

CHAPTER 1



*The Socioeconomic and Political  
Context of States*

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The policy issues facing society can, at times, have a contemporaneous effect on both levels of government (Baumgartner, Gray, and Lowery 2009)—an effect that is magnified if one party controls both levels of government. In November 2010, the nation elected a Republican House of Representatives, and in 2014, it elected a Republican Senate, thus awarding full legislative control to one party. At the state level in 2010, Republicans gained control of twenty-nine of the fifty governorships and twenty-five of the state legislatures. In 2014, they achieved modest gains in both branches: Republicans controlled thirty-one governors and thirty state legislatures. Many issues high on the Republicans' national legislative agenda dovetailed with issues on the states' agendas, where those issues had a greater chance of enactment because of Republicans' greater degree of party control. The Republican Congress slashed various safety net programs while Republican governors reduced them even further. Streamlining government—consolidating and reorganizing agencies—was in vogue in both parties at all levels of government. Squeezing money out of the public-employee workforce was also popular: President Barack Obama froze the wages of federal workers for two years, beginning in 2011, and state policy makers from both parties proposed reducing the size and cost of their public-sector workforces, including their health care costs and pensions. Some Republican governors and legislatures, such as Wisconsin's, even eliminated collective-bargaining rights for unionized employees while various anti-union proposals were considered in several states.

Another way in which the agendas of national and state governments are linked is when different levels of government pursue policies in a sequential fashion. Indeed, state policy

makers often frame their attention to problems as a response to federal inaction or a substitute for federal action. Perhaps the best current example is illegal immigration. The U.S. Congress considered a comprehensive immigration policy in 2006 but failed to pass it. That year, the states considered more than 570 bills related to immigration and passed seventy-two of them (National Conference of State Legislatures 2006). Those numbers nearly tripled in 2007, when 1,562 bills were introduced, and 178 were enacted. The number of bill introductions continued at roughly that pace through 2011 (National Conference of State Legislatures 2011). Since then, the number of enactments has declined to less than two hundred per year. The most (in)famous of these state laws was Arizona's, which required immigrants to carry "alien" registration documents at all times and which ordered police officers to determine the immigration status of a person during any lawful stop where reasonable suspicion existed that the person is an "alien." The 2010 law also forbade illegal immigrants from accepting jobs. The law was challenged in federal court by the Obama administration and a coalition of Latino civil rights organizations. In 2012, the U.S. Supreme Court's decision (*Arizona v. United States* 2012) on Arizona's law preempted three of its provisions and upheld one provision. This decision also contributed to states passing fewer new laws on immigration.

A third way in which national and state policy agendas may be connected is that laws passed in Washington, D.C., may stimulate further state lawmaking. Under the provisions of the Affordable Care Act passed in 2010, the states were required to expand their Medicaid programs to cover all adults under 65 up to 133% of the federal poverty line. The full cost of covering the newly eligible would be borne by the federal government for three years; thereafter the federal subsidy would be 90%. However, *National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius* (2012) made participation in the expanded Medicaid program voluntary for the states. So the law and the court decision stimulated states to consider covering large numbers of uninsured poor citizens at little cost to state government. Thus far, thirty-three states (counting two hybrid expansions and the District of Columbia) have expanded their Medicaid programs, two states are in discussion with the federal government over possible conditions, and sixteen states have not joined the program. Chapter 12 contains much more information on the Medicaid program, as well as other health and welfare programs run by the states.

Of course, many topics on state policy agendas have nothing to do with the federal government at all; they are strictly related to the states themselves. Sometimes, proposed solutions to state problems are borrowed from other states. Policies adopted via this diffusion process include the lottery, renewable-energy programs, bans on smoking in public places, the AMBER Alert System, charter schools, "lemon" laws, and no-fault divorce. Many issues on state policy agendas are either routine or unique to that particular state, such as the safety of the trans-Alaska oil pipeline, mining in Montana, and annual flood preparation along the Red River in North Dakota. The unique bills often deal with the state's major industries, many of which ask the state government at some point for financial support or tax or regulatory relief. The routine items all states deal with are spending and revenue bills, bonding bills, transportation bills, and enacting many bills about local governments.

The purpose of this book is to help you understand why state governments make the decisions they do in good economic times and bad. The authors of this volume compare the fifty states in terms of their policy differences and explain these differences using the methods of political science. We find these political differences both fascinating and intriguing to analyze. The social and economic differences among states are also significant. This chapter will make you aware of some of the differences among states in population, natural resources, and wealth—differences that affect what policy makers can do, the sorts of problems they face, and what kinds of solutions they may place on the agenda.

### **DIFFERENCES AMONG THE STATES**

Differences among the states abound. If you pay close attention to the news, you will notice that different states have different problems and different solutions to the same problem. California often leads the way on the environment. In 2012, the Golden State enacted sweeping auto emissions standards that mandated a 75% reduction in smog-forming pollutants and a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2025. By that year, one in seven new cars will be required to be electric or zero-emissions vehicles. Smaller states can lead as well. In 2013, Nevada passed the first law in the country to allow autonomous cars on the road. Google supplied plenty of lobbying muscle to see the bill through the legislature. Google has been at the forefront of developing self-driving cars, which use video cameras, radar sensors, lasers, and maps to drive cars automatically.

A more systematic way to see the policy differences among states is to look at the rankings of the states on various quantitative policy indicators. For this purpose, political scientists often select issues on which liberals and conservatives differ and then rate the states as to whether they have liberal or conservative policies on these issues. We scored states on five such policies and then summed and averaged the scores to produce an index of overall **policy liberalism**. Table 1-1 presents state rankings on this index in 2016, on which California ranks first and South Dakota last (see the first column).<sup>1</sup> The index makes intuitive sense: Other liberal states joining California are Connecticut, New Jersey, Hawaii, and New York. Clustering at the bottom are the smaller western or plains states such as South Dakota, Wyoming, Kansas, Arizona, and Idaho. The traditionally conservative southern states are no longer the most conservative on this scale but cluster just above the bottom five states.

The policy liberalism index is based on five policy indicators measured between 2013 and 2016: gun control policies, coded from strictest to loosest; a scale of abortion laws, coded from most facilitative to most restrictive; conditions for receiving benefits under Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), coded from those most expanding eligibility to the most restrictive; and tax progressivity (the extent to which the **tax burden** falls on the top 1 percent of earners, as compared with the lowest 20 percent), ranging from those systems that tax the rich the most heavily to those that burden the working poor the

1. I would like to thank Eric Hansen for his research assistance on this chapter and especially for his help in constructing the policy liberalism index.

**Table 1-1** State Rank on Policy Liberalism Index, 2016, and Its Components

<i>State</i>	<i>Policy Liberalism</i>	<i>Gun Law Index</i>	<i>Abortion Index</i>	<i>TANF Index</i>	<i>Tax Progressivity</i>
California	1	1	1	1	4
Connecticut	2	2	3	2	26
New Jersey	3	3	9	4	14
Hawaii	4	7	4	5	24
New York	5	5	11	12	7
Vermont	5	5	11	12	7
Maine	7	25	8	11	5
Minnesota	8	12	18	9	3
Maryland	9	4	5	38	12
Illinois	10	8	15	7	40
Massachusetts	11	6	16	18	30
Rhode Island	12	9	24	10	27
Oregon	13	18	6	43	6
New Mexico	14	37	12	8	32
West Virginia	15	25	17	20	10
Delaware	16	10	22	40	1
Pennsylvania	17	11	32	6	39
Colorado	18	15	19	39	23
Iowa	19	16	20	15	19
Washington	20	12	2	17	49
New Hampshire	21	22	21	27	43
Ohio	22	19	36	29	31
Alaska	23	49	14	24	38
Montana	24	42	10	49	8
Wisconsin	25	17	25	26	11
Kentucky	26	43	33	25	13
Missouri	27	39	44	42	17
Virginia	28	20	41	21	20
Nebraska	29	21	37	30	16
North Carolina	30	31	29	22	18
Nevada	31	31	13	14	46
Tennessee	32	28	27	16	44
Indiana	33	23	35	32	33
Utah	34	40	34	23	21
South Carolina	35	34	30	41	15
Georgia	36	28	28	45	28
Alabama	37	24	38	35	36
Texas	38	31	39	13	45
Arkansas	39	34	40	34	29
Michigan	40	14	43	48	22
North Dakota	41	28	48	31	41
Oklahoma	42	34	42	44	35
Louisiana	43	40	50	37	34
Florida	44	25	26	19	48
Mississippi	45	44	49	47	25
Idaho	46	37	31	50	9
Arizona	47	50	45	36	37
Kansas	48	44	46	46	42
Wyoming	49	48	23	8	50
South Dakota	50	47	47	33	47

SOURCES: Constructed by the author from data from the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence (gun law index, 2013 data), NARAL Pro-Choice America (abortion index, 2015 data), Urban Institute (TANF index, 2014 data), and Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (tax progressivity index, 2015 data).

