attending public schools. Some cities with politically liberal electorates, for example San Francisco, have declared themselves to be “sanctuary” cities, ordering their police officers not to enforce federal immigration laws or even to ask suspects about their immigration status. Some cities with more conservative voters have adopted ordinances making it illegal for landlords to rent to undocumented immigrants or employers to hire them. Federal courts have invalidated most of these laws as an unconstitutional interference in the exercise of federal power. The U.S. Supreme Court’s propensity to restrict state laws that appear to infringe on federal power was evident in its 2012 ruling (*Arizona v. U.S.*) that certain portions of Arizona’s tough immigration enforcement law cracking down on undocumented immigrants undermined federal authority. (See “Up Close: *Arizona v. the United States on Immigration.*”)

Additional state issues involving immigration continue to arise. Can states deny driver’s licenses to persons who cannot prove that they are in the country legally? Should states offer in-state tuition to students who graduated from high school but who are not in the country legally? (State versions of the DREAM Act have been passed in 12 states as of 2013, including Texas, California, and New York. Maryland voters approved a state DREAM Act in 2012 by a 59 percent vote.) And can states act to deny voter registration
to persons who cannot prove their citizenship? In 2004, Arizona voters approved a state constitutional amendment that required proof of citizenship in order to register to vote. In 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Arizona v. Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona*, ruled it unconstitutional. The Court, in a 7–2 ruling, said that Arizona’s requirement went beyond registration procedures spelled out in the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (the “motor voter” law) and that federal law trumps state law.

**Conflict over Immigration Reform**

To date, the intense conflict over immigration policy in Washington has prevented any effective action to halt illegal immigration, determine the status of millions of undocumented immigrants, or decide how many aliens should be admitted each year and what the criteria for their admission should be. Beginning during the George W. Bush administration and continuing to Obama’s presidency, Congress has struggled over how to resolve this intensifying problem. Debates have centered on how to compromise diverse interests—employers seeking to keep immigration as open as possible, immigrants seeking a legal path to citizenship, and citizens seeking border security and opposed to any form of amnesty for undocumented aliens. Intense debates have also taken place over strengthening border enforcement, including funding 700 miles of fencing along the 2,000-mile Mexican border; providing a path to citizenship that includes criminal background checks, paying fines and fees, and acquiring English proficiency; establishing a temporary (two-year) guest worker program; and shifting the criteria for legal immigration from family-based preferences to a greater emphasis on skills and education. So far it has been extremely difficult to build consensus on these divisive issues.
up close

Arizona v. United States on Immigration

The failure of the federal government to enforce existing federal immigration laws inspired Arizona to pass its own illegal immigration act in 2010. It made it a state crime to be in the country illegally.

The law allowed state and local police in “any lawful contact . . . where reasonable suspicion exists that a person is an alien who is unlawfully present in the United States, when practicable to determine the immigration status of the person . . .” Once identified as illegal immigrants, persons could be taken into custody, prosecuted for violating Arizona law, were turned over to the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for deportation. “Reasonable suspicion” may involve a combination of circumstances, but the law specifically prohibits officers from using race or ethnicity as determining factors.

The U.S. Department of Justice filed suit against the Arizona law arguing that it violated the Supremacy Clause of the Constitution. “A state may not establish its own immigration policy or enforce state laws in a manner that interferes with federal immigration laws. The Constitution and federal immigration laws do not permit the development of a patchwork of state and local immigration policy throughout the country.” (United States v. Arizona, Federal District Court Brief, July 28, 2010).

The Supreme Court agreed that federal immigration laws preempt any state laws on the topic, as provided by the Supremacy Clause of the Constitution. The Constitution grants to Congress the power to “establish an uniform Rule of Naturalization” (Art.I, Sec 8, Cl 4). And according to the Court, federal law intends a “single integrated all-embracing system.” Even complementary state regulation of immigration is impermissible. Federal immigration law is “complex and comprehensive” and Congress has not specified any role for the states in this area. The states cannot make illegal immigration a state crime, state officials cannot arrest an alien not lawfully present in the United States, states cannot require registration of aliens, and states cannot impose criminal penalties on employers who hire illegal aliens. The Court did not order Arizona police to stop inquiring about alien status, or reporting to ICE when they encountered an illegal alien.


