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978-1-107-04020-5 - American Public Opinion, Advocacy, and Policy in Congress:
What the Public Wants and What it Gets

Paul Burstein

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**American Public Opinion, Advocacy,
and Policy in Congress**

What the Public Wants and What It Gets

Between one election and the next, members of Congress introduce thousands of bills. What determines which become law? Is it the public? Do we have government “of the people, by the people, for the people”? Or is it those who have the resources to organize and pressure government who get what they want? In the first study ever of a random sample of policy proposals, Paul Burstein finds that the public can get what it wants – but mainly on the few issues that attract its attention. Does this mean organized interests get what they want? Not necessarily – on most issues there is so little political activity that it hardly matters. Politics may be less of a battle between the public and organized interests than a struggle for attention. American society is so much more complex than it was when the Constitution was written that we may need to reconsider what it means, in fact, to be a democracy.

Paul Burstein is Professor of Sociology, Adjunct Professor of Political Science, and Samuel and Althea Stroum Chair in Jewish Studies at the University of Washington, Seattle. He is the author of *Discrimination, Jobs, and Politics: The Struggle for Equal Employment Opportunity in the United States since the New Deal* and has published on topics including policy change; public opinion; social movements; interest organizations; congressional action on work, family, and gender; and the mobilization of law. His articles have appeared in the *American Sociological Review*, *American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Forces*, *American Political Science Review*, *Political Research Quarterly*, *Sociological Forum*, *Law and Society Review*, and other journals. He has been elected to the Council and the Publications Committee of the American Sociological Association and to the position of Chair of the ASA’s Political Sociology section. He has also served on the editorial boards of twelve journals in sociology, political science, and other fields.

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PAUL BURSTEIN

University of Washington



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For Florence, my life's love

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