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Divided We Govern: Party Control, Lawmaking, And Investigations, 1946-2002, Second Edition



Synopsis

In this prize-winning book, a renowned political scientist debunks the commonly held myth that the American national government functions effectively only when one political party controls the presidency and Congress. For this new edition, David R. Mayhew has provided a new Preface, a new appendix, and a new concluding chapter that brings the historical narrative up to date. Important, accessible, and compelling, David Mayhew's second edition of *Divided We Govern* takes the best book on the history of US lawmaking and against all odds makes it better. Keith Krehbiel, Stanford University; In this welcome updating of his agenda-setting classic, David Mayhew cogently defends his original methodology and finds that divided government remains no less productive of important legislation than unified government, although it is now (thanks mainly to Clinton's impeachment) strongly associated with prominent investigations of the executive branch. Written with Mayhew's usual clarity and grace, this is a book to be enjoyed by beginning and veteran students of Congress alike. Gary Jacobson From reviews of the first edition: "First-rate. . . . Mayhew's tabulations and analysis are, quite simply, unimpeachable." Morris Fiorina, Washington Monthly "Will stand for years as a classic." L. Sandy Maisel, Political Science Quarterly "Should be read by every student of American politics." Gillian Peele, Times Higher Education Supplement

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Customer Reviews

this is a book that I intended to read for some time. I maintain a blog about "divided government" and this is one of the cornerstone works of scholarship about that frequent state in the US Government. The book can be a tough slog for a casual reader like myself. Working through the extensive footnotes and supporting material that some would consider dry, maybe even Sahara desert-like, requires some perseverance. But Mayhew has a clean, approachable style, writes with clarity, and if you are a political wonk and/or bring a curiosity of why things really get done (or don't) in Washington - it is a fascinating read. There is a pervasive belief - a nugget of "conventional wisdom" - that if you want to "get things done" in Congress, whether legislation, investigations to clean up governmental abuses, or just promote "change", a single party must control the Presidency and both legislative branches to avoid gridlock. It certainly seems intuitively obvious that the federal government would be more productive if all branches are run by one party. In this book David Mayhew proved the conventional wisdom flat wrong, at least in the modern era. He put the proposition to the test by rigorously quantifying and analyzing all legislation and investigations (the two primary functions of Congress) from 1946-2002. First published in 1991, the book was updated with a second edition in 2005. It is the seminal reference work that debunked the notion that the federal government functions more effectively with unified single party control. But if unified vs. divided government does not correlate to congressional productivity, what are the factors that prompts congress to "get things done"? Mayhew analyzes some of the possibilities in the book.

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