This book details the policy subsystems – links among members of Congress, interest groups, program beneficiaries, and federal and subnational government agencies – that blanket the American political landscape. Robert Stein and Kenneth Bickers have constructed a new data base detailing federal outlays to congressional districts for each federal program, and use it to examine four myths about the impact of policy subsystems on American government and democratic practice. These include the myth that policy subsystems are a major contributor to the federal deficit; that, once created, federal programs grow inexorably and rarely die; that, to garner support for their programs, subsystem actors seek to universalize the geographic scope of program benefits; and that the flow of program benefits to constituencies in congressional districts ensures the reelection of legislators. The authors conclude with an appraisal of proposals for reforming the American political system, including a balanced budget amendment, a presidential line-item veto, term limitations, campaign finance reform, and the reorganization of congressional committees.
PERPETUATING THE PORK BARREL
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Policy subsystems and American democracy

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