**Table 1-1** (Continued)

NOTES: Each index is ranked as follows: 1 = most liberal, 50 = most conservative. The policy liberalism index also includes right-to-work laws that are not included in this table because the law is a binary variable. The gun law index is derived from the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence (2013) state scorecard. It was constructed by standardizing the Brady Campaign's score for each state. The abortion index is derived from the NARAL Pro-Choice America (2015) "Report Card on Women's Reproductive Rights." It was constructed by first converting the letter grade given to each state into a numerical score according to the following scale: A+ = 4, A = 3.67, A- = 3.33, B+ = 3, B = 2.67, B- = 2.33, C+ = 2, C = 1.67, C- = 1.33, D+ = 1, D = 0.67, D- = 0.33, F = 0. This measure was then standardized. Finally, the average of the standardized letter grade and NARAL's standardized state ranking was computed and standardized to produce the index. The TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) index is derived from the 2014 data of the Urban Institute Rules Database (<http://anfdata.urban.org/wrd>). The first step in its computation was summing the number of conditions associated with receiving benefits, such as whether a job search is required or whether food-stamp use counts as income. The twenty-eight conditions counted for this index were defined by Fellowes and Rowe (2004) as components of their Eligibility Index. Then four continuous measures were standardized: the percentage reduction in benefits after the first sanction, the months of assistance guaranteed before the state's lifetime limit, the maximum monthly benefit for a family of four, and the maximum income for a family of three to remain eligible for benefits. The average of these four standardized measures and the standardized sum of conditions was then computed and standardized to produce the index. The tax progressivity index is derived from the 2015 data of the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (2015). It was constructed by first calculating the average tax as a percentage of income after the federal deduction offset for the top 1 percent and for the bottom 20 percent of income earners. Then, the ratio of these two averages (top 1 percent ÷ bottom 20 percent) was calculated and standardized to produce the index. Information on right-to-work laws comes from the 2016 data of the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation ([www.nrtw.org](http://www.nrtw.org)). The policy liberalism index was constructed by computing the average of the standardized versions of the five indicators.

most heavily. The fifth component of the index has to do with unionization: whether a state has laws that facilitate collective bargaining or whether it has a "right-to-work" law that impedes unionization. Because this is a simple binary variable (1 or 0), it is not presented in a column, although the data are incorporated into the policy liberalism index.

The sharp-eyed reader will notice that a specific state is not necessarily liberal (or conservative) in every category. The best way to see this is to select a state and look at its overall policy liberalism ranking and then see how it ranks on each component. For example, I live in North Carolina, which ranks thirtieth overall on the policy liberalism scale, or slightly conservative. It is most liberal on tax policies and the TANF index, ranking eighteenth and twenty-second, respectively, and is slightly below average on the abortion law index (twenty-ninth) and the gun law index (thirty-first). With the addition of its right-to-work law, my state averages out at thirtieth on policy liberalism. States have a general tendency toward a conservative, liberal, or middle-of-the-road position, but their degree of liberalism or conservatism does not play out exactly the same on each policy.

The next questions are, Why do some states make liberal policy choices while others make conservative ones? What factors distinguish California, New York, and other liberal states from South Dakota, Wyoming, and other conservative states? These are the types of questions the authors pursue in this book and in the field of state politics. I will return to these questions later in the chapter.

## EXPLAINING POLICY DIFFERENCES

The second half of this book focuses on a state government's many activities. These outputs of a government's activities are called **public policies**, which can be defined as means to governmental ends. The public policies reviewed in this book deal with taxation, health and welfare, K-12 education, higher education, corrections, the environment, economic development, inequality, morality, and infrastructure. Scholars have spent years investigating

differences among states' public policies and the reasons for those differences. The intellectual task is to explain interstate patterns—that is, what conditions or characteristics of states lead to a generous educational expenditure, a low welfare expenditure, or innovation in health policy? In general, these investigations focus on two broad sets of variables: political characteristics and socioeconomic factors. Among a state's political variables, researchers have found the following to be important: political party control and interparty competition, interest group balance and strength, gubernatorial power, professionalism of the legislature and bureaucracy, and public and elite opinion. Many of these factors will be examined in the chapters that follow.

In this chapter, I look at a set of socioeconomic factors that affect patterns of state policy. Included in these factors are the following: population size and composition; immigration; physical characteristics and natural resources; and types of economic activities stemming from a state's physical endowments, wealth, and regional economic forces. These factors structure a state government's problems and affect a state government's ability to deal with them. I also explore the broader political context that affects state governments, such as political culture, other states' actions, and national political forces.

Understanding the magnitude of state differences also helps those trying to understand the rationale for federalism. The states are so different that it is hard to imagine they would get along within a single government. Only federalism could accommodate the cultural distance between, say, clean-living Utah and the gambling mecca of Nevada. Federalism allows these differences to flourish—and fester.

## THE PEOPLE

The first state resource I examine is the human resource. What kinds of people live where? How does the movement of people back and forth affect states? Why are trends in population growth and economic competition important for a state's future?

### *Population Size and Growth*

A fundamental fact influencing a state's policies is its population. The largest state, California, had a bit over 39 million residents as of 2015. In fact, California's population is slightly larger than Canada's, and California's provision for education, highways, hospitals, and housing is on the same scale as that of many large nations. The second-largest state, Texas, had 27.5 million residents. There are also some sparsely populated states, and again, size has its consequences. Alaska and Wyoming are among the least populated states, but they are huge in terms of square miles. Thus, their unit cost of building highways and providing other services is high. Neither state—but especially Alaska—can achieve economies of scale in many of its public programs. Smaller democracies, then, have difficulties and opportunities not found in California and Texas.

Whatever the population size, a state's leaders must cope with it. More difficult to manage in the short run are changes in population. States experiencing sudden population growth have difficulty providing the schools, roads, bridges, waste management, and law enforcement needed for an expanding population. By contrast, states experiencing a decline



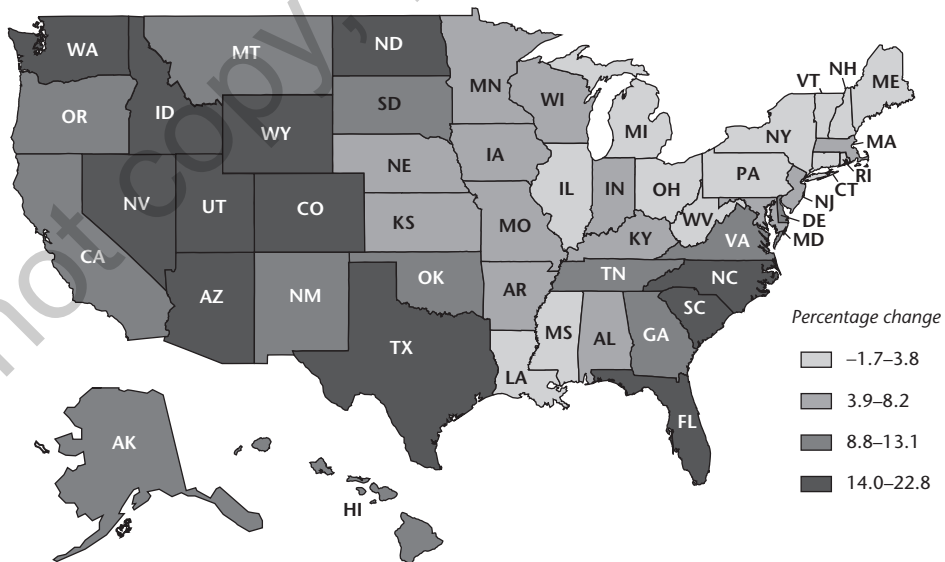
in population have a different set of concerns. As people leave the state and businesses die, the tax base erodes. But if a state government adjusts by raising taxes, more people may leave, thereby initiating a vicious cycle. Obviously, states would rather be growing than shrinking.

