

Every day we hear more about the key role religion plays in American politics. But exactly what is the relationship in the United States between religious belief and practice and the exercise of politics? Should we be alarmed or encouraged by the contemporary situation? And what are the historical and cultural roots of religious activism? In the revised and updated second edition of this accessible and engaging survey, Robert Booth Fowler, Allen D. Hertzke and Laura R. Olson provide a lively and straightforward treatment of the politics of religion in American public life today. They provide the historical context, the broader sociological aspects of religion and politics, and the range of strategic choices open to different religious actors, enabling the reader to reach informed and balanced judgments about these controversial issues. The authors offer a balanced and wide-ranging text. They honor both behavioral and philosophical approaches to the study of religion in society; they dismiss neither conservative cultural values nor liberal demands for social justice. The book is driven not by ideology or any grand schemes but rather by the desire to provide reliable knowledge about religion and politics on a careful case-by-case basis that will enable students to understand today's developments and to adapt to those of tomorrow. From the presidency to the courts, from local school battles to congressional debates, from public opinion and voting behavior (including the 1996 elections) to the shaping of culture, this text provides a window to the contemporary scene. It assesses the politics of Roman Catholics, evangelical Protestants, liberal Protestants, and Jews. It also examines important but often neglected subjects such as women and religion, African American religion, Islam, less traditional faiths, and cults. Arguing that religion and politics are much more than institutions and political behavior, Fowler, Hertzke and Olson emphasize the roles of values and attitudes in social and cultural patterns and in conflicts and agreements lived out day to day in communities. Well written, evenhanded, and consistently generous in its treatment of opposing views, *Religion and Politics in America* is now the ideal text to introduce students to the volatile mix of politics and religion in the late twentieth-century and beyond.

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