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Building Coalitions, Making Policy

## **Building Coalitions, Making Policy**

*The Politics of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Presidencies*

*Edited by*

Martin A. Levin, Daniel DiSalvo, and Martin M. Shapiro

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## Contents

[\*Acknowledgments\*](#)

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[Introduction. Getting Past No: Building Coalitions and Making Policy from Clinton to Bush to Obama](#)

[\*Martin A. Levin, Daniel DiSalvo, and David Emer\*](#)

[1 The Electoral Connection and the Dissonant Game of Coalition Building in an Era of Partisan Policymaking](#)

[\*Martin A. Levin and Daniel DiSalvo\*](#)

[2 Why LBJ Is Smiling: The Bush Administration, "Compassionate Conservatism," and Building Coalitions, Making Policy: The Politics of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Presidencies No Child Left Behind](#)

[\*Frederick M. Hess\*](#)

[3 Splitting the Coalition: The Political Perils and Opportunities of Immigration Reform](#)

[\*Daniel J. Tichenor\*](#)

[4 Embracing the Third Rail? Social Security Politics from Clinton to Obama](#)

[\*R. Kent Weaver\*](#)

Building Coalitions, Making Policy: The Politics of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Presidencies

[5 The Bush Administration Building Coalitions, Making Policy: The Politics of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Presidencies and the Politics of Medicare Reform](#)

[\*Jonathan Oberlander\*](#)

[6 A Building Coalitions, Making Policy: The Politics of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama](#)

---

[Presidencies Solution for All Seasons: The Politics of Tax Reduction in the Bush Administration](#)

[\*Tim Conlan and Paul Posner\*](#)

[7 The Bush Administration and the Uses of Judicial Politics](#)

[\*Thomas F. Burke and Nancy Scherer\*](#)

[8 A Feint to the Center, a Move Backward: Bush's Clear Skies Initiative and the Politics of Policymaking](#)

[\*David Emer\*](#)

[9 National Security, the Electoral Connection, and Policy Choice](#)

[\*James M. Lindsay\*](#)

[10 The Dynamics of Presidential Policy Choice and Promotion](#)

[\*Daniel J. Galvin\*](#)

[11 Touching the Bases: Parties and Policymaking in the Twenty-First Century](#)

[\*Daniel DiSalvo\*](#)

[12 Bush's "Our Crowd"](#)

[\*Martin M. Shapiro\*](#)

[13 Politics, Elections, and Policymaking](#)

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[\*David Mayhew\*](#)

[\*List of Contributors\*](#)

[\*Index\*](#)

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editor—thoughtful, tough, and temperate.

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*Building Coalitions, Making Policy*

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Getting Past No**

*Building Coalitions and Making Policy from Clinton to Bush to Obama*

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Martin A. Levin, Daniel DiSalvo, and David Emer

This book focuses on getting past no through an examination of successful and failed attempts to build coalitions—that critical connection between politics and policymaking. Indeed, the number of points where someone can say no to a new policy initiative famously characterizes the American policy-making process. Getting past no requires building coalitions—intraparty coalitions to keep those on your side from saying no and interparty coalitions to get key people on the other side to say yes.

In the 1990s, close elections, thin congressional margins, and ultimately divided government brought forth from Clinton Democrats a coalition-crafting strategy of trying to both Building Coalitions, Making Policy: The Politics of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Presidencies maintain the support of the party's base and increase the support of voters ranging from the political center through to new constituencies that might expand the party coalition. Clinton's "third way" approach produced such "balanced" moderate policies as welfare reform and deficit reduction. This, in part, is the story of *Seeking the Center: Politics and Policymaking at the New Century* (Georgetown University Press), the second book in our New Politics of Policymaking series.

The current volume carries this story onward into the George W. Bush administration and the early Obama years, with analyses of a range of policies—tax cuts, Social Security privatization, Medicare prescription drug reform, education reform, immigration, environmental policy, Building Coalitions, Making Policy: The Politics of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Presidencies judicial politics, and national security policy.

Standing on the shoulders of a giant, this book also incorporates David Mayhew's pioneering 1974 tale of seeking to win elections, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. In that era of weak parties, Mayhew focused on individual members of Congress and their efforts at making electoral connections. In today's era of stronger parties, we analyze politics from the Building Coalitions, Making Policy: The Politics of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Presidencies perspective of how *parties* seek to win elections.

In addition to carrying forward these threads from our *Seeking the Center* and Building Coalitions, Making Policy: The Politics of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Presidencies from Mayhew's *The Electoral Connection*, we bring them together: this book is about how the president and congressional party leaders tried to build winning party coalitions in today's era of stronger parties and how this electoral Building Coalitions, Making Policy: The Politics of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Presidencies strategy shaped policy choice during George W. Bush's presidency, with comparative perspectives from the Clinton administration. Success at Building Coalitions, Making Policy: The Politics of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Presidencies

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this game requires navigating the tensions between their base and the political center to try to maintain the Building Coalitions, Making Policy: The Politics of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Presidencies election support of both. As Mayhew suggests in [chapter 13](#), this balancing process was “a complex, tension-ridden, inside-outside strategy.”

The essays in this volume discuss the contemporary politics of policymaking in general and building party coalitions in particular. We are constructing a Building Coalitions, Making Policy: The Politics of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Presidencies general model of coalition building. This is the first book to analyze this structural imperative of leaders navigating the center and base of their party and to apply this analysis to a range of policy areas.

## **Building Coalitions Making Policy The Politics Of The Clinton Bush And Obama Presidencies**

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