Changes in population between 2005 and 2015 are shown in Figure 1-1. Growth in this decade declined from the previous decade, in part because of the recession of 2007–2009. During the worst of the recession, Americans recorded the lowest mobility rates since the late 1940s. At the same time, immigration from other countries, especially Mexico, also declined. Often, the overall influx of immigrants cushioned the out-migration of domestic migrants to other states—this happened in the metropolitan New York area and in Los Angeles (Frey 2009).

During this decade, Utah was the fastest growing state at 22.8 percent, followed by Texas at 20.5 percent, Nevada at 20 percent, North Dakota at 19 percent, and Colorado at 17 percent. North Dakota moved into the set of top-five fastest growing states for the first time due to the oil boom brought about by fracking. The drop in oil prices worldwide has stopped North Dakota’s population growth for the moment. Note that in general, the fastest growing states were in the West, where there were nonrenewable natural resources to exploit. Utah also has a high birth rate.

Rapid growth was a southwestern and mountain west phenomenon. States in those regions have to race to build enough schools, highways, hospitals, prisons, and other public infrastructure to keep pace with their expanding populations. In the same decade, two

**Figure 1-1** Population Change, 2005–2015



SOURCE: Map constructed by the author from calculations conducted on U.S. Census data for 2005 and 2015.

states lost population: Michigan shrank by  $-1.7$  percent. Michigan's population flight mainly stemmed from its economic problems related to a declining auto industry and the resulting high unemployment. The other state to lose population was Rhode Island,  $-0.85$  percent over the decade. Rhode Island's population is aging, and its unemployment is relatively high.

Population shifts among states are a result of differential fertility rates and different rates of net migration (in other words, the difference in the number of people moving into a state and the number moving out of that state). Migration patterns, in turn, are a function of economic opportunities: People usually move to find better jobs and a better quality of life. State leaders therefore strive for economic growth and full employment as a means of retaining old citizens and attracting new ones.

### *Population Composition*

States also differ in the composition of their populations—that is, in the demographic groups that make up their populations. States vary in the proportion of old people to young people, in the number of foreign-born people, and in the number of minorities. The increasingly diverse population presents challenges to government and often provides a basis for political conflict.

*Age.* The U.S. population, as a whole, is aging because many baby boomers are now entering the sixty-five and older age cohort. Some people refer to this boomlet as the coming “silver tsunami”: seventy-nine million baby boomers will exit the workforce over the next twenty years and become dependent on Medicare and Social Security (Johnson and Kasarda 2011, 7–8). And yet, the number and concentration of seniors are quite variable at the state and local levels. The Midwest and Northeast have large elderly populations because of *aging in place* and the out-migration of younger persons, whereas retirement magnets in the South and West attract relatively affluent retirees. In 2015, Florida had the highest percentage (19.5 percent) of people aged sixty-five and over (Administration on Aging 2014). Not surprisingly, then, according to local economic-impact reports, Florida's senior community contributes an annual \$2.8 billion net tax benefit to the state's coffers (Area Agency on Aging of Pasco-Pinellas 2013). Across the state, seniors provide \$135 billion in spending power (more than their younger colleagues), account for 50 percent of new home construction, and expend \$9 billion in out-of-pocket medical expenses.

In four states—West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Montana, and Maine—at least 16 percent of their populations were sixty-five and over in 2015, which ranked them right after Florida (Administration on Aging 2014). These states are illustrative of aging in place. They will face an increasing demand for nursing homes, doctors, mass transportation, and senior centers that will be difficult to meet because their labor forces will grow more slowly, and their tax bases will diminish. Even so, studies reported in Pittsburgh newspapers focused on the positive economic impact of seniors: The pensions and medical insurance of Pennsylvania seniors cushioned the impact of the 2007–2009 recession compared with the situations in other states because the state's seniors spent a lot of money and used more medical care, which increased the number of jobs in the health care industry (Miller 2010).



In youth-gaining states and metro areas, younger immigrants and domestic migrants dampen the demographic impact of aging. All states want to attract young college graduates with the skills, talent, and creativity to forge a twenty-first-century economy, one directed at high-tech industries rather than traditional manufacturing. In his 2002 article, “The Economic Geography of Talent,” Richard Florida argued that talented people are attracted to locales with high diversity and cultural “coolness.” The comingling of talent, diversity, and coolness is associated with high-tech industries, and together, they generate higher regional incomes. Professor Florida’s ideas have attracted a following in the state and local economic-development community. By the end of the 2000s, even the state of Florida was attempting to rebrand itself, shifting from a retirement mecca to a haven for young adults looking for good jobs and affordable housing. Policy makers in the Sunshine State talked up the pristine beaches, as well as “cool cities” such as Tampa, where street life buzzes amid the surrounding cafes, concerts, art exhibits, major-league sports teams, and plenty of partying (RIS Media 2011).

Nevertheless, it is inevitable that the desires of young families for schools and day care will compete with the demands of the elderly for senior services and adult day care, and public officials will have to allocate scarce resources among these priorities (Frey 2011). The baby boomers have been replaced by the millennials (those born between 1982 and 2000) as the largest generation. They constitute 83.1 million and are more diverse than previous generations; 44 percent are minorities, who may have different priorities than the previous generation.

*Foreign Born.* The United States is a nation formed by immigrants. Much of the nation’s history can be told by reviewing the arrival of the different waves of immigrants: the Italians, the Irish, the Scandinavians, and so forth. Indeed, the entry of these ethnic groups into the political system formed the basis of many political cleavages. Overall, the foreign born numbered 45 million, or 14 percent of the population, in 2015 (Anna Brown and Stepler 2016). In 2014, 27.7 percent of immigrants were from Mexico; 26.4 percent were from Asia, 23.9 percent from elsewhere in Latin American, 13.6 percent from Europe and Canada, and 8.3 percent from other countries (Anna Brown and Stepler 2016). Many expect Asian immigration to soon outpace Mexico as the number one source. The overall pace of immigration slowed with the onset of the recession in 2007, possibly because of enhanced border enforcement by federal and state authorities and the passage of stricter state laws that signaled an anti-immigrant stance. In addition, some immigrants left the United States to return to their home countries during this period of economic hardship. The result is that since 2007, the number of illegal immigrants has actually declined to 6 million annually. The decline has been particularly marked in Mexico. Between 2009 and 2014, more Mexicans left the United States and returned home to Mexico than moved to the United States (Krogstad 2016).

In the long run, the country will reap substantial benefits from the arrival of today’s immigrants, just as it did from those who arrived earlier. But in the short run, the states attracting the most refugees, “regular” immigrants (those who are not fleeing to this country for political asylum), and illegal immigrants may experience difficulties in absorbing

them. In 1990, immigrants tended to arrive in just four states—California, Florida, New York, and Texas—but now half of new arrivals live in other states (Pew Research Center 2015). Since 2000, immigrants have increasingly moved into second-tier states in the Southeast, such as Georgia and Virginia, and into previously homogenous states, such as Minnesota and Utah (Migration Policy Institute 2014).

The set of states experiencing the greatest percentage growth in foreign-born people between 2000 and 2013 included southern and border states: South Carolina (99 percent), Kentucky (86 percent), Tennessee (92 percent), Alabama (85 percent), and Arkansas (82 percent). The correlation between overall population growth and foreign-born growth in the first decade of the twenty-first century was a positive 0.32, showing that immigration is an important contributor to population growth in this country. It is difficult for a state to grow if it relies only on domestic migration.

There is a general consensus among economic researchers that the U.S. economy gains in the long run from immigration because it boosts the supply of skills in the workforce, increases the supply of low-cost services, and contributes to innovation (U.S. White House 2007, chap. 9; Peri 2010, 6). Legal immigrants pay taxes and contribute to Social Security, and many illegal immigrants pay taxes as well. (Fifty percent compliance is assumed by most economic studies.) However, an oft-asked question is, Do the costs of government services for immigrants exceed the benefits? This is a difficult question to answer because a proper study would compare the stream of costs and benefits over a lifetime for both natives and non-natives and because data on illegal immigrants are especially difficult to obtain. But some answers are available. Both immigrants and the native born pay most of their taxes to the federal government. Illegal immigrants are not eligible for any federal welfare and health benefits, and legal immigrants must wait five years to apply for programs such as SNAP (food stamps), TANF, SSI (Supplemental Security Income), Medicaid, or SCHIP (State Children's Health Insurance Program). So we can reason that the taxes immigrants pay to the *federal* government probably exceed the services received.