Citizens opposed to giving amnesty to undocumented immigrants currently in the United States complain that undocumented immigrants receive services like health care for free while they do not.

Liberalism and Conservatism in the States

State politics differ in their prevailing ideological predispositions—that is, whether they are predominantly “liberal” or “conservative.” There are various ways of defining and measuring ideological predispositions. One way is to look at policy enactments. For example, “policy liberalism” might be defined as the adoption of relaxed eligibility standards for receipt of welfare and medical benefits, decriminalization of marijuana possession, elimination of the death penalty, extensive regulation of business, state ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, and the adoption of progressive state income taxes. “Policy conservatism” would be defined as the opposite of these enactments. Scholars frequently construct new policy liberalism rankings for states based on key ideological issues of the day such as gun control, abortion laws, welfare eligibility and work requirements, tax progressivity, and unionization.
Another way to identify the ideological profiles of the 50 states is to use voters’ self-identification. A common question on opinion polls is “How would you describe your views on most political matters? Generally do you think of yourself as liberal, moderate, or conservative?” Using this definition, Gallup surveys have identified the most liberal states as Massachusetts, Oregon, Vermont, Delaware, and Connecticut. Among the most conservative are Alabama, North Dakota, Wyoming, Mississippi, and Utah. Ideology and party affiliation tend to go hand-in-hand. Of the 10 most liberal states, all are reliably Democratic voting states in national elections, and of the 10 most conservative states, all regularly vote Republican in national elections.

Nationally, among voters, 23 percent describe their ideological disposition as liberal, 36 percent as moderate, and 38 percent as conservative. Historically researchers have found that voters’ ideological identification correlates closely with measures of policy liberalism and conservatism.

**STATE POLITICAL CULTURES**

Do the states exhibit separate and identifiable political cultures? That is, are there political differences among the states that cannot be accounted for by demographic characteristics, for example, race, ethnicity, income, or education? It does appear that some states have developed historical traditions of Democratic and Republican party affiliation, as well as cultural patterns of liberal and conservative politics, that are independent of any demographic features of their populations. For example, Minnesota has developed a liberal and Democratic tradition, Indiana a conservative and Republican tradition, and neither can be fully explained by the socioeconomic composition of their populations. The liberal politics of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Oregon as well as the conservative politics of Tennessee, North Dakota, and Utah are not fully explained by characteristics of these states’ populations or by specific historical events. So we attribute to “political culture” the differences across states that take into account the values and ways of life of early settler and immigrant groups.

Early attempts at developing different classifications of state political cultures began with examinations of the content and language of each state’s original constitution. These documents were seen as reflecting the cultural values of the early settlers, which were passed down from one generation to the next and became part of the state’s political fabric. More recent attempts have used a combination of race and ethnic origins, religious affiliations, and social structures to classify states and, in turn, to examine how closely cultural differences reflect political and public policy differences across the states.

The newest research uses U.S. Census and religious survey data to classify all U.S. counties into 11 regional subcultures that represent distinctive differences in race, ethnicity, religion, social class, historical settlement patterns, language, regionalism, sectionalism, and new streams of immigration and migration. (See Figure 1–4.) With the exception of the Rurban subculture, the study’s subcultures represent historical and cultural extensions of earlier settler and immigrant waves. To measure state culture, the study computed the respective proportions of the total statewide population that are under the influence of each subculture.

