



A Citizen's Guide to U.S. Elections: Empowering Democracy in America (Citizen Guides to Politics and Public Affairs)

By Costas Panagopoulos, Aaron C. Weinschenk

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Political observers routinely lament that American democracy is broken, and many of them blame electoral malfunction. But is the system really broken? Panagopoulos and Weinschenk make the case that citizens are empowered to fix what's wrong with electoral politics and renew democracy in America, all within the institutional setup and framework of the existing system. Put simply, much of what is broken can be fixed if people stop throwing up their arms and start rolling up their sleeves to do the hard work of building our democracy. This book provides an overview of the basic features that characterize contemporary elections in the United States and includes discussions about voter participation and decision-making patterns, money in elections, and the role of parties and the media in presidential, congressional and state and local races. It also outlines some of the most important trends and challenges in the current system. As a call to action, each chapter features potential solutions to the challenges that exist in U.S. elections.

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Editorial Review

Review

"*A Citizen's Guide to U.S. Elections* fills an important gap in electoral studies. It manages to be part user's guide and part call to action, while at the same time maintaining objective and scholarly standards. Each chapter discusses perceived problems, evaluates existing evidence, and offers suggestions for concerned citizens. This book is perfect for the undergraduate classroom, community groups, or the general public. Bottom line: if you need a good grounding in the problems and potential of the U.S. electoral system, this is the book for you. I can't wait to use it in my classroom!"

– Thomas M. Holbrook, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

"Jam-packed with crucial information about contemporary politics and elections, this terrific primer should be required reading for serious students and citizens who want to understand the electoral process and back up their opinions with facts."

– Charlie Cook, *Cook Political Report* and *National Journal*

"This is not just a guide, but a perceptive, accessible synthesis of politics and political science. It explores the pressures, patterns and motivations that drive our electoral outcomes -- and can change them. It's enlightening, a great read for political junkies, and a good one for any citizen who cares about democracy and each individual's capacity and responsibility to make a difference."

– Robert M. Shrum, University of Southern California; Senior Advisor, Gore 2000 and Kerry 2004

"*A Citizen's Guide to U.S. Elections* offers a broad and engaging overview of elections in the U.S. The brief text provides students with a basic overview of electoral politics, situating the discussion in light of important scholarship by political scientists. It also challenges students to engage in a broader discussion about how citizens might engage to improve elections if they are dissatisfied with the current state of democracy in the U.S. A valuable contribution at a time of high levels of cynicism and negativity in politics!"

– Jan Leighley, American University

About the Author

Costas Panagopoulos is Professor of Political Science and Director of the Center for Electoral Politics and Democracy and the graduate program in Elections and Campaign Management at Fordham University. A leading expert on campaigns and elections, voting behavior, media and public opinion, political psychology

and campaign finance, Professor Panagopoulos has co-authored or edited several books, including *Politicking Online: The Transformation of Election Campaigns Communications* (Rutgers University Press) and *Public Financing in American Elections* (Temple University Press). He has published over 60 scholarly articles in outlets including the *American Journal of Political Science*, the *Journal of Politics*, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *Political Behavior*, *Political Psychology* and *Political Analysis*. He has also served as Editor-in-Chief of *Campaigns & Elections* magazine, as Senior Editor of the *Journal of Political Marketing*, and as part of the NBC News Decision Desk team since the 2006 election cycle. In 1992, while an undergraduate at Harvard University, Professor Panagopoulos was a candidate for the Massachusetts State Legislature.

Aaron C. Weinschenk is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, where he teaches classes on American government and politics, Congress, public policy, urban politics, and statistics. He is an expert on voting behavior, campaigns and elections, mayoral politics, public opinion, and political psychology, and has published over a dozen journal articles in outlets such as *Political Research Quarterly*, *Political Behavior*, *American Politics Research*, *State and Local Government Review*, *Electoral Studies*, and *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion, and Parties*.

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