

Preface

Over 20 years ago, Malcolm E. Jewell (1982) lamented that “we have given too little thought and devoted too little of our research resources attention and resources to the field of state government and politics.” *Public Opinion in State Politics* represents the efforts of 20 scholars to study an aspect of state politics that has generally eluded systematic and sustained inquiry: public opinion in the states. Until somewhat recently, the dearth of polls on the opinion of state publics often presented an overwhelming barrier to studying state-level public opinion and integrating such opinion into the study of state politics, policy making, and government. The explosion of public opinion polling over the past two decades or so by commercial firms, newspapers, and academic and nonprofit institutions has opened up the possibility of measuring public opinion in the American states.

The studies included in *Public Opinion in State Politics* investigate state-level public opinion from a number of angles. Some look at the factors that shape public opinion in the states, others look at the impact of state public opinion on politics and policy making in the states. A variety of measures of state public opinion are used including partisanship, global ideology, attitudes on particular issues, gubernatorial and state legislative approval, and trust in general and toward government in particular. New methodologies to measure state public opinion are presented (Chapter 1 by Park, Gelman, and Bafumi) and for the first time in print, the dynamics of state public opinion are tracked (Chapter 12 by Erikson, Wright, and McIver).

If Jewell’s exhortation a quarter of a century ago stimulated greater research effort and attention to state politics, which seems to be the case—note the existence of a section of the American Political Science Association, the establishment of a dedicated journal, *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*, and an extensive recent literature review (Brace and Jewett, 1995)—then one hope of *Public Opinion in State Politics* is to stimulate continuing

efforts to study state-level public opinion, to find new and better ways of measuring opinion at the state level, and increase the visibility of the study of state public opinion among political scientists, those who study state politics, and those interested in democratic politics and processes.

Sources for Preface

- Brace, Paul, and Aubrey Jewett. 1995. "The State of State Politics Research." *Political Research Quarterly* 48 (September): 643–681.
- Jewell, Malcolm E. 1982. "The Neglected World of State Politics." *The Journal of Politics* 44 (August): 638–657.