Immigrants (and the native born) pay less in taxes to state and local governments, but it is these governments that pick up more of the costs of immigrants than does the federal government. Thus, if there is a negative cost–benefit ratio to be found, it will more likely be at the state and local level. Nevertheless, of the twenty-one state reports on the economic impacts of immigrants, summarized by the National Conference of State Legislatures (2013), nineteen reports conclude that immigrants pay more in state taxes than they receive in state benefits. Only Mississippi and North Carolina reported that immigrants had a negative impact on the state budget, and in North Carolina's case, the impact was small. The magnitude, geographic concentration, and type of immigration have affected many state governments, primarily in the areas of education, health care, and law enforcement (even though immigrants are less crime prone than the native born), and have provoked a backlash in some states. One obvious impact is that many new arrivals do not speak English or do not speak it well. A political movement touched off by the prevalence of non-English speakers has succeeded in getting more than half of the states to enact laws making English the official language. It is unclear what practical effect such laws have because most

immigrants want to learn English anyway; classes in English as a second language are full almost everywhere, and the waiting lists are often several months long.

The task of teaching English to children falls to the public schools, particularly to the large urban school districts. Most of the cost of English instruction is met by state and local coffers; the federal government provides relatively little funding. In California, efforts to teach English quickly became a divisive political issue, culminating in the adoption, in 1998, of Proposition 227, which ended bilingual instruction in the public schools. The battle over bilingual instruction versus immersion in English continues today around the country.

Language proficiency also affects immigrants' access to health care. Under an executive order issued by President Bill Clinton in 2000, all federal agencies that fund nonfederal entities must ensure "meaningful access" to those entities for people with limited English proficiency. This order means that state, county, and local health and welfare agencies; hospitals, emergency rooms, and clinics; managed-care organizations; nursing homes and senior centers; and mental-health centers must provide translation of written materials and free interpreter services to patients. Some federal financial help is available through Medicaid and other funds, but much of the money has to come from state governments and private medical practices.

*Minorities.* Because of immigration and differential birthrates among groups, the United States has gradually evolved from a largely white, European society to an increasingly diverse one; today, more than one in three Americans is a member of a racial or ethnic minority. By 2042, minorities will surpass the majority. This has already happened in California, New Mexico, and Texas, where minorities constitute over half the population, and in Hawaii, where whites have long been in the minority. By about 2020, more than half of our country's children will be part of an ethnic or racial minority group; minorities already account for a majority of babies born in our nation. Hispanics or Latinos are the country's largest minority group (55 million by 2014) and are growing very fast; they increased by 43 percent between 2000 and 2010 (Howden and Meyer 2011).<sup>2</sup> Hispanic families tend to be large, with twice as many children under eighteen as compared with non-Hispanic families (Cook 2011). Looking forward, those identifying with more than one race (8 million) are the fastest growing group, followed by Asians, and then Latinos. Asians are a much smaller population than Latinos (17 million). Blacks or African Americans, who are 42 million strong, are expected to grow at a modest rate, as are whites. Native Americans and Alaskan Natives, the smallest minority group, at 4 million, are the slowest growing group.

As the previous discussion of immigration would suggest, each minority population tends to be concentrated in certain states. Historically, the politics of individual southern states has varied according to the proportion of blacks. The Deep South states—Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina—which had the highest concentrations

2. Hispanics are an ethnic group, not a racial group; Hispanics can be white, black, or of mixed race. The term *Hispanic* is a U.S. Census Bureau label that applies to all people from Spanish-speaking countries—that is, from Spain or Latin America. Many Hispanics born in the United States prefer to be called Latino, which refers to people of Latin American descent living in the United States. Or they prefer to be known by their national origin—for example, Cuban or Mexican.

of blacks, were much more conservative politically than the peripheral South—Arkansas, Florida, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. Political behavior varied because where there were more blacks, whites were more likely to unite behind racial conservatism and exercise racially exclusionary practices that enhanced their political strength (Key 1949, chap. 24). In 2014, blacks constituted from a quarter to over a third of the population in those five Deep South states, as well as in Maryland (Macaig 2015).

Latinos, by contrast, have been concentrated primarily in the Southwest, totaling 47.7 percent of the population of New Mexico in 2014 and 38.6 percent of the populations of California and Texas (Macaig 2015). There is also a significant Latino presence in Arizona (30.5 percent) and Nevada (27.8 percent) to round out the top-five states. But the big story of recent population studies is the increasing and dramatic dispersion of Latinos across the country; dramatic gains in their population share emerged in unexpected locales, such as Connecticut, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, New Jersey, Ohio, and Rhode Island (Brownstein 2011, 21). Like blacks, Latinos are a disadvantaged minority, but unlike blacks, many Latinos lack fluency in English, which provides an additional obstacle in finding jobs. And for those who are here illegally, their unauthorized status is a serious impediment to obtaining both higher education and jobs.

Asian Americans tend to live along the coasts, especially in Hawaii, where they constituted 36.4 percent of the population in 2014, or in California, where they made up 13.8 percent (Macaig 2015). Other states with notable proportions of Asians are New Jersey (9.3 percent), New York (8.3 percent) and Nevada (7.9 percent). In Hawaii, Asian Americans are joined by the 10 percent of the population that is native Hawaiian Islanders, so whites are a minority of the total population. Hawaii has enjoyed successful race relations for a long time and may provide a model for other states.

Native Americans primarily reside in the Southwest and West, especially New Mexico, South Dakota, Oklahoma, and Montana. There, their proportions ranged from 6.5 to 10.4 percent of the population in 2013. About half live on tribal lands, and about half are urbanites. In their state, Alaskan Natives constituted nearly 15 percent of the population in 2013.

Finally, an increasing number of Americans are taking advantage of a new option on the U.S. Census to state that they are of more than one race: 9 million people, or 2.9 percent of the population, identified themselves as multiracial on the 2010 census (Saulny 2011), an increase of more than 30 percent since 2000. The growth was greatest in the South and parts of the Midwest.

In this description, I have emphasized the spatial concentration of minorities, but it is also important to point out that the minority share of the population increased in every state; indeed, even extremely homogeneous states are becoming more diverse. As of 2014, minorities represented more than 20.7 percent of Utah's population, nearly 17.8 percent of Minnesota's, and 17 percent of South Dakota's, just to take a few examples (Macaig 2014). The minority status of the younger population has significant implications for politics into the future. Minorities are likely to give priority to public schools, health care, and infrastructure as the keys to economic progress. By contrast, the mostly white senior population may be reluctant to fund such services through their taxes (Brownstein 2011, 21).

This intergenerational racial and ethnic conflict over priorities has the potential to be a long-standing divide.

The rapid growth of minorities has increased their political clout in the electorate, although they are still underrepresented among elected officials. Thus far, Latinos have achieved the governorship in Florida, Arizona, New Mexico, and Nevada. African Americans have been elected to this office only in Virginia and Massachusetts.<sup>3</sup> Greater inroads have been made in state legislatures: In 2015, blacks held 9 percent of seats nationwide, which was below their 13 percent population share (Wiltz 2015). The six states with the most African American residents all had legislatures with 20 percent or more black legislators. Latinos held only 4.8 percent of legislative seats in 2015 (Wiltz 2015), well below their 17 percent population share in 2015. In the top-five states for Latino population, New Mexico's legislature was 37 percent Latino in 2015, California's was 19 percent, Texas's was 23 percent, and Arizona's was 21 percent (Wiltz survey in appendix). Native Americans, who were 0.5 percent of the population in 2015, are represented in notable numbers (i.e., above 1 percent) only in the legislatures of Alaska (Native Alaskans), South Dakota, Arizona, Maine, Montana, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. Asians, who made up 1.3 percent of the U.S. population in 2015, are the least well represented. They do well electorally in Hawaii, where they had 57 percent of the seats in 2015, and made a dent in California, where they were 9 percent of state lawmakers in 2015. But otherwise, they were not elected to state legislatures in notable numbers. The close proximity of minority groups sometimes creates racial tensions over political issues (e.g., affirmative action). Several states have faced legal challenges to congressional districts drawn along racial lines, and the U.S. Supreme Court has dealt with a series of such "affirmative gerrymandering" cases. Chapter 7 describes in more detail the racial issues involved in legislative reapportionment. Overall, diversity in the composition of state populations—whether racial, ethnic, age, or country of origin—leads to political diversity. Political parties in California are likely to be different from those in Iowa because of population diversity or the lack thereof. State parties will differ in their political cleavages and citizens' opinions about public-policy needs. To take one example, there are likely to be more groups representing a wider spectrum of interests in Florida than in Mississippi. Subsequent chapters will describe some of the political consequences of states' population diversity.