The state-by-state distribution of regional subcultures shows why each state is unique. Pennsylvania, for example, is dominated by a Germanic subculture, while neighboring West Virginia is dominated by a Heartland subculture. The Rurban subculture is dominant in Oregon, while the Global subculture is dominant in neighboring California. Arkansas has a border-dominated politics, while Mississippi’s remains under the sway of a Blackbelt subculture. Politics in New Mexico continues to be dominated by a Latino subculture, while neighboring Texas now lacks a dominant subculture and is truly multicultural. The regional political subculture measure, a composite of social, economic, ethnic heritage, immigration, and migration factors, is a more powerful predictor of state party affiliation, voting patterns, and public policy outcomes than any single factor.
Some scholars have examined the link between cultural-religious values and citizen attitudes toward immigration reform. For example, “agreement with three values—continuing our heritage as a nation of immigrants, following the Golden Rule, and protecting the dignity of every person—predicts higher support for a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants.”

**RELIGION IN THE STATES**

The religious profiles of the states vary significantly and are becoming more important in explaining why states act differently politically, particularly on highly divisive, politically explosive moral issues. A voter’s position on these media-grabbing issues may be grounded in religious beliefs and may be a stronger voting cue than one’s political party affiliation, although the two are often related. Consequently, moral issues (like same-sex marriage, contraceptive coverage, abortion, gambling, marijuana legalization) are increasingly being used by political parties and candidates as wedges, designed to cause voters to cross party lines on those hot-button issues alone. Putting such issues on the ballot in the form of an amendment is seen as a way to boost turnout among religious conservatives, regardless of whether they are Republicans or Democrats. Liberals, in turn, use such amendments as tools to turn out their own voters, many of whom are more concerned about the blurring of church and state than the issue itself.

There are several ways to define a person’s religiosity. The four most common measures are the importance of religion in a person’s life, frequency of attendance at worship services, frequency of prayer, and belief in God. States differ significantly in the degree to which their citizens say religion is important in their lives. Southern states rank highest; New England states rank lowest. (See “Rankings of the State: Religion and Ideology (Liberalism)
Religion and Ideology (Liberalism)

Note: Data are for January–December 2012.
Source: Frank Newport, “Mississippi Maintains Hold as Most Religious U.S. State,” Gallup Inc., February 13, 2013. Available at http://www.gallup.com/poll/160415/mississippi-maintains-hold-religious-state.aspx. Copyright © 2013 All rights reserved. The content is used with permission; however, Gallup retains all rights of republication.

Note: Data are for January–December 2012.
Source: Frank Newport, “Alabama, North Dakota, Wyoming Most Conservative States,” Gallup, Inc., February 1, 2013. Available at http://www.gallup.com/poll/160196/alabama-north-dakota-wyoming-conservative-states.aspx#2. Copyright © 2013 All rights reserved. The content is used with permission; however, Gallup retains all rights of republication.
Actually, it is the frequency of a person’s religious service attendance more than an individual’s specific faith that is often the best determinant of their stance on moral issues and their likelihood of voting.

**STATE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP**

Political leadership in a state also helps shape its politics and public policy. While we can systematically examine the influence of population size and growth, income, education, race, and ethnicity on state politics, we must also remind ourselves that from time to time individual leaders have brought about political change in their states—change that might not have occurred without their efforts. Electoral politics in states and communities as well as the nation encourage political entrepreneurship—that is, electoral politics provides incentives for candidates to propose policy innovations in order to publicize themselves and win votes.

**POLICY RESPONSIBILITIES OF STATES AND COMMUNITIES**

Despite the glamour of national politics, states and communities carry on the greatest volume of public business, settle the greatest number of political conflicts, make the majority of policy decisions, and direct the bulk of public programs. They have the major responsibility for maintaining domestic law and order, for educating children, for providing highways that allow Americans to move from place to place, and for caring for the poor and the ill. They regulate the provision of water, gas, electric, and other public utilities; share in the regulation of insurance and banking enterprise; regulate the use of land; and supervise the sale of ownership of property. Their courts settle by far the greatest number of civil and criminal cases. In short, states and communities are by no means unimportant political systems. Each state determines for itself via the state constitution or state laws whether a function will primarily be funded and performed by the state government or by various local governments—cities, counties, school districts, or other local entities. In many instances, both state and local government dollars help support a specific service.

