



Politics in the States and the Initiative Process

By Ruth L. Wright

This information is drawn from Chapter 5, “The Initiative Process,” by Shaun Bowler and Todd Donovan, in *Politics and the American States: A Comparative Analysis*. 8th edition. Edited by Virginia Gray and Russell L. Hanson. The page numbers refer to quotations and information from that chapter.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

About half of the states, most of them in the west, have “some type of direct democracy process” that allows voters a direct say in shaping public policy. (p. 129) Each state has its unique rules for regulating the process. In some states the legislature has little say over what is voted on and little ability to modify the decision after the referendum. The existence of a liberal or a limited set of rules can make politics in initiative states fundamentally different from non-initiative ones. These rules affect not only the particular initiatives passed but the political dynamic.

State initiative battles have also been used to shape the national agenda as much as to set policy for a state. Examples of influential state initiatives are the anti-tax initiatives in the 1970s and later repeals of affirmative action provisions. National organizations promote and support initiatives for gun control, access to abortion, gay rights, services for immigrants, bilingual education, criminal sentencing, taxation, gambling, insurance reform, environmental protection, campaign finance reform, and, most notably, term limits. (p 129)

Although most proposals on a state’s ballot are “home grown,” the experts described the current situation as follows: “[Initiatives do not] arise chiefly from ‘average’ citizens rallying at the grass roots to challenge the established order. The initiative process is also used by political parties, incumbent politicians, candidates for office, wealthy individuals, and powerful interest groups. (p. 130, quoting Smith and Tolbert 2001, Ellis 2002, and Donavon et al 1998.)

The origins of the initiative movement explain some conflicting contemporary attitudes. The earlier advocates who wanted direct democracy to weaken the control that powerful economic forces had on government fell into two groups, Populists and Progressives. They represented different social bases and, more important, wanted different things from reform. The Populists (oppressed farmers, for example) believed “the common people were trustworthy and competent, while legislators were neither. Their aim was to take power away from the incumbent politicians, vested interests, and party machines and give it to the voters.” (pp.130-131, with quotes from Cain and Miller 2001) The Progressives were “more sympathetic to the legislative process, but wanted to ‘liberate’ representative government from the corrupt forces so that it might become an effective instrument for social reform.” (p.131, with quotes from Cain and Miller 2001)

These differences are reflected in the 24 different state systems. Eighteen of the 24 states adopted initiative between 1898-1914. Many of these state constitutions were formulated when Populists and Progressives were influential. Those that were Populist-inspired often have relatively liberal rules on qualification and require fewer signatures. They often allow citizen initiatives to draft both constitutional amendments and statutory law. Constitutional changes are typically harder to amend than new laws; thus

they usually have higher qualification requirements. After 1914, fewer states adopted direct democracy. Alaska put initiative into its constitution when it was admitted to the Union (1959), but only Wyoming (1968), Illinois (1970), Florida (1970), and Mississippi (1992) have adopted it since. Late-adopting states tend to have a breed of initiative that is “more restrained.” As a result initiatives may be rarely used. (p.131) Use of initiatives declined in the 1940s and 1950s. Since the 1960s, however, the number of ballot measures has steadily increased in all states that permit them. They reached a new peak in the 1990s. (p. 132)

FORMS OF INITIATIVE

See also the Glossary elsewhere in the study packet.

With direct initiative the initiative’s proponents write the legislation and qualified measures go directly onto the ballot at the next election. Most states have direct initiatives only; however, Maine, Massachusetts, and Wyoming have indirect initiatives only. Five other states have both direct and indirect. The distinction between the two is not always easy to draw. “For instance, a question may go on the ballot if the legislature rejects it, submits a different proposal, or takes no action. Others may require that the initiative not be placed on the ballot until the next legislative session has adjourned.” (pp. 132-133)

Referendums, of course, are not used only for initiatives. *Legislative referendums* (also called *popular referendums*) ask citizens to vote on constitutional amendments or statutes prepared by the legislature (e.g. bills that allow a county to vote to be wet or dry, or a bill to call for a vote to hold a constitutional convention). With the exceptions of Florida and Mississippi, every state that adopted initiatives adopted popular referendums at the same time. A fourth kind of referendum, sometimes called *popular veto*, allows citizens to collect signatures to place a previously passed bill before the voters for a binding yes or no vote. Some nations, Switzerland in particular, allow citizens to vote on an issue to advise the legislature. (p.132)

