complementary to the more agency-centered approach in this volume, and certainly not in place of the need for precisely the empirical “law-on-the-street” views of most of the authors collected here.

The book closes with two looks at the future of the rights revolution. David Freeman Engstrom argues for shaping private civil rights litigation so that it better serves public purposes. Aware, however, of the dangers of litigation reform, he leaves us to ponder a basic normative question: What are the public purposes to which private litigation, beyond its usual economic incentives, should be calibrated? The editor Dodd has the final say. Perhaps not surprisingly, she returns to the blurriness of the distinction between public and private actors in civil rights litigation to argue for developing more “synergy” between agencies such as the EEOC, which after all can file its own cases, and private plaintiff-initiated litigation. But she acknowledges that private litigation, for better or worse, is likely to predominate. The task for the next era of the rights revolution, Dodd concludes, paraphrasing the scholar Charles Epp, is to make rights real by mobilizing the resources and public support necessary to secure justice for all.


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Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ) is the star of a compelling story about the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. Politically skilled, LBJ gave a passionate speech to a full Congress, connecting civil rights and civil liberties domestically to a global crusade for democracy that included the war in Vietnam, saying, “It is all of us who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice. And we shall overcome.” Johnson used all the tools of the presidency, including public rhetoric and private negotiations. By the end of the summer, he would sign the bill into law.

But there are other stories: Johnson’s historic speech followed a series of dramatic marches led by civil rights activists in Selma, Alabama. Courageous and determinedly nonviolent crusaders, including future congressman John Lewis, suffered brutal police beatings, drawing national attention, demonstrating their commitment, and illustrating their cause. They set the political agenda for Johnson. This voting rights story centers activist strategy, organization, and dedication. A slightly broader view recognizes that the Selma to Montgomery march built on more than a decade of dramatic action that included sit-ins, marches, demonstrations, and organizing within the Democratic Party.

The fuller story is long and complicated, one in which social movement activists respond to and challenge political leaders, particularly the president. They promote changes in policy, politics, and rhetoric that, after years of hard work, sometimes seem to appear suddenly. The dynamics of change are complicated everywhere, but in the United States, where institutional obstacles are built into constitutional design, virtually any reform requires extraordinary and persistent pressure. At least sometimes, that is a social movement specialty.

Sidney Milkis and Daniel Tichenor rightly note that the study of movements and politics sometimes falls between disciplinary and subdisciplinary cracks in sociology and political science. Their most welcome book is a powerful argument to jump the cracks and focus on interactions between movements and more conventional institutional politics, particularly the presidency. Reading broadly in social movement theory, and deeply in the cases they present, the authors have opened a wide area of inquiry and provided a substantial first step that is sure to inspire and inform a new generation of scholars.

The authors begin by dipping into the broad stream of social movement scholarship that emphasizes the connections between protest movements and institutional politics. They note that various kinds of social movements in American history have received vastly different responses. Some movements do not seem to matter much, like the anarchists at the turn of the twentieth century, whereas other movements are ignored, like the Poor People’s Campaign in the 1960s. Others achieve some kind of influence, winning incorporation and more or less accommodation in mainstream politics. The authors’ framework is evocative and raises difficult analytical questions, because movements contain diverse elements that offer challenges with more or less volatility and they change over time. Developing a parsimonious framework that sorts out the circumstances in which American movements win something remains a challenge.

Milkis and Tichenor are too sensitive to both the long process of political reform and the range of political contingencies to provide simplistic capsule summaries. They have wisely opted to offer two deep case explorations with long histories. Three extensive chapters cover the long struggle for African American rights, stretching from abolition through Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society. Two similarly extended analytical chapters cover the political emergence of the Christian conservative movement, which has exercised substantial influence over the past 50 years or so.

The studies highlight a range of political dynamics that reflect both essential elements of American politics and the historical development of both the presidency and US movements. In general, presidents disappoint the social
movements that support them. Managing diverse political coalitions and an inventory of social problems, presidents are reluctant to commit passionately to the issues that movements press, and they are often unable to deliver what activists want anyway. They must be forced, by political pressure and exigent circumstances, to take action even on issues they care deeply about. The case of Abraham Lincoln, who allowed himself to be dragged to abolition, is a signal example.