**Education**

Education is the biggest expenditure for state and local governments combined. (See Figure 1–5.) However, local governments spend a larger portion of their budgets on education than state governments, but each helps fund this critical activity. States and communities are responsible for decisions about what should be taught in public schools, how much should be spent on the education of each child, how many children should be in each classroom, how often they shall be tested, how much teachers should be paid, how responsibilities in education should be divided between state and local governments, what qualifications teachers must have, what types of rates and taxes shall be levied for education, and many other decisions that affect the life of every child in America. Support for higher education, including funds for state and community colleges and universities, is now a major expenditure of state governments. The federal government has never contributed more than 10 percent of the nation’s total expenditures for education.

**Health and Welfare (Social Services and Income Maintenance)**

States and communities continue to carry a heavy burden in the fields of health and welfare—despite an extensive system of federal grants-in-aid for this purpose. (See Figure 1–5.) States and communities must make decisions about participation in federal programs and allocate responsibilities among themselves for health and welfare programs. While the federal government administers Social Security and Medicare, state governments administer the
largest public assistance programs—Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (cash aid, formerly Aid to Families with Dependent Children), Medicaid (health care for the poor), and food stamps, as well as unemployment compensation. Within the broad outlines of federal policy, states and communities decide the amount of money appropriated for health and welfare purposes, the benefits to be paid to recipients, the rules of eligibility, and the means by which the programs will be administered. States and communities may choose to grant assistance beyond the limits supported by the national government.

Transportation
The United States has over 4 million miles of surfaced roads and over 240 million registered motor vehicles. States and communities must make decisions about the allocation of money for streets and highways, sources of funds for highway revenue, the extent of gasoline and motor vehicle taxation, the regulation of traffic on the highways, the location of highways, the determination of construction policies, the division of responsibility between state and local governments for highway financing administration, and the division of highway funds between rural and urban areas. While the federal government is deeply involved in highway construction, state and local governments fund well over half of the costs of all highway improvements. For years, mass transit has gotten shortchanged next to highways because a majority of Americans prefer to travel in their own cars over riding buses or taking the subway. Historically, high-speed rail has fared even worse than other forms of mass transit, although there are some signs it is becoming a higher priority. The federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (the Economic Stimulus Package) budgeted $8 billion for building high-speed rail systems connecting major urban areas. Only a handful of states, California being the largest, applied for the funds. For others, the price of such a major infrastructure project was just too high, especially in the middle of a recession. Today, construction of a high-speed rail system is still largely on the drawing boards in many states, although the planning is further along.
FIGURE 1–5 How State and Local Governments Spend Their Money

State and Local Government (combined)
- Education - 28%
- Public Welfare - 15%
- Insurance Trust - 12%
- Utility - 7%
- Highways - 5%
- Governmental Administration - 4%
- Hospitals - 5%
- Interest on General Debt - 3%
- Police Protection - 3%
- Health - 3%
- Corrections - 2%
- Housing and Community Development - 2%
- Sewerage - 2%
- Parks and Recreation - 1%
- Fire Protection - 1%
- Natural Resources - 1%
- Solid Waste Management - 1%
- Othersa - 7%

State Government
- Education - 17%
- Public Welfare - 28%
- Insurance Trust - 22%
- Utility - 2%
- Highways - 6%
- Governmental Administration - 4%
- Hospitals - 4%
- Interest on General Debt - 3%
- Police Protection - 1%
- Health - 3%
- Corrections - 3%
- Housing and Community Development - 1%
- Sewerage - 0%
- Parks and Recreation - 1%
- Fire Protection - 0%
- Natural Resources - 1%
- Solid Waste Management - 0%
- Othersa - 8%

Local Government
- Education - 37%
- Public Welfare - 3%
- Insurance Trust - 2%
- Utility - 11%
- Highways - 4%
- Governmental Administration - 5%
- Hospitals - 5%
- Interest on General Debt - 4%
- Police Protection - 5%
- Health - 3%
- Corrections - 2%
- Housing and Community Development - 3%
- Sewerage - 3%
- Parks and Recreation - 2%
- Fire Protection - 3%
- Natural Resources - 1%
- Solid Waste Management - 1%
- Othersa - 6%