Bowler and Donavon define the essentials of the initiative process as follows: Citizens, groups, or others outside the government decide whether or not to place a question on the ballot, when to ask it, and what the details of the law will be. The process grants the power to make policy directly to the citizens and is a direct expression of both majority rule and popular sovereignty in way that is quite distinct from a purely representative form of government. (p.133) Even though most initiatives fail, they can have “a powerful effect on the design of state political institutions and on the political agenda.” (p. 132)

SUBJECT MATTER

In general any topic is a potential initiative subject. A few states prohibit measures dealing with the judiciary, bills of rights or tax questions. In most cases the only major limits on initiatives are constitutionality and single-subject laws. Half of the 24 initiative states do limit initiatives to a single subject. “Single subject rules were adopted to prevent egregious attempts to build coalitions of supporters by log-rolling. One defeated California initiative linked regulation of margarine; voting rights for Native Americans; gambling, fishing, mining issues; and apportionment of the state Senate.” Only Florida’s court has regularly nullified initiatives on single-subject grounds, but others are moving in that direction. (p. 133, with quote from Crouch 1943)

State reviews before circulation of petitions are often limited to checks for proper form. Very few states’ officials or courts are allowed to amend or revise the language of propositions without the proponent’s consent. Of the 24 states, only six have much of a pre-election review. Four states have a largely advisory process. [*Note*: The I&R bill that passed the House in the 2007 session required that the

actual bill be drafted by The Legislative Reference Service, which drafts all bills, and allows proponents to seek advice from the Alabama Law Institute, which attempts to prevent contradictions in the Code.]

Scholars note a stability in the subject matter of initiatives. Since 1980 the most common types of initiatives have been governmental reform measures, such a term limits and campaign finance reform (23%); taxation questions (22%); social and moral issues (17%) and environmental measures (11%). The only changes have been an upsurge in environmental measures and a slight decline in governmental reform ones. (p.134)

GETTING ON THE BALLOT

The usual steps for getting on the ballot are described by Bowles and Donovan as follows:

1. A proposal is drafted by proponents.
2. The proposal is forwarded to a state office for review (usually for form, not legal content). An official title and summary of the measure are issued. (Only a few states allow the proponent to write the title.)
3. Proponents circulate petitions that include title, a summary, and text of the law for registered voters to sign.
4. A state office verifies that the correct number of valid signatures has been gathered. If so, the proposal goes to the ballot. (pp. 134-135)

The third step, signature collection, is the most important barrier. “While anyone with a few dollars and a cause can propose a measure, the costs and logistics of collecting signatures weed out all but the best funded or best-organized proponents.” (p.135 with quote from Banducci, 1998) Most states require a minimum number of signatures expressed in terms of a percentage of votes for governor cast in the last election. The percentages range from 3% in Massachusetts to 15% in Alaska. States also have requirements that mean the signatures must come from a broad area, usually defined in terms of counties. Nebraska requires that 5% of signatures come from at least two-fifths of counties; Wyoming requires signatures from two thirds of all counties. States vary also in the length of time for gathering signatures. Some states (Missouri and Utah) allow over a year. Oregon has a strict 90 day limit. In early-adopting states the percentage of voters’ signatures usually was set when initiative was originally adopted. With the growth of populations, the raw number of signatures has grown, but the time limits have rarely changed. The rate of signatures per day needed can prevent most good government groups or volunteer groups from meeting the requirements. (pp. 135-136)

[*Note:* One state League confirmed this statement anecdotally on the LWVUS Lobbyists List. After a major effort to gather signatures over a summer, they secured only 10% of the required number.]

Professional petition firms are often employed with paid signature collectors (usually \$1-\$2 per signature) and professional initiative campaign staffs. Observers argue that this “initiative industrial complex” has undermined the Populists’ vision of the initiative process as the voice of citizens. Some argue that, in practical terms, only special interests and the wealthy can get their initiatives on the ballot in many states. The cost just to get on the ballot is said to be over \$1 million in California and more than \$300,000 in a smaller state like Washington. Several states, including Washington and Colorado, passed laws banning the use of paid signature gatherers. However, the US Supreme Court (*Meyer v. Grant, 486 US 414 1988*) overturned these laws in 1988, arguing that the First Amendment protects paid petitioning as a form of political speech. (pp. 135-136) *See elsewhere in the study packet Elizabeth Gerber’s account of other reforms and their success or failure.*

