

The Politics of Institutional Reform

In this ground-breaking analysis, Terry M. Moe treats Hurricane Katrina as a natural experiment that offers a rare opportunity to learn about the role of power in the politics of institutional reform. When Katrina hit, it physically destroyed New Orleans' school buildings, but it also destroyed the vested-interest power that had protected the city's abysmal education system from major reform. With the constraints of power lifted, decision makers who had been incremental problem-solvers turned into revolutionaries, creating the most innovative school system in the entire country. The story of New Orleans' path from failure to revolution is fascinating, but, more importantly, it reveals the true role of power, whose full effects normally cannot be observed, because power has a "second face" that is hidden and unobservable. Making use of Katrina's analytic leverage, Moe pulls back the curtain to show that this second face has profound consequences that stifle and undermine society's efforts to fix failing institutions.

Terry M. Moe is the William Bennett Munro Professor of Political Science at Stanford University and a Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution. He has written extensively on the presidency, public bureaucracy, and the theory of political institutions, most recently in *Relic: How Our Constitution Undermines Effective Government – And Why We Need a More Powerful Presidency* (2016, with William Howell). He has also written extensively on the politics of American education, most recently in *The Comparative Politics of Education: Teachers Unions and Education Systems Around the World* (2017, edited with Susanne Wiborg) and *Special Interest: Teachers Unions and America's Public Schools* (2011).

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*Katrina, Education, and the
Second Face of Power*

TERRY M. MOE
Stanford University



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Acknowledgments

This book was a long time in the making. It began in 2010 as a project I undertook while a member of the Hoover Institution's Koret Task Force on K-12 Education. Each of us on the Task Force had agreed that, either as individuals or in small groups, we would carry out research leading to book manuscripts on some aspect of education reform. *The Politics of Institutional Reform*, in early draft (and titled, at that time, *Learning from Katrina*), was my contribution to the team effort. As I sought to come up with a reasonably coherent manuscript, I received comments from my colleagues on the Task Force, and I was fortunate indeed to have input from such a wise and insightful group of people. I want to thank them, and I also want to say – now that the Task Force has been disbanded after some 15 years of productive (and fun) work – that I miss them. They are, in alphabetical order: John Chubb, Bill Evers, Checker Finn, Rick Hanushek, Paul Hill, Caroline Hoxby, Tom Loveless, Paul Peterson, Herb Walberg, and Russ Whitehurst.

During those Task Force years, I worked closely on the manuscript with Mike Henderson, who had just received his Ph.D. from Harvard and was an assistant professor at the University of Mississippi. Mike is a great writer, very knowledgeable about Louisiana (having grown up there), and he did extensive work on what are now Chapters 2 and 3 of the book. Those chapters have gone through major revisions in the years since, as has the manuscript as a whole, but his contributions were considerable and of great value to the final product.

After managing to cobble together a first draft while a member of the Koret Task Force, I had no choice but to set the manuscript aside for a

time as I turned to other projects that needed to get finished. Years passed by, and I didn't take it off the shelf until late 2016. This long delay turned out to be a blessing – because in the meantime, there had been important developments in the New Orleans reform trajectory that were crucial to my analysis and really needed to be included. Also, I have to say, taking a breather had given me new perspective on the project as a whole and what I wanted to say and do. For both reasons, the revisions I carried out over the next 2 years were quite substantial, and resulted in a book that is more complete, more coherent – and simpler – than the manuscript I wrote in 2010, or could have written.

I want to extend a special thanks to Verlan Lewis, who, as a post-doc here at Stanford for 2 years, was enormously helpful to me during this second phase of revisions. He gave me comments on the manuscript and its key ideas and claims, he did research and tracked down references on all sorts of specialized topics, he filled in citations, and in countless other ways helped me tie up loose ends and move the book toward completion. Verlan was unfailingly positive and willing to pitch in, even when he was neck-deep in his own research, and even after he had moved on to an assistant professor job at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. I really appreciate his support.

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