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In this wide-ranging new volume, one of our most important and perceptive scholars of the workings of the American government investigates political parties, politicians, elections, and policymaking to discover why public policy emerges in the shape that it does. David R. Mayhew looks at two centuries of policy making—from the Civil War and Reconstruction era through the Progressive era, the New Deal, the Great Society, the Reagan years, and the aspirations of the Clinton and Bush administrations—and offers his original insights on the ever-evolving American policy experience.

These fourteen essays were written over the past three decades and collectively showcase Mayhew's skepticism of the usefulness of political parties as an analytic window into American politics. These writings, which include a new introductory essay, probe beneath the parties to the essentials of the U.S. constitutional system and the impulses and idiosyncrasies of history.

David R. Mayhew is Sterling Professor of Political Science, Yale University. He is the author of numerous acclaimed books, including *Divided We Govern*, *Electoral Realignments*, and *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, all published by Yale University Press. He lives in Newton, MA.