States that require more signatures per day have fewer initiatives. Initiatives flourish in states “with more people per representative, with stronger interest group systems, and more professionalized legislatures.” (p. 137) The authors speculate that these factors reflect the fact that states with greater demands on their political systems tend to have more initiatives, if they are allowed. It is important to note the authors’ comment (p. 137, note 9) that most of our understanding of initiative politics comes

from the Pacific Coast and Colorado, where access laws are liberal and interest groups are active and demanding. There are fewer studies of the experience of initiative rules in states east of the Mississippi. In general, eastern and midwestern states tend to have more restrictive qualification rules. In eastern and southern states, the authors note, state political party organizations play larger roles in structuring political competition and thus reduce the demands for use of the initiative. (p.137)

INITIATIVE CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS

The campaign stage of the initiative process has been the most studied aspect of it. Criticism falls into two broad categories: a critique of the power of special interests and a critique of the process for making too many demands on voters [*that is, the question of voter competence*]. Interest groups can spend enormous sums because the Supreme Court views initiative campaigns differently from candidate campaigns. The limits the Court allows, at present, on contributions to candidates recognize that large contributions might give the appearance that a candidate may be corrupted. (*Buckley v. Valeo, 424 US 1 1976*) Contributions to initiative campaigns, however, are seen as direct attempts to communicate with voters. The court found no compelling state interest in limiting contributions to initiative campaigns. (*First National Bank v. Bellotti, 1978 US 765 1978*). This decision first extended free speech rights to corporations. “Put simply, there are no limits on what can be spent on initiative campaigns.” (p. 139) Economic interests with clearly defined agendas can buy their way onto the ballot and fund TV and other advertising campaigns. Broad based citizen groups lack resources for advertising. Voter competence may be affected not only by a manipulative campaign but also by a lack of knowledge about the concerns of a particular group (HMO practices or car insurance regulations). Moreover, citizens may need to consider more than one initiative. These conditions raise the question of whether voters are readily swayed by manipulative TV campaigns to pass policies that they do not prefer. (p.139) [*See the Elizabeth Gerber summary for much more empirical evidence on campaign spending.*]

Economic Interests vs. Citizen Group Dominance

The questions posed by the authors are the following: Do narrowly-based economic interests (e.g. banks, trade and industry groups, corporations, professional associations) outspend other broad-based citizen groups? Do economic interests win the initiatives they finance?

The empirical evidence the authors report contains some surprises. In 1999 Elizabeth Gerber found that economic interests (Missouri Forest Products Association, California Beer and Wine Wholesalers, and individual firms like casino operators or Phillip Morris) do outspend citizen groups, but when they spend in favor of their own initiatives, they rarely win. She found a *negative* relationship between the amounts spent by these narrow economic interests for a yes vote and the chances of its passing. Thus most spending by narrow economic interests is nearly 80% defensive. A dollar spent by a No campaign has almost twice the impact on the outcome as a dollar spent on a Yes vote. “High spending by anyone rarely assures passage but can assure defeat... These findings suggest that special interests do not often write public policy via the initiative, but they are successful in blocking many proposals that might affect them.” The authors described this analysis as “one of the most robust findings in all of direct democracy literature.” (p.140)

How (and What) Voters Decide on Initiatives

The question of whether or not and how voters might be able to make reasonable decisions on ballot initiatives is an important one. Research suggests that their ability to do so rests on the availability of information, in the form of cues or shortcuts that help them make sense of complex issues. One way they decide is by voting on the basis of elite endorsements. If, for example, voters see a prominent Democrat support a proposition, then Democratic voters are more likely to support it and Republicans oppose. “Of course voting on the basis of simple clues does not establish that citizens understand the details of the proposals. It may explain, however, why there are so few examples of initiatives passing that are later found to be unpopular with the voters who approved them.” (p.141)

But how do voters receive the cues? Sometimes the state assumes the duty of informing voters. In 10 states, the secretaries of state mail voters a ballot pamphlet that lists the ballot proposals and includes arguments for and against the propositions. In those states, voters say they relied on the pamphlet. Finding out who signed the pro and con arguments is the single most important source of information for making their decisions. A second source of clues for voters is through TV ads paid for by the Yes and No campaigns. It is true that surveys find that voters typically believe that ads are attempts to mislead and that the voters discount the usefulness of political ads. However, the ads provide clues, such as the names of sponsors or opponents, as well as names of prominent groups, newspapers and politicians who have taken a position. Money spent on TV ads and other campaign material may encourage voters to prepare for the vote. Studies found that states with higher initiative campaign spending revealed “higher levels of general knowledge about politics, more awareness of the campaign, and a larger voter turn-out.” (p.141) In Washington and California, states where the initiative is a major political tool, less than 2% of voters who listed TV ads as a source of information relied on them exclusively. (p.141)