#### **THE PLACE**

States also differ in their physical characteristics. Some of these attributes are fixed and cannot be changed, such as land area, location, and climate. State leaders can try to compensate for the effects of a remote location, a cold or unpleasant climate, or small geographic size, but for the most part, they are constrained by nature. Similarly, states are constrained by their natural-resource endowments: Some states have rich soil; others cannot grow much. Some states have plenty of water, forests, minerals, oil, or coal; others have to share their water with other states or must rely on imported oil and coal. The net effect of the uneven

3. David Paterson also attained the office of governor of New York, but it was by succession from the office of lieutenant governor, not election.



distribution of natural resources is that states vary in the types of economic activities that can be conducted in them. The overall wealth of states, in turn, depends on the vigor of their economies—and the wealth of states affects the policy choices they make.

### *Land*

States vary enormously in land area. Alaska is more than twice the size of Texas, the second-largest state. In fact, twenty-two of the smallest states would have to be combined to reach an area as large as Alaska's. The two smallest states, Delaware and Rhode Island, together would fit comfortably within Los Angeles County.

What difference does its geographic size make to a state? First, it affects a state's political style, leading to distinct differences among the states. In the larger states, legislative districts are, by necessity, quite large. In wide-ranging districts, it is hard for legislators to keep in touch with constituents; airplanes are frequently used for campaigning in Alaska, for example. In rural Texas, the districts are vast. Moreover, legislators must travel hundreds of miles from their homes and jobs to Austin, the state capital. The travel burden, then, is a factor in who can serve in the legislature—only those who can afford it or who make a career of it.

In smaller states, such as New Hampshire and Vermont, districts are small and compact. Legislators can run personal, almost one-on-one campaigns. Vermont's former Speaker, Ralph Wright, said that all he needed to start campaigning was a list of eligible voters, which cost \$50, and a map of the town of Bennington, which was free (Wright 2005). His district was only six miles end to end, so he was able to walk it nine times, going door to door. Once in office, these legislators can commute to the capital every day while remaining in their regular occupations. The result is politics with a somewhat amateur, small-town flavor.

Second, geographic size has policy implications. In the provision of highways, for example, geographic area and population density determine expense. Alaska, Montana, and Wyoming are large, sparsely populated states, so their per capita highway expenditures are among the highest in the nation. Rhode Island is a small state, with a compact population; its expenditure on highways is among the lowest. A state's size affects the delivery of services in many other policy areas as well.

Third, land can be the basis of political conflict. Among the most divisive issues in the western states is that the federal government owns much of the land. Eighty-two percent of Nevada is held by the federal government; more than 60 percent of Alaska, Idaho, and Utah is federal domain. Thus, vast areas of the West are not under state jurisdiction; this land can be put only to the uses allowed by the federal government. Over the years, the federal government's land ownership has provoked periodic outbreaks of unrest. The most recent event involved protesters' takeover of a federal wildlife refuge in Oregon; the protesters said they wanted to unshackle their county from federal control. Chapter 2 explores the federal-land issue in more detail.

### *Natural Resources*

Natural resources, such as soil, water, minerals, and energy sources, are attached to the land. The distribution of natural resources has great economic consequences; it allows states



blessed with abundant water and rich topsoil to concentrate on crop production. Less fortunate states must conserve their water and import some of their food. Some states receive income from the coal, oil, and minerals extracted from their land. Not only do these states have access to nonrenewable resources, but they also derive tax revenue from the companies that mine the coal or pump the oil and natural gas. Those companies then refine the natural resources and sell them to customers at prices sufficient to cover the tax and make a profit. In essence, resource-rich states can shift some of their tax burden onto the citizens of other states, as long as there is a demand for oil, coal, and natural gas. Unfortunately for the resource-rich states, such as Alaska, Louisiana, Wyoming, Texas, and North Dakota, worldwide demand for oil has fallen, leading to a sudden drop in their revenues.

In agriculture, California was the largest producer of agricultural products (crops and livestock) in 2012; it was followed by Iowa, Texas, Nebraska, and Minnesota, with those five representing more than a third of U.S. agricultural-output value (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service 2015). Most of the other states in the Midwest rank fairly high, and the New England states rank low because their state economies produce few agricultural products. Unlike in earlier times, however, in no state is agriculture the largest sector of the state's **gross state product (GSP)**.<sup>4</sup> But agriculture looms large in other ways. In the rural states, there is a sense of pride and identification with the land. Iowa, for example, had on its billboards, for a time, the slogan, "Iowa, a Place to Grow," suggesting simultaneously the growth of sturdy crops and sturdy children.

In addition to fertile topsoil, agriculture requires a reliable supply of water. The Midwest is blessed with sufficient water, but the West is not. Nowhere is water a more important issue than in the Southwest and West. On the wall of the Colorado state capitol is an inscription that reads, "Here is the land where life is written in water." The battle over the use of water from the Colorado River continues to be a major issue in seven western states. Chapter 2 describes the interstate compact governing the water's usage among states; within states, the water conflicts are among agriculture, energy projects, and economic development.

Finally, nonrenewable natural resources are unevenly distributed across the states. Coal is found in large quantities in Kentucky, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and the surrounding states, and in the West, particularly in New Mexico and Wyoming. Oil is located in the South and Southwest, primarily Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas, and in Alaska. The unequal distribution of minerals and other natural resources has major consequences for state governments. One favorable consequence for a state that has such resources is that it can levy a **severance tax** on these resources when they are extracted and consumed by citizens of other states or countries.

The states in which the severance tax looms largest are Alaska, North Dakota, and Wyoming. Wyoming has no income tax; interest from a mineral trust fund and severance taxes on natural gas, coal, and oil furnished 39 percent of its 2014 budget (McManmon and Nülle 2016). Its severance tax projections have now been revised downward due to the

4. The GSP is the gross market value of the goods and services attributable to the labor and property located in a state. It is the state equivalent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

decline in oil and gas prices. North Dakota, which does have an income tax and a sales tax, collected 54 percent of its tax revenues from the severance tax on oil and coal in 2014. The oil boom had presented policy makers with \$1 billion surpluses, but by 2015, the decline in oil prices had led to a \$1.5 billion decrease in severance tax revenue (McManmon and Nülle 2016). Alaska is even more dependent upon its oil reserves: 72 percent of its state tax revenues in 2014 were from severance taxes on oil and natural gas. By 2015, the state received almost no income from this source. The state has no individual income tax or general sales tax and has even been able to grant each citizen an annual dividend, amounting to \$1,884 in 2014. By 2016, all of the tax options were on the table, even the annual dividend. These states are discovering the drawbacks of relying too heavily on the severance tax. Now they must make politically painful adjustments in their tax structures.

### THE ECONOMIC CONTEXT

The economic performance of a state depends on its natural resources, available human capital, and national and international economic trends.

#### *State Economic Activities*

The land and its natural resources initially determine the type of economic activities that will prosper in different regions of the country. Because of regions' different resource bases, they concentrate on different economic activities, and they enjoy different levels of prosperity. As measured by GSP, in 2016, California had, by far, the largest economy, at \$2.46 trillion, followed by Texas, New York, Florida, and Illinois (Chantrill 2016). Florida's economy, the fourth largest, was less than half the size of California's. Vermont had the smallest state economy, at \$31.1 billion.

