



Deliberate Discretion?: The Institutional Foundations of Bureaucratic Autonomy (Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics)

By John D. Huber, Charles R. Shipan

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The laws that legislatures adopt provide a crucial opportunity for elected politicians to define public policy. But the ways politicians use laws to shape policy vary considerably across polities. In some cases, legislatures adopt detailed and specific laws in an effort to micromanage policymaking processes. In others, they adopt general and vague laws that leave the executive and bureaucrats substantial discretion to fill in the policy details. What explains these differences across political systems, and how do they matter? The authors address these issues by developing and testing a comparative theory of how laws shape bureaucratic autonomy. Drawing on a range of evidence from advanced parliamentary democracies and the U.S. States, they argue that particular institutional forms--such as the nature of electoral laws, the structure of the legal system, and the professionalism of the legislature--have a systematic and predictable effect on how politicians use laws to shape the policymaking process.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Huber and Shipan's work is an impressive theoretical and empirical undertaking of great relevance to students of American and comparative politics alike." *Comparative Politics*

"This remarkable book tackles a difficult question in comparative politics: why, when, and how (and how far) legislative majorities manage bureaucracies. The authors' answers combine the rigor of a formal model of delegation with the sweep that comes from arguments that can be applied both to the institutions of U.S. states and many parliamentary democracies. The results' persistent theme that legislators control each other by controlling bureaucracy is rich with political insight into situations arising in coalitions and divided government, an exemplar of how systematic comparative analysis can pry important empirical implications from theoretical models." Jim Alt, Harvard University

"This book, by two of the most exciting scholars in comparative politics, is a landmark text in the field of delegation and legislative-executive relations. No other book on this subject is as theoretically advanced, as methodologically sophisticated, and as empirically comprehensive." Simon Hix, London School of Economics and Political Science

"This remarkable book tackles a difficult question in comparative politics: why, when, and how (and how far) legislative majorities manage bureaucracies. The authors' answers combine the rigor of a formal model of delegation with the sweep that comes from arguments that can be applied both to the institutions of U.S. states and many parliamentary democracies. The results' persistent theme that legislators control each other by controlling bureaucracy is rich with political insight into situations arising in coalitions and divided government, an exemplar of how systematic comparative analysis can pry important empirical implications from theoretical models." Jim Alt, Harvard University

"This book makes Huber and Shipan the first to extend and contextualize principal-agent theory into a wide range of cross-national comparisons. Add to that their ingenious empirical tests of their propositions, and we have an indispensable book for anyone interested in when politicians delegate authority to bureaucrats, and with what consequences." Frances Rosenbluth, Yale University

"A debate in political theory rages on and off in political science concerning the extent to which a legislature should delegate authority to bureaucratic agencies. How detailed should statutory instructions be? Huber and Shipan offer a fresh and truly comparative approach to the topic of legislative delegation. By examining in specific policy contexts how political systems, whether American states or European nations, delegate, *Deliberate Discretion?* allows a systematic comparison of both how delegation is accomplished and what effect on legislative goals it has. As a consequence, the book is a major contribution to debates about the proper location of policy-making authority. It should be read by Americanists, comparativists, and public policy specialists." Bryan D. Jones, Director, Center for American Politics and Public Policy, University of Washington, Seattle

"[I]nsightful.... The study reports an impressive array of empirical data analysis and is based on research in the US (federal and state level), the UK, France, Italy, Denmark, and other countries. Highly recommended." Choice

"If you want to read just one book on bureaucratic oversight, read *Deliberate Discretion*. Synthesizing the most important insights of a vast literature on delegation, this book also breaks new ground, both theoretically and methodologically. Its scope is extraordinary. John Huber and Charles Shipan's meticulous efforts set new standards for research on delegation and agency policy making...a first-rate piece of scholarship...Clearly written and carefully constructed, this book is a joy to read. I suspect it will be assigned in graduate seminars for some time to come." *Congress & The Presidency*

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