Another important factor relates to the low success rate of initiatives. “Since voters are typically reluctant to alter the status quo and since most campaign spending is on the No side, the majority of initiatives fail.” (p. 142, Gerber 1998, 1999) One source says fewer than 40% pass. Multiple studies have established that initiatives are more likely to pass when supported by citizens groups and when the initiative “allocates broad, non-divisible benefits to a large diffuse constituency.” (p. 142, Dovavon et al 1998, Campbell 1997, Ernst 2001) On this basis, Bowler and Donovan conclude that “most initiatives that pass can be seen as a change that, for better or worse, taps into the preferences and concerns of the broader public.” (pp.141-142)

Even a losing campaign, however, can have an impact. There is systematic evidence that an initiative on the ballot affects who participates in state elections. Because initiative use increases turnout, initiatives have been used to support a gubernatorial campaign or to provide wedge issues politicians hope will split their opponents’ base.

EFFECTS ON CITIZENS AND STATE POLITICS

Bowles and Donavon cite a long-standing view that people learn how to be citizens by making decisions in groups and participating in politics. They are moderately hopeful that initiatives, by requiring greater participation, may educate citizens and breed “civic maturity.” Some suggest that ballot initiatives, by forcing people to deliberate about public issues, might constitute a watered-down form of participatory democracy and lead to a more engaged, informed and interested citizenry. Bowles and Donavon cite recent studies that support this view. Increased voter turnout is well established. In states where initiatives are often used, “voters are found to have greater factual knowledge and to feel more competent when participating in politics. They are more likely to believe they ‘have a say’ and to believe that public officials care what they think. These results are especially present in Switzerland, the country of origin of the initiative, and in the western states.” (p.143, with references to Bowler and Donovan 2002, Frey 1999, and Frey and Stutzer, 1999)

Effects on Minorities

A major concern is that the initiative process can be used to harm minorities—such groups as gays and lesbians, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities. Certainly a series of anti-minority measures have passed at the ballot box—repeal of affirmative action, immigration issues, bilingual education, and English as the official language. While some states have rejected the most repressive measures, “we should not be too sanguine about the capacity of minorities to weather majority views in initiative politics.” (p. 144) A study in 2001 reported, “Limited evidence does suggest that the initiative process...is sometimes prone to produce laws that disadvantage relatively powerless minorities—and probably is more likely than legislatures to do so.” (p. 144, quoting Cain and Miller) Even when anti-

minority measures fail to pass, they may change public attitudes about the group or about policies that benefit that group. Mass opinion may become less tolerant. (pp.143-144, quoting Wenzel et al 1998)

Effects on State Policies

Does the existence of initiative cause public policy to better reflect the preferences of the voters? It may do so by changing how legislators behave. Even if the initiative does not pass or even reach the ballot, it sends legislators signals about what the public wants done on key policy matters. The credible threat of a measure being passed by initiative may provide incentives for legislators to pass some version of it themselves in order to maintain some ability to shape the eventual policy. (p.144, Romer and Rosenthal 1979; Gerber 1996)

It is difficult to measure whether policies more closely match public opinion in initiative states. Studies have arrived at different conclusions for different policy issues. Also designing the statistical models is difficult. One policy area where the initiative has had a clear direct impact is “governance” policies, policies that amend the political system itself. When groups outside the legislature have a tool to craft policies, states with initiative are more likely to have adopted measures that are “contrary to legislators’ self-interest or that constrain how they govern.” (pp.144-145, quoting Tolbert, Lowenstein and Donovan 1998) Examples are term limits, supermajority requirements for new taxes, tax and expenditure limitations, and campaign finance. Most initiative states have term limits; non-initiative states, with the exception of Louisiana, do not. (p.145)