State economies vary not only in size but also in which economic sector is most important and in the major goods or services produced. Many of these variations result from the natural resources of each state—that is, minerals, timber, soil, and access to waterways. Over time, however, sectors of the economy based on natural resources have declined in dollar value and in employment relative to the rest of the economy. Indeed, in 2005, for the first time, the services sector of the private economy was larger than the goods sector in all states. (Each of these broad sectors contains many different industries.) In 2014, only Wyoming had a goods sector larger than its service sector. By 2014, in only nine states was manufacturing still the largest single industry within the goods sector, clearly less dominant than in the past (calculated from data in U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis 2015a). Meanwhile, natural resources is still the leading industry in five states: Wyoming, West Virginia, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and Alaska.

As noted earlier, the services sector is now larger than the goods sector in all but one state. The major example of a service industry is the finance industry, which is tops in thirty-two states, including the financial capitals of New York and nearby Connecticut and in the popular business havens of Delaware and South Dakota. Because the latter states offer especially favorable regulatory conditions for the banking and insurance industries, banks locate their subsidiary operations there. But finance is also the number-one industry in less

likely states, such as Arkansas, Idaho, Maine, and Montana. Four states—Florida, Hawaii, Mississippi, and New Mexico—have government as their largest sector. All of these states have substantial federal military installations within their borders, and they have either senior citizens or poorer citizens who receive federal assistance of different types. The shift from a goods-based economy to a services-based economy is just one example of the larger changes in the national and international economies. Because of the globalization of capitalism, states are increasingly feeling the effects of surges and declines in prices, labor markets, and exchange rates thousands of miles away. States' economic fortunes in a global economy depend on their abilities to export products and their capacities to attract direct foreign investment. Chapter 16 describes states' efforts to attract foreign, as well as domestic, investors and highlights the political salience of exports in a global economy.

International trade—the import and export of goods and services—is an important and integral part of the economy today. In 2015, the exports of goods and services to other countries amounted to \$180.3 billion, a hefty sum (U.S. Census Bureau 2016). Texas, California, Washington, New York, and Illinois led in export-related goods, but other states varied in their success in finding export markets for their products. Of the top-five exporters listed above, the number-one product exported for California and Washington was civilian aircraft, engines, and parts. For Texas, its top export product was petrol oil and bituminous minerals while Illinois's top export was light oils and the preparation of petroleum. New York's top export was prepared nonindustrial diamonds (U.S. Census Bureau 2016). These facts are revealing: Amid the political discussion of international trade pacts and U.S. jobs lost to cheap foreign labor, jobs created by the manufacture of exports for foreign markets are often overlooked. Many state economies depend, in part, on the buying power of consumers far away.

Because of the globalized economy, export industries are a source of higher wages, and state leaders actively seek international trading opportunities. Recognizing that international trade agreements can have profound impacts on their economies, states are working together to influence U.S. trade policy and especially the actions of the U.S. trade representative. Thirteen states have international trade offices located in various foreign countries. The state of Washington, for a long time, has had its own state trade representative to represent it in trade negotiations; more recently, it has been joined by Minnesota. Both Oregon and Florida deploy their trade representatives in overseas locations to bring business to their respective states. And Maine has a Citizen Trade Policy Commission, established by law in 2004, to assess the effects of international trade policies and agreements on the state's laws, working conditions, and business climate.

States along the borders of Mexico and Canada have special ties to the international economy. Trade relations among all three countries are governed, to some extent, by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). A series of other international agreements attempt to coordinate border policies on pollution, wildlife, fishing, treatment of disease, law enforcement, and so on. Mexico is particularly important to Texas; after a new governor is elected in Texas, he or she usually visits Mexico even before visiting Washington, D.C. Florida's economy is buoyed by foreign investment and merchandise trade with Latin

America. In fact, Miami has long been called the economic and commercial capital of Latin America (Cohen and Barnes 2015, 407).

### *State Personal Income*

The net effect of states' natural resources, national and international economic trends, and the flow of federal funds is reflected in states' wealth, usually measured by **per capita personal income**. Because this figure includes an individual's income from all sources, a state's growth in personal income is a good index of how well its economy is doing. The states vary significantly in personal income. In 2014, Connecticut, the top state, at \$64,864, was significantly ahead of last-place Mississippi, at \$34,431 (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis 2015b). Personal income is an important constraint on state programs because wealth determines what a state can afford to do on its own to meet its people's needs. States such as Mississippi do not have a lot of taxable income. States at the top of the income ranking, such as Connecticut, have a larger tax base and can afford to offer their citizens more generous benefits. The irony is, of course, that Mississippi's needs are greater than Connecticut's. But, as described in Chapter 2, federal aid reduces these interstate disparities to some extent.

State leaders do not simply "convert" economic wealth into expenditures for public programs. Indeed, there are too many anomalies in state wealth and expenditure rankings for simple conversion to be a convincing explanation for state expenditure and policy differences. Moreover, the economic performances of states change over time. Some develop new fiscal capacities that might be tapped by government; the fiscal capacities of others shrink, leaving them with overdeveloped public sectors in the eyes of many of today's conservatives. Politics shapes how economic resources will be translated into public policies. In the next section, I introduce some of the political dimensions that structure how states use their economic resources.

## THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

The broader political context that influences state policy making includes long-standing historical and cultural patterns, contemporary public opinion and ideology, and national political trends.

### *Historical Differences*

Many of the political differences in states today—differences in voter turnout and party competition, for example—are long-standing ones. The South, in particular, has had a different political history than the rest of the country—and not just since 1865. Some of the South's differences from other regions of the country are rooted in distinct economic interests. But another important historical difference is the South's political culture. It shapes the habits, perspectives, and attitudes that influence present-day political life.

Daniel Elazar (1984) has written extensively on how state political cultures have shaped the operations of state political systems. He has argued that the United States shares a general political culture that is, in turn, a synthesis of three major subcultures: individualist,

moralist, and traditionalist. The values of each subculture were brought to this country by early settlers and spread unevenly across the country as various ethnic and religious groups moved westward. Along the way, these migration streams deposited their political values, much like the ice age left permanent geological traces on the Earth. Today's differences, according to Elazar, can be traced to the bedrock political values and perspectives of the earliest settlers, who, among other things, created the original state constitutions.

The **individualist political culture** emphasizes the marketplace. Government has a limited role, primarily to keep the marketplace working properly. Bureaucracy is viewed negatively as a deterrent to the spoils system. Corruption in office is tolerated because politics is thought to be a dirty business. Political competition tends to be partisan and oriented toward gaining office rather than toward dealing with issues.

In distinct contrast is the **moralist political culture**, which emphasizes the commonwealth. In this view, government's role is to advance the public interest or the good of the commonwealth. Thus, government is a positive force in the lives of citizens. Politics revolves around issues; corruption is not tolerated. Politics is a matter of concern to all citizens; it is therefore a citizen's duty to participate in elections.

The third subculture, the **traditionalist political culture**, is rooted in an ambivalent attitude toward the marketplace and the commonwealth. The purpose of government, under this philosophy, is to maintain the existing social and economic hierarchy. Politicians hail from society's elite, who have almost a familial obligation to govern. Ordinary citizens are not expected to participate in political affairs or even to vote.

Elazar's cultural theory has intuitive appeal because it is consistent with general impressions about state differences in political values, style, and tone and provides a historical explanation for differences. More than a hundred studies have tested his predictions about political and policy differences among the three subcultures and found some support for them. Internal migration patterns between regions may either reinforce or override the cultural base laid by the first settlers. If the population influx is quite large, the cultural base may be transformed into a different one. Florida, for example, was first transformed by northerners moving there to retire and, more recently, by immigrants from Cuba and other countries in Latin America. Only pockets of traditionalism remain in Florida today. States with stable populations, such as North Dakota, remain relatively pure examples of their subcultures.

