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978-0-521-52786-6 - A Government Out of Sight: The Mystery of National Authority in
Nineteenth-Century America

Brian Balogh

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“Balogh’s splendid synthesis convincingly describes how the federal government unobtrusively shaped the growth of the nation. Along the way, he also reveals the vital relationship between high political theory and policy implementation in the making of the American state.”

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A Government Out of Sight

Although it is obvious that America's state and local governments were consistently active during the nineteenth century, a period dominated by *laissez-faire*, political historians of twentieth-century America have assumed that the national government did very little during this period. *A Government Out of Sight* challenges this premise, chronicling the ways in which the national government intervened powerfully in the lives of nineteenth-century Americans through the law, subsidies, and the use of third parties (including state and local governments), while avoiding bureaucracy. Americans have always turned to the national government – especially for economic development and expansion – and in the nineteenth century even those who argued for a small, non-intrusive central government demanded that the national government expand its authority to meet the nation's challenges. In revising our understanding of the ways in which Americans turned to the national government throughout this period, this study fundamentally alters our perspective on American political development in the twentieth century, shedding light on contemporary debates between progressives and conservatives about the proper size of government and government programs and subsidies that even today remain “out of sight.”

Brian Balogh is an associate professor in the Department of History at the University of Virginia and Chair of the Governing America in a Global Era Program at the Miller Center of Public Affairs. He is author of *Chain Reaction: Expert Debate and Public Participation in American Commercial Nuclear Power, 1945–1975* and editor of *Integrating the Sixties: The Origins, Structures and Legitimacy of Public Policy in a Turbulent Decade*. He has published articles and essays about Progressive Era politics, the link between interest groups and public policy, and the legacy of Vietnam – some of which have appeared in the *Journal of Policy History*, *Studies in American Political Development*, and *Social Science History and Environmental History*. He also serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Policy History* and *Studies in American Political Development*. Balogh is a frequent commentator on politics in the national media. He co-hosts a radio show, *Backstory with the American History Guys*, that is carried on several NPR-affiliated stations. Before receiving his Ph.D. in history at The Johns Hopkins University, Balogh ran several welfare programs for the City of New York and was an adviser to New York City Council President Carol Bellamy.

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*The Mystery of National Authority in
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BRIAN BALOGH

University of Virginia and the Miller

Center of Public Affairs



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Acknowledgments

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