Long-term Effects

In some initiative states the cycles of change are fueled by the initiatives. They pressure legislators to follow public preferences more directly. More important for the long term, initiative “allows those outside the traditional corridors of power to change permanently the institutions of government that structure how policy is made.” (p. 145) Initiatives have been used to re-write state rules about how judges sentence criminals, about how much a state may collect through existing taxes, how much the legislature may spend in a given year, how new taxes are imposed, and how often a legislator may run for reelection. These rule changes have major consequences in the long run. They limit the range of policy options available to future legislatures. When incumbent legislators drive the policy process, changes are largely shaped by actors who have to live with the consequences, and who have experience with the routine business of making government work. (pp. 145-146)

Effects on State Fiscal Policy

Direct democracy has allowed outsiders—particularly anti-tax advocates—the opportunity to institutionalize rules that constrain taxes and spending. It also allows an additional point of access for groups seeking their slice of the budget pie. “It is important to remember that these mandates for increased spending and limits on revenue can constrain legislatures both in the present, and potentially, in the future.” (p. 146) A single ballot may contain separate initiatives for cutting some taxes, raising others, issuing public debt for specific projects, and increasing spending on specific programs. In most states the choices about increasing spending need not be linked to specific proposals about where the revenue will come from. Likewise, choices about cutting taxes typically need not be linked to specific programs that will lose funding. Little is known about how voters reason about such matters over time. (p.146)

The consequences of fiscal initiatives—for example on state budgets and bond ratings—may be more enduring than the effects of other initiatives that pass. Bowles and Donavon pose several important questions about voters, initiatives, and fiscal policies. “When given a free hand in budgeting, do voters consider the fiscal tradeoffs implicit in such choices? Are they capable of budgeting, as a legislature would be expected to do?” They answer, “Fiscal crisis may result if they are not.” (p.147)

Many worry that proponents can sell anti-tax measures as “something for nothing”—essentially continued services while taxes are cut. There is some evidence that, over time, California voters have been more likely to approve tax cuts than tax increases and that they preferred bonded debt to raising taxes. The tax and expenditure limitations (TELS) mean legislators have more difficulty writing budgets. Also, citizen TEL decisions leave little wiggle room for dealing with an economic downturn. (p. 147)

THE LEGISLATURE’S ROLE: IMPLEMENTATION AND AMENDABILITY

States in which legislatures are less affected than others by the initiative process have limits on the topics of initiatives, especially on some kinds of fiscal measures, and sometimes prohibit constitutional amendments written by citizen initiative rather than the legislature. After passage, constitutional amendments are more difficult to amend or repeal than statutory initiatives. Legislature in Colorado, Maine, Idaho, and Missouri may modify laws passed by initiative. Other states require waiting periods, supermajorities, or both before initiatives can be amended. California is the only state where the legislature can neither amend nor repeal an initiative statute, ever. One critic characterized California’s statutes as “Mistakes engraved in stone.” (pp. 147-148)

The ability to amend is not the only way legislators may retain some control. They may find ways around fully implementing initiatives that they find burdensome. “Initiatives do not implement or enforce themselves.” (p. 147 quoting Gerber, 1999) Despite provisions to prevent elected officials from “cheating” the popular will, some discretion, must be left to the legislature, wittingly or unwittingly (if laws are poorly drafted). (p. 147)

A study in 1995 suggests another consequence. In initiative states, spending is lower at the state level, but higher at the local level. One explanation is that state governments can evade citizen-initiated tax and expenditure limitations (TELS) by establishing new local jurisdictions—special service districts. In the 1990s initiative states saw a great increase in special governments, such as sewer districts, water districts, fire districts, and the like. The TELS pushed taxing and spending down to counties and special governments. “The end result is that the policy impact of most initiatives reflects a compromise between what electoral majorities and government actors want.” (p. 149, quoting Gerber et al. 2001) The authors conclude, “If most initiatives are defeated at the ballot box, or may be amended after they have passed, or may not be fully implemented by state government, it is pretty clear that the critics of the process are greatly exaggerating the threat that initiatives offer to republican government.” (p. 149)

THE JUDICIARY’S ROLE: LEGAL CHALLENGES

The courts have the largest role in countering initiatives. Like all laws, those passed by initiative and referendum are subject to the system of checks and balances through the judicial process. Initiatives must be consistent with the US Constitution, the state constitution and must abide by the state’s regulations for the initiative process. Courts usually refuse a pre-election review of the measure’s constitutionality, on the grounds that no one has standing to challenge a law not yet passed. Thus a significant number of measures passed by the voters are later invalidated by state and federal courts. Two studies (Miller 1999, Qvortrup 2001) show that over half of initiatives were challenged in courts and that about 40% of those challenged were overturned. It is not clear whether this rate depends on poorly written laws or on the determination of defeated opponents to continue the fight, or both. (pp. 149-150)