#### *Contemporary Differences*

Others argue that historical cultural differences are not as important as contemporary differences in explaining public policy. Rodney Hero and Caroline Tolbert (1996; Hero 1998, 2007) argue that present-day patterns of racial and ethnic diversity are more influential than political subcultures derived from settlement patterns of the past. They show that states vary in their policy choices according to the heterogeneity of their populations. Joel Lieske (2010) combines the ideas of both Elazar and Hero and Tolbert; he used multiple measures of racial and ethnic origins, religious affiliations, and social structure in 2000 to classify all U.S. counties into eleven subcultural categories. He then used these categories to predict social and



political behavior and state performance in various areas, making claims for their predictive superiority over the measures of previous researchers. As shown in Figure 1-2, Lieske groups his eleven subcultures into five larger categories used by Elazar and Hero. He places three subcultures—the Nordic, Mormon, and Anglo-French—under the *moralist* category used by Elazar that mostly arose out of a core Puritan culture. His *individualist* category, similar to that of Elazar, embraces two relatively homogeneous subcultures—the Germanic and Heartland—that represent the geographic extensions of German and Dutch settlers. The *pluralistic* category includes two culturally diverse subcultures—the Rurban and Global—that represent the outgrowth of internal migratory streams and the arrival of a third global wave of immigration since 1965. His *bifurcated* category (one of Hero’s categories) encompasses two culturally diverse subcultures—the Border and Blackbelt—that represent the geographic extensions of early waves of British immigration and the subsequent migration of their African slaves to the Upland South. Finally, the *separatist* category includes two other bifurcated subcultures—the Native American and Latino—that have been the most protective of their native language and cultural traditions.

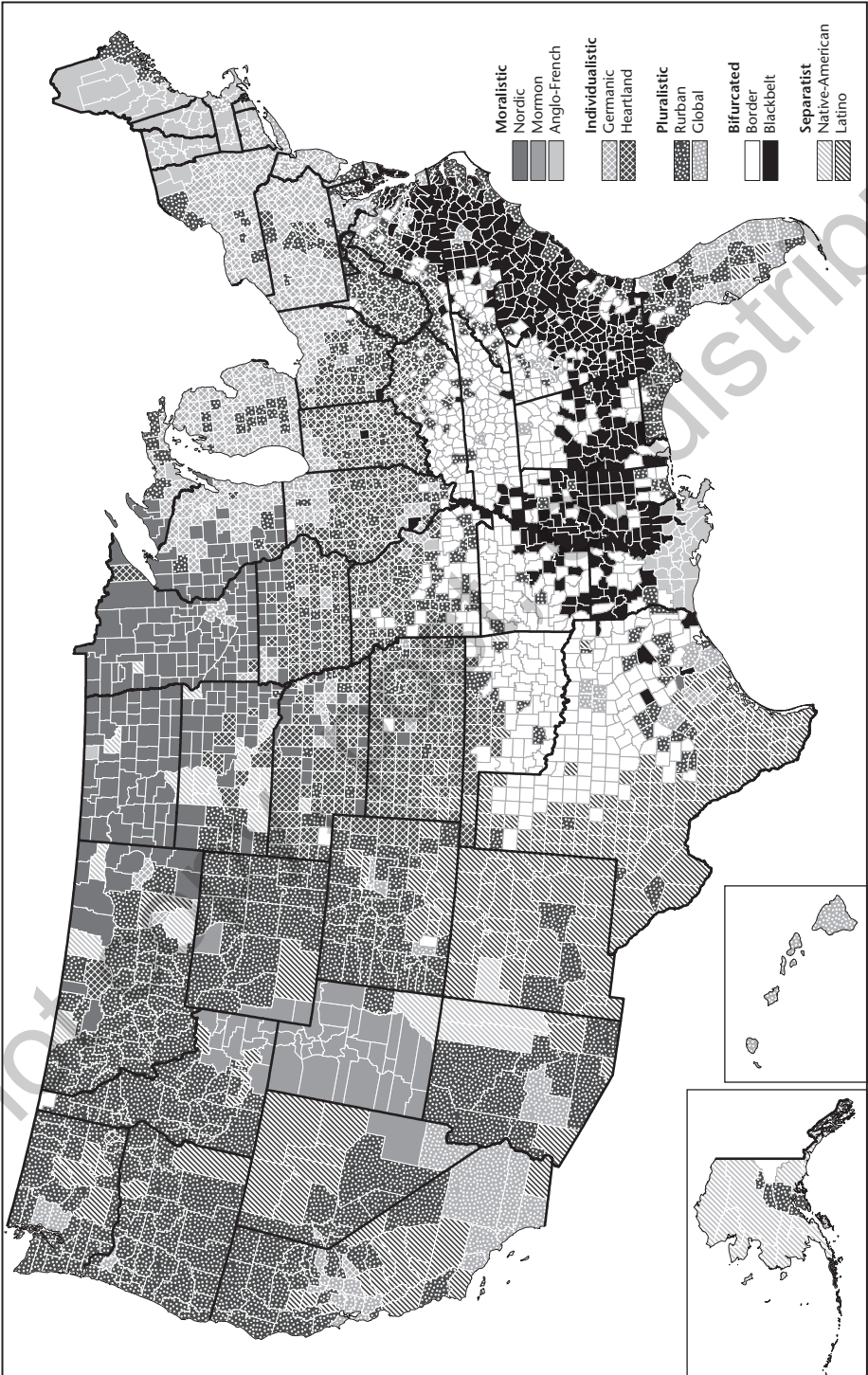
Another contemporary difference in states’ political makeup is public opinion. Public opinion encompasses the attitudes of individual citizens toward public issues: Should their state expand the Medicaid program to more adults? Expand charter schools and the use of vouchers? Allow transgender people equal access to public bathroom facilities? The cultural thesis outlined previously suggests that public opinion on these and other issues should vary by state, and indeed, it does. An even more important question is whether state policy differences are related to (or caused by) differences in public opinion (see Chapter 5 for a fuller discussion of public opinion).

Erikson, Wright, and McIver, in *Statehouse Democracy* (1993), pioneered a method for comparing public opinion across states by pooling CBS News/*New York Times* telephone surveys from 1976 to 1988 to obtain measures of citizen ideology and party identification by state. I use a similar and more recent citizen ideology measure constructed from the Annenberg National Election Surveys of 2000 and 2004 and annual Cooperative Congressional Election Studies (CCES) from 2006 to 2014 by Chris Tausanovitch and Christopher Warshaw (2013) to predict policy differences among the states. Recall the policy liberalism index presented in Table 1-1 earlier in the chapter. The index is constructed so that 1 indicates the state making the most liberal choices (California) and 50 indicates the state making the most conservative policy choices (South Dakota). Given the direction of the two scales, one might expect citizen ideology and the policy liberalism index to be positively correlated.

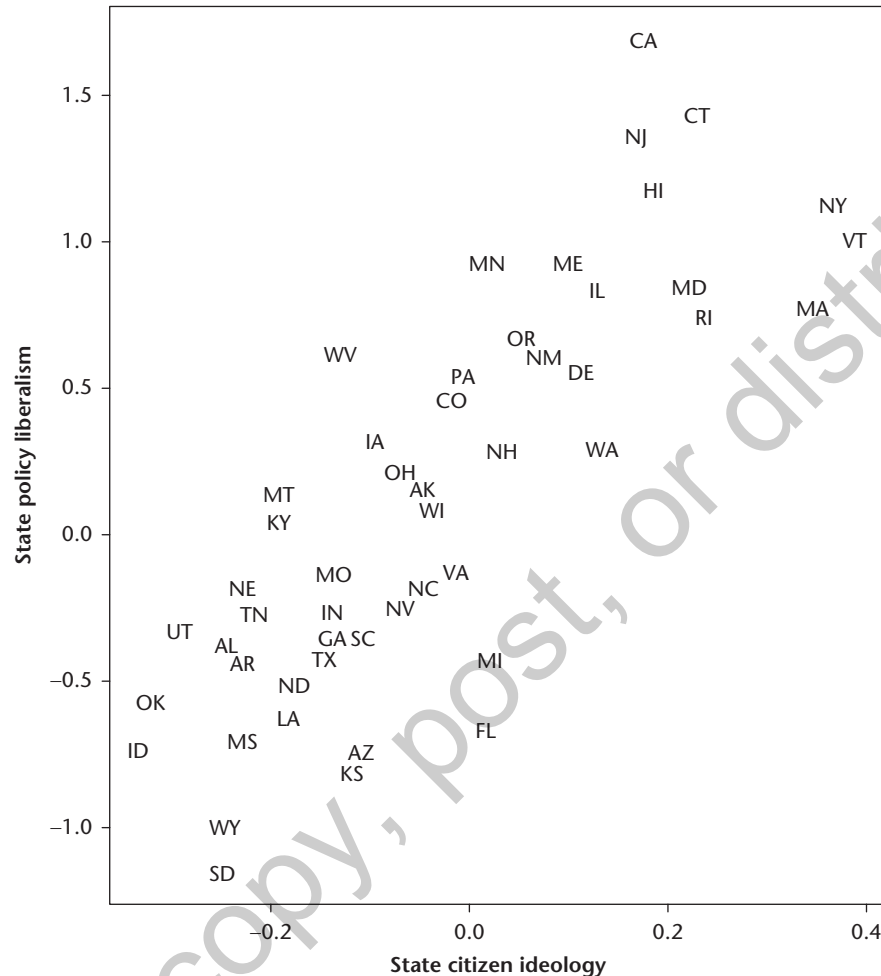
Figure 1-3 reveals that, indeed, there is a positive relation between the two measures: As states increase in liberal ideology (move to the right along the  $x$ -axis), they make more liberal policy choices (move upward along the  $y$ -axis). The correlation between the two scales is 0.81, nearly the same as the 0.82 correlation reported by Erikson, Wright, and McIver (1993) for a different policy index measured in the 1980s. Of course, other factors besides public opinion must be included in a properly specified model, but a previous measure of citizen ideology also held up quite well statistically against other variables (Gray et al. 2004).