Note: Figures may not add to 100 due to rounding. Data are for 2010.
*Other expenditures include employment security administration, veterans’ services, general expenditures, liquor stores, protective inspection and regulation, air transportation, parking, libraries, and sea and inland port facilities.
Public Safety
States and communities have the principal responsibility for public safety in America. Over 2.4 million state and local government jobs are in the protective services (police, firefighters, and correctional officers), second only to education. Some state police have important highway safety responsibilities and cooperate with local authorities in the apprehension of criminals. However, community police forces continue to be the principal instrument of law enforcement and public safety. Sheriffs and their deputies are still the principal enforcement and arresting officers in rural counties. States and communities also have the principal responsibility for maintaining prisons and correctional institutions. Each year several million Americans are prisoners in jails, police stations, juvenile homes, or penitentiaries. The bulk of these prisoners are in state and local, rather than federal, institutions.

Civil Rights
The national government has defined a national system of civil rights, but these rights cannot become realities without the support of state and local authorities. States and communities must deal directly with racial problems, such as racial isolation in the public schools, job discrimination, and segregated housing patterns in the cities. They must also deal directly with the consequences of racial tension, including violence. But in the twenty-first century, civil rights battles are not just racial in nature. Claims of discrimination are on the upswing from older workers, gays and lesbians, women, disabled persons, and immigrants.

Physical Environment
Local governments have the principal responsibility for our physical environment. They must plan streets, parks, and commercial, residential, and industrial areas and provide essential public utilities for the community. The waste materials of human beings—rubbish, garbage, and sewage—exceed one ton every day per person. The task of disposal is an immense one; the problem is not only collecting it, but finding ways to dispose of it. If it is incinerated, it contributes to air pollution; and if it is carried off into streams, rivers, or lakes, it contributes to water pollution. A community’s water supply may also be contaminated if pollutants and toxins are buried. Thus, communities are largely responsible for two of the nation’s most pressing problems: air and water pollution.

Taxation
To pay for public programs, states and communities levy taxes. They must decide what tax burdens their citizens can carry and whether to tax income, sales, or property. At the same time, they must compete with one another to attract industry and commerce. If taxes are too high, businesses and residents may leave along with jobs. But if taxes are too low, the quality of life may deteriorate. Finding the right level of taxation is one of the toughest jobs facing state and local officials—and one of the most perilous politically. And proposing to raise taxes in the middle of a recession can be particularly risky.

“STATES,” “DISTRICTS,” AND “TERRITORIES”
How did the states become states? The original 13 states did so by ratifying the U.S. Constitution. The first new states to be admitted were Vermont in 1791 and Kentucky in 1792. States that sought admission began by petitioning Congress to allow them to elect delegates and draw up a state constitution. The Congress granted this permission in a series of enabling acts. Later, when the territorial voters approved the new constitution, the territory formally applied for admission and presented its constitution to Congress for approval. Congress accepted the application by a joint resolution of both houses, and a new star was added to the flag. The last admissions were Alaska and Hawaii in 1959.
Of course, from a political perspective, admission was not always an easy process. Long before the Civil War (or “The War Between the States” as it is still called in parts of the Old South), states were admitted roughly in pairs of free and slave states, so as not to upset the delicate balance in the U.S. Senate. Iowa and Wisconsin were admitted as free states in 1846 and 1848, while Florida and Texas were admitted in 1845 as slave states. When California was admitted as a free state in the famous Compromise of 1850, the balance was tilted toward the free states. The balance was further tipped when Minnesota was admitted in 1858 and Oregon in 1859. The Civil War followed in 1861.

Eleven states seceded from the Union in 1860—Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. Although the Supreme Court later voided the acts of secession as unconstitutional, Congress required all of these states to reapply for admission to the Union. After the war, these states were under military occupation by U.S. troops. The military governments drew up new state constitutions, registered black voters, and sent black representatives to Congress. Congress required these governments to ratify the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments in order to be readmitted to the Union. The “reconstructed” southern state governments did so, and all were readmitted by 1870.