The chief debate over the courts’ role is “whether courts should be more lenient with initiative laws, as the will of the people, or more stringent in their examination because they have not been vetted by the legislative process or subject to a governor’s veto.” (p. 150) Others call for greater court activity prior to elections to prevent expensive campaigns for unconstitutional initiatives. A further question in states where judges are elected is whether judges facing election might be “too eager to support the popular will.” (p.150)

THE FUTURE OF THE INITIATIVE PROCESS: LIMITED BY REFORM, OR EXPANDED USE?

Note: The study packet contains two documents that deal more completely with suggested reforms and their value: (a) The report of the taskforce of the National Conference of State Legislators recommends specific reforms. (Their complete arguments are on their web site listed in the general Bibliography.) and (b) The summarized article by Elizabeth Gerber is based on careful study of the empirical evidence (as opposed to arguments alone) for the success or failure of attempts at reform. Below Bowler and Donavon's view is added for comparison..

As the use of initiatives has grown, so have calls for reform. The chief argument of academic and press critics is that initiative is a kind of “faux populism.” The process does not, in practice, make politics more democratic or more responsive to the will of the voters. They argue that the initiative process “may simply give well-established interests yet another point of access to the system or tie up the policy-making system of the state.” The critics do, however, credit the process with providing for “an informed, deliberative discussion and debate on important issues.”

Bowler and Donavon worry that the reforms threaten to limit the scope of the process. “While attempts at reform seem—and quite possibly are—driven by the purest of intentions, some of the proposed reforms raise the hurdles higher for those who would use the process. If reforms increase costs, the playing field is further skewed. ... In fact, most of the reform proposals offer few cures for the ills that supposedly ail the initiative process.” (p.152)

Of the two trends—reforms aimed at limiting the process and expansions of the process that may lead to its wider use—these authors believe that expansion of use will prevail. Surveys of voters—whether in initiative states or non-initiative states—typically show “strong, overwhelming support for the process.” (p. 152) Although voters express concerns (in particular about the role of money and special interests), the popular appeal of the process remains deeply rooted. (p. 152)

CONCLUSION

In the end, the debate may return to the dichotomy between the Populists and the Progressives described in the introduction. Critics of the initiative believe that the Populists' reasoning does not apply to the contemporary era for two reasons:

- Overt corruption among legislators is no longer the norm;
- Contemporary proponents often fail to fit the Populist vision of concerned citizens who turn amateur politicians in order to prod a state legislature toward adopting policies that reflect the public need. Many are promoted by professional initiative proponents.

The authors believe that these concerns “unduly worry state officials.” (p. 152)

Bowler and Donavon's concluding statement is quoted below:

“Although it is easy to say that things are ‘different’ in initiative states and non-initiative states, it is most difficult to establish empirically what the exact effects of initiatives are...Hot topics that receive media attention—assisted suicide, decriminalization of drugs, expansion or reduction of gay rights, the regulation of immigration—may well have relatively small long-term effects. For all the sound and fury, the majority of proposals tend to fail, and those that do pass are subject to judicial review that may undercut the proposals further. Oftentimes the more successful proposals are rules that alter how elected officials seek office, raise revenue, and set spending priorities. And these are the ones to which elected officials take greatest exception. But these are also the kinds of proposals that would seem most in keeping with the ideas of the Progressives, Populists, and, conceivably, the Founders. American government is the people's government, and it is presumably for the people to decide how their government functions.” (pp. 152-153)

Sources

Politics in the American States: A Comparative Analysis, 8th Edition, combines high-caliber research with comprehensive comparative analysis of the 50 states. The 7th and 8th editions have, as noted in the Preface, “continued the tradition of the original editor,” by choosing recognized scholars who use their own and others’ research and by re-examining the topics in the context of recent developments in state governments. (pp. *xi-xiii*)

The 9th Edition was scheduled to be available 12/21/07 for about \$70 from Congressional Quarterly Press. It includes an updated chapter on I&R. College libraries may have copies.

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The authors’ references to other authors are cited here only by name and date. To trace these references more completely, the Bibliography for Chapter 5 is available from Ruth L. Wright.