Figure 1-2 Regional Political Subcultures by County, 2010



SOURCE: Calculated by the author from 2010 data supplied by Joel Lieske. Joel Lieske, "The Changing Regional Subcultures of the American States and the Utility of a New Cultural Measure," *Political Research Quarterly* 63 (2010): 538-52.

**Figure 1-3** Citizen Ideology and Policy Liberalism in the States

SOURCE: Constructed by the author. Policy liberalism index is taken from Table 1-1. Citizen ideology is taken from Chris Tausanovitch and Christopher Warshaw, "Measuring Constituent Policy Preferences in Congress, State Legislatures, and Cities," *Journal of Politics* 75 (2013): 330-42. Data available at [www.americanideologyproject.com](http://www.americanideologyproject.com).

In addition to public opinion, states' political organizations are crucial to policy making. This book examines, in detail, two types of organizations: political parties, treated in Chapter 3, and interest groups, discussed in Chapter 4. The chapter authors describe how parties and groups function and how they differ from state to state.

#### *National Forces*

The states' political contexts are also conditioned by national political trends. These external forces have an effect on the linkages between politics and policy within states. A classic article by John Chubb (1988) found that presidential and senatorial coattails, voter

turnout surges and declines, and national economic conditions have all affected the outcomes of state legislative races since 1940. For example, in 2006, when voters showed their wrath over the Iraq War by turning the Republican Congress out of office in Washington, D.C., they also looked favorably upon Democrats at the state level. Governors were elected in thirty-six states: fifteen Republicans and twenty-one Democrats. Republican-controlled legislatures fell to fifteen. In an analysis of those 2006 gubernatorial elections, Adam Brown (2010) found that Democratic voters whose governor was a Democrat approved of their governor's performance and blamed the unemployment problem on President George W. Bush. Republican voters in the same state blamed the state's Democratic governor, not President Bush, for putting people out of work. Brown called this attribution of blame *divided federalism*. Thus, national political trends may indirectly affect state government through their impact on state elections.

Interest organizations sometimes try to coordinate multistate campaigns in order to achieve their legislative or electoral objectives, perhaps by placing statutory initiatives or constitutional amendments on state electoral ballots. After the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled in early 2004 that the state's ban on same-sex marriage violated the state constitution, the traditional-marriage movement sought to rewrite state constitutions so that state judges could not find a right to same-sex marriage in state fundamental documents, even if state statutes had already defined marriage in traditional terms. By 2012, they had succeeded in getting thirty-one states to define marriage in their constitutions so as to preclude same-sex marriage. In June 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015), ended this movement when it ruled that the fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples by the Fourteenth Amendment. Besides these forces, other national political factors may affect the states. One such factor is the hierarchy of national offices that exists in the United States. As Schlesinger (1966, 1991) has documented, there is a regular career progression from state legislative and other entry-level offices to the governorship to Washington-based positions, such as senator, vice president, and president. Most people who achieve high office in Washington have "worked their way up" through this office hierarchy. Former governors Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush are four examples of this phenomenon, which Chapter 8 describes in more detail.

These are but a few of the ways in which national political trends may affect state politics. Together with the historical and contemporary political differences among states, they structure how states handle their problems. Fiscal resources offer only the opportunity to solve problems; political leadership must still be used to confront the problems.

#### **GOVERNING IN UNCERTAIN TIMES**

Today, the fifty states face a number of challenges, the most daunting of which are the effects of prolonged financial austerity. However, leaders differ in their assessments of how those challenges ought to be met. In the twenty-four states in which Republicans enjoyed party control of the legislature and the governorship in early 2016, they honored campaign pledges not to raise taxes, often by enacting deep spending cuts and sharply lowering taxes to

balance budgets. These cuts hit health care (especially Medicaid), unemployment benefits, higher education, and even K–12 education, a previously sacrosanct budgetary item (Gramlich 2011). At the same time they expanded charter schools and voucher systems. A particular target was the public workforce, including teachers; at least three states—Indiana, Ohio, and Wisconsin—passed laws to limit collective-bargaining rights in the public sector. Republican-controlled states enacted a number of social-policy measures, including antiabortion laws and anti-immigrant statutes, as well as voter ID measures.

By the same token, the effects of party control could also be seen in the seven states held completely by Democrats in 2016. Some passed gun control measures while Connecticut's Democrats increased taxes and required private companies to provide sick leave for workers, a first in the nation. Rhode Island established paid family leave. Thus, the impact of party control was very clear in the recent legislative sessions.

Two states under split party control—Illinois and Pennsylvania—did not produce a budget. It happened in 2015–2016 because party leaders—a Democratic governor in Pennsylvania facing a Republican legislature and a Republican governor in Illinois facing a Democratic legislature—could not reach an agreement on the budget. This happens nearly every session, but this time, both states went eight months into fiscal year 2016, which is unusual. Pennsylvania reached a budget deal well before Illinois did, where public schools and universities limped to the end of the 2016 school year having to make one bad decision after another as layoffs mounted. In that sense, most of the other states seemed better able to handle the challenge of austerity than the federal government, in which one political party controlled the Congress and another party controlled the presidency in 2016. By taking a close look at smaller political systems, such as the American states, this book will reveal how politics in America operates.

#### KEY TERMS

gross state product (GSP), 15	policy liberalism, 3
individualist political culture, 19	public policies, 5
moralist political culture, 19	severance tax, 15
<i>National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius</i> , 2	tax burden, 3
per capita personal income, 18	traditionalist political culture, 19

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## SUGGESTED READINGS

### *Print*

- Cohen, Richard E., with James A. Barnes. 2015. *The Almanac of American Politics 2016*. Bethesda, MD: Columbia Books and Information Services. An annual publication that offers a brief description of each state's political history and current issues and a profile of each state's governor, senators, and members of Congress.
- Lieske, Joel. 2010. "The Changing Regional Subcultures of the American States and the Utility of a New Cultural Measure." *Political Research Quarterly* 63 (September): 538–52. Offers new political subculture categories based on 2000 census data.
- ProQuest. 2015. *ProQuest Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2015*. A commercial source of the discontinued *US Statistical Abstract of the United States*, containing statistics on many aspects of state demography, economy, and policy.
- Wright, Ralph. 2005. *Inside the Statehouse: Lessons from the Speaker*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press. A first-hand account of what life in the legislature is really like.

### *Internet*

- Governing*. [www.governing.com](http://www.governing.com). The site for *Governing* magazine; provides a variety of other state politics content, including a daily blog and newsletter.
- Newspaper Association of America. <http://newspaperlinks.com/home.cfm>. A source of links to all machine-readable newspapers in the country, organized by state.
- Pew Hispanic Center. <http://pewhispanic.org>. A center that archives surveys, statistics, and other research information on Latinos, especially immigrants and their attitudes and politics.
- Stateline.org. [www.stateline.org](http://www.stateline.org). Funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, Stateline.org provides in-depth coverage of state government and public policy. The content, which is organized by state and by policy topic, is updated daily.