Hawaii and Alaska were the last states admitted to the Union (1959). Hawaii is the only state with an Asian majority population (64 percent). For many years after it became a territory in 1898, Hawaii depended primarily on sugar and pineapple exports to support its economy. But today its economy depends heavily on tourism, not only from “the mainland” but also from Japan. Living costs in both Hawaii and Alaska are high.

The District of Columbia

The U.S. Constitution, Article I, Section 8, specified in 1787 that “the seat of the government of the United States” shall be in a “district not exceeding ten square miles” ceded to the federal government by the states (Maryland and Virginia). The District of Columbia was to be governed by Congress. In defense of a separate district, Alexander Hamilton wrote:

[Congressional control] of the seat of government… is an indispensable necessity. Without it not only the public authority may be insulted and its proceedings interrupted with impunity, but a dependence of the members of the general government of the state comprehending the seat of government… might bring the national councils an imputation of awe or influence… dishonorable to the government.18

Hamilton’s language is stiff and formal, but his meaning is clear: Making Washington a state would generate undue local pressure on Congress.

The Twenty-third Amendment, ratified in 1961, gives Washington full participation in presidential elections. Because Congress has also granted it, by law, full home rule, the city has its own elected mayor and city council. In 1978, Congress passed another constitutional amendment that would grant the District full congressional representation and the right to vote on ratification of future constitutional amendments. However, the necessary three-quarters of the states failed to ratify this amendment. So while DC residents can vote in presidential elections, they are not represented by voting members in the U.S. Senate or House of Representatives. However, DC is represented by an elected nonvoting delegate to the

District of Columbia residents frequently take to the streets to call attention to the fact that they are taxed but have no elected representatives in the U.S. Congress. They want Congress to admit the District to the Union as a state.
U.S. House of Representatives who can vote and serve on a committee but cannot vote on any passage of legislation.

Having failed to gain congressional representation by constitutional amendment, District residents and their supporters in Congress turned to a new strategy—calling on Congress to admit the District to the Union as a state. (While the Constitution specifies that Congress shall govern over “such District not exceeding ten miles square . . . as the seat of the government,” presumably Congress could satisfy this constitutional mandate by reducing “the seat of the government” to a few blocks surrounding the Capitol, while admitting the bulk of the District as a state.) This strategy not only reduces the barrier in Congress from a two-thirds vote to a simple majority vote of both houses, but, more important, eliminates the need to secure ratification by three-quarters of the states. Nonetheless, so far Congress has refused to vote for District statehood (presumably the state would be named “Columbia”). Troubles with District self-government have convinced many Congress members that Washington is not ready for statehood. But the District’s residents and its nonvoting representative in Congress never quit trying. Politically, Washington is heavily Democratic, liberal, and black. Its 632,000 residents are likely to support larger social welfare programs, an expanded bureaucracy, and increased federal spending. Opponents of these policies are not likely to be enthusiastic about the District’s representation in Congress.

The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

Nearly 4 million people live on the Caribbean island of Puerto Rico, a population greater than that of 23 states. They are American citizens, who can move anywhere in the United States; and have been subject to the draft in wartime. (Congress granted Puerto Ricans citizenship in 1917.)
The government of Puerto Rico resembles a state government, with a constitution and an elected governor and legislature. However, Puerto Rico has no voting members of Congress and no electoral votes in presidential elections. But Puerto Ricans are represented in the U.S. House of Representatives by a nonvoting representative, just like the District of Columbia.