Presidents want the political support that movement activists can offer. Movements turn out people willing to march, vote, contribute money, and encourage their neighbors to do the same. But the negotiation of political bargains is rarely explicit, and either side is likely to let its partner down. Suffrage activists split over support for Woodrow Wilson and the US entry into World War I. Carrie Chapman Catt supported Wilson’s war effort and eschewed confrontation in hopes of gaining the president’s support for the Nineteenth Amendment, while one-time allies Alice Paul and Lucy Burns picketed the White House for peace as well as suffrage. Women got the vote, and the women’s movement mostly disappeared for 40 years.

Lyndon Johnson invested heavily in the Voting Rights Act, after he had disappointed the civil rights movement by marginalizing the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party at the 1964 Democratic Convention. With his support for the bill, Johnson promoted the transformation of what was once the solid Democratic South to the most reliable source of Republican voters in America. Despite Johnson’s effective and politically costly commitment to civil rights, prominent activists, most notably Martin Luther King Jr., were unwilling to reciprocate by supporting his war in Vietnam. The moral logic of supporting both peace and justice was abundantly clear, but Johnson saw ingratitude and betrayal.

Ronald Reagan was far more successful at managing and coopting another movement, the Christian Right. Candidate Reagan aggressively courted organized religious conservatives, but once in office, his administration put tax cuts and aggressive foreign policy at the top of its agenda. From the Oval Office, Reagan addressed the March for Life by telephone—at a distance. He appointed judges who were, mostly, less committed to a socially conservative agenda than to markets and precedent. Reagan was nonetheless able to get the Christian Right to sign onto his military and foreign policy agenda.

Toward the end of the book, the authors consider a broader array of movements confronting President Obama, who called for activists on the Left to push him further. The relationship to the president is quite challenging, because movements must accept concessions from allies gracelessly, constantly demanding more without rupturing the relationship. As the presidency has grown more visible and powerful, it is an unavoidable focal point, but movement success depends on it not being an exclusive one.

One more point: the president is not only a target for influence but also a provocation. Donald Trump united a broad oppositional Resistance movement that includes both new activists and experienced crusaders with a range of concerns. At the same time, he legitimated and encouraged a dark atavism in American life, inviting racist and xenophobic activists out into the open. Neither force is likely to disappear after Trump. It remains to be seen which will have more influence over time. It is unfair to expect a definitive answer to this and other critical questions from *Rivalry and Reform*, but the book cogently poses the questions, offering a set of tools for going further. Let us call it a provocation and a beacon.

Conservative Innovators: How States Are Challenging Federal Power


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The federal government has come to rely increasingly heavily on the states to administer a broad range of federal policies. Yet as partisan polarization has risen and state legal and administrative capacity has grown, state officials have resisted and challenged federal policies with mounting force and momentous implications. As Ben Merriman points out in this compelling, well-written book, “Those interested in the future of policy about matters such as social welfare provision, voting rights, immigration, and environmental protection should look to the states” (p. 29). In this volume, Merriman focuses on how conservative state officials used the expanded powers of modern state-level executive offices to challenge and resist the Obama administration’s policies, including the Affordable Care Act and the Clean Power Plan.

The book begins by analyzing the confluence of factors that turned state offices such as attorney general into a “ready-made support structure for conservative litigation” (p. 31). The first of these factors, Merriman argues, is the expansion of state litigation capacity, which largely arose in response to the development of new federal rights regimes. As Congress over time became less prone to grant federal agencies expansive enforcement and investigative powers, federal courts became the principal mechanism for enforcement in matters such as environmental and consumer protection, leading to the emergence of the so-called litigation state and the growth in state litigation capacity (p. 34). Second, as the federal judiciary became less deferential regarding the exercise of federal agency power, it became more receptive to state-initiated suits. In particular, Merriman emphasizes the Supreme Court’s opinion in the 2007 case *Massachusetts v. EPA* that, when assessing legal standing to bring suits against federal agencies, states ought to be accorded a “special solicitude.”