The United States seized Puerto Rico in 1898 in the Spanish–American War. In 1950, its voters chose to become a “commonwealth,” and self-governing commonwealth status was officially recognized in 1952. In a 1967 plebiscite, 60 percent of Puerto Ricans voted to remain a commonwealth, 39 percent voted for statehood, and less than 1 percent voted for independence. In nonbinding referenda in 1991, 1993, and 1998, Puerto Ricans continued to support commonwealth status. That changed in 2012. In a two-part referendum, 52 percent first voted against keeping their current U.S. commonwealth status. Then, when asked if they wanted to become a U.S. state, an independent country, or a freely associated state (a type of independence in close alliance with the United States), 61 percent of those who answered the second question opted for statehood. But because over 470,000 voters had intentionally left the second question blank, opponents of statehood were quick to point out that only 45 percent of all those casting ballots—less than a majority—supported statehood. Puerto Ricans remain divided between statehood and commonwealth status and Congress seems to be in no hurry to push for statehood. Many Congress members worry that statehood would cause their own states to lose federal funding and representatives in Congress. Article IV, Section 3 of the U.S. Constitution gives the U.S. Congress the power to grant statehood.

Under commonwealth status Puerto Ricans pay no U.S. income tax, although local taxes are substantial. Yet, they receive all of the benefits to which U.S. citizens are entitled—Social Security, public assistance, food stamps, Medicaid, and Medicare. If Puerto Rico were to become a state, its voters could participate in presidential and congressional elections; but its taxpayers would not enjoy the same favorable cost–benefit ratio they enjoy under commonwealth status. Some Puerto Ricans also fear that statehood would dilute the island’s cultural identity and perhaps force English upon them as the national language.

U.S. Territories

In addition to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the United States has 12 “territories,” also known as possessions. The major territories are the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands. The residents of all U.S. territories are full U.S. citizens (with the exception of those on American Samoa who are U.S. nationals, but not citizens). These residents possess all the rights and obligations of U.S. citizens, including Social Security payments and benefits and service in the armed forces, except for the right to vote in presidential elections or to vote for representatives in U.S. Congress. Like the District of Columbia, each territory elects a nonvoting delegate at-large to the U.S. House of Representatives who can participate in committees but cannot vote on legislation. However, both the Democratic and Republican parties seat voting delegations from the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the territories at their presidential nominating conventions.
Politics is the management of conflict. Aside from understanding the major conflicts confronting society, one must also understand the political processes and governmental organizations designed to manage conflict.

The task of political science is not only to describe politics and public policy but also to explain differences, through comparative analysis, among states and among communities. Comparative analysis helps us answer the question why.

Economic development, defined broadly to include population growth, income, and education, is key to a state’s politics and public policies. Changing growth rates (fastest in the West and South) and the need to increase educational opportunity can create conflict in and among states.

Perhaps the most significant change in the nation’s ethnic composition over the last decade is the growth in the numbers and percentage of Hispanic Americans, with Mexican Americans as the largest subgroup.

Most immigrants come to the United States for economic opportunity, including work and education, while others come to escape oppression and discrimination. Approximately 1 million immigrants come legally and roughly three times that many come illegally.

Although immigration policy is the responsibility of the federal government, conflict over the issue has prevented any effective action to halt illegal immigration, determine the status of undocumented immigrants, or decide on the number of aliens to admit every year and what the admission criteria should be.

The newest immigration policy debates have focused on the rights of undocumented children (minors) brought to the United States by undocumented adult immigrants.

The path to becoming a citizen is fairly straightforward; it is the length of time it takes that is often the biggest barrier.

Ideological predispositions—liberal, moderate, or conservative—of states and communities can be defined chiefly by the kinds of policies enacted and voters’ self-identification. Ideological leanings can also depend on a state’s historical patterns of party affiliation, voters’ religious fervor (frequency of attendance at worship), political cultures and subcultures, and, on occasion, the political leadership of an individual.

Compared to the national government, state and local governments settle the greatest number of political conflicts, make the majority of policy decisions, and direct the bulk of public programs.

Of all state and local programs, education is the most costly. But states and local governments also carry heavy responsibilities for health and welfare, highways, public safety, and the environment. One of the toughest responsibilities is finding a level of taxation that won’t drive out jobs and residents.

Achieving statehood is a difficult process requiring congressional approval. The District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have come the closest to becoming new states.