

THE MIDSOUTH POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW

VOLUME 5, 2001

The Midsouth Political Science Review
is copyright by
The Arkansas Political Science Association

HISTORY, POLITICAL CULTURE, AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM IN ARKANSAS

Gary D. Wekkin and Donald E. Whistler
University of Central Arkansas

Abstract

This research uses data from Arkansas history and from two recent surveys to analyze the failed efforts at constitutional reform. It finds that despite the fact that Arkansans (like other Americans) have recently lost some confidence in the national government while at the same time somewhat increasing their trust in state and local government, Arkansans retain a pervasive distrust of the state's economic and political elites. It is this distrust of elites that informs resistance to wholesale changes in the state's constitution that would have increased the legal authority of state government. On the other hand, when convinced that a specific constitutional change is in the public interest, Arkansans have approved 75 amendments to the state's 1874 constitution. Thus, enactment of an entirely new constitution awaits convincing the Arkansas public that with current constitutional restrictions lifted, Arkansas' economic and political elites would use the state's enhanced legal authority for the long-term public good.

INTRODUCTION

If democratic political institutions are to be supported over time, citizens must believe that they are organized and operated properly. Easton (1965) refers to this as diffuse support for a political system.

An important indicator of whether citizens support their political institutions is the *trust* they express in the political institutions. Yet Americans have always had a principled mistrust of government. The 1787 Constitution-makers constructed national government and the compound republic (federalism) on the premise that "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely" (Lord Acton); but at the same time, they understood that government is necessary and that it can be institutionalized by reason predicated on human experience (Ostrom, 1987, 70). That is, government must be given enough power to govern, but not enough to tyrannize. Properly limited by internal checks and by regular accountability to voters, government can be more beneficial than harmful to human well-being. Thus, popular trust in government is an indicator of the public's evaluation of the effectiveness and the accountability of government to the governed.

Over time, general trust in government has, along with trust in the particular levels of government within the federal system, gone through several historical stages. The initial stage, which we could style the First Republic, was one of principled distrust of government but acquiescence in its ineluctable necessity, after the worldview modeled by the Constitutional drafters and their Anti-Federalist doubters. This stage would survive from the Federal period

until the expansive transformations of the role of the Washington government during the New Deal.

A second stage, consisting of heightened trust in the national (federal) government and lessened trust in the state governments, began in the early 1930s and culminated in the Great Society of the mid-1960s. This period of confidence in the national government, which coincides with the period that Neustadt styles the modern presidency (i.e., the introduction of Keynesian political economy, intergovernmentalist domestic policy, and internationalist foreign policy), is one of not only numerous successes for the Washington government (e.g., the New Deal, World War II, selective incorporation of the Bill of Rights, the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts) but numerous embarrassments for the state governments, as well (e.g., segregation, mal-apportionment, rampant organized crime, eco-pollution), all of which subsequently gravitated onto the agenda of organs of the national government. Research performed in the 1960s thus showed trust in the national government to be roughly twice as great as that in the states or their local appendages (Black, Kovenock and Reynolds, 1974; Jennings and Niemi, 1974).¹ But such trust in the national government began to plummet in the 1970s,² as the Vietnam War, the bureaucratic expansion fueled by 'Great Society' programs, the taxes and inflation fueled by the effort to have both guns *and* butter, and Watergate eroded evaluations of the national government's effectiveness, cost efficiency, and accountability to voters (Ginsberg, 1982: 236-237; Nye et al., 1997).

A third stage, rooted in the 'post-Watergate climate of morality' of the 1970s and still prevalent at the turn of the century, finds Americans happier with their state governments--which have developed greater institutional capacity to perform expanded governing tasks since the upgrading of governors' offices in the 1950s-1960s (Sabato, 1983), legislatures in the 1960s-1970s (Rosenthal, 1974), and fiscal and institutional capacities (ACIR, 1986)--than with the national government, which has subjected the public to a seemingly never-ending cycle of partisan scandal-mongering (Watergate, Abscam, Koreagate, Iran-Contra, Whitewater, Monica and Bill, etc.) and gridlock that accounts for not only declining trust but declining voter participation, as well (Ginsberg and Shefter, 1990). State governments are now perceived to be capable of delivering governing services with greater cost efficiency and responsiveness to voters than would the denizens of the self-absorbed world on the Potomac: asked which level of government they trust "to do a better job running things," 61 percent of a 1995 national sample chose their own state government, while only 24 percent chose the national government (Blendon et al., 1997, 208).

Thus, our historic principled distrust of government has returned, nested within which is the tendency to trust most the levels of government that are closer to the people (Blendon et al., 1997; see also Orren, 1997, 81).

History and Political Culture in the "49th State"

In Arkansas, however, we find a history of state government performance almost calculated to cause inhabitants to look *beyond* state boundaries for trustworthy governance. Victimized since statehood by the Conway-Rector-Sevier-Johnson 'dynasty' of slave-owning cotton-planters (also known as "the Family" or "Sevier's Hungry Kinfolk") who burdened the state with debt following the failure of an economic development scheme involving state-issued

bonds, and then by still more state and local debt as a result of the taxes and land transfer schemes of Gov. Powell Clayton and his cronies under the "Carpetbag Constitution" adopted in 1868, the first thought of Arkansans when Reconstruction ended was to replace that power-centralizing document with one "specifically designed to protect citizens from possible oppression by their own state government" (Blair, 1988, 122). To ensure popular control over government, many offices previously appointive were made elective, terms were reduced from four to two years, maximum salaries for officials from capitol to courthouse were set, the General Assembly was limited to one sixty-day session every other year, and "taxing and spending powers were circumscribed with every prohibitive device imaginable" in the Arkansas Constitution of 1874 (Blair, 1988, 122).

After promulgation of this document a new set of elites ruled, consisting initially of ex-confederates who were soon supplemented by white agrarians, small-town businessmen, lawyers, and agents of out-of-state companies or individuals who owned property in Arkansas (e.g., timber and railroad interests). Their policies aimed chiefly at trying to attract some northern business capital by keeping labor costs, public services, and taxes low, but not so much outside investment that their own political pre-eminence would be threatened. Populist opposition to these policies of the post-Reconstruction elites became endemic among poor farmers in Arkansas, as elsewhere throughout rural America in the last third of the nineteenth century. However, elites in Arkansas, as elsewhere throughout the South, were able to reduce the political potential of these poor whites as well as of poor blacks by means of economic coercion, electoral devices such as poll taxes and the white primary, and *de jure* segregation which impeded biracial coalescence of the poor. This domestic order remained in effect, except for the brief "rule of the rustics" during the administrations of Jeff Davis (1901-1907), until the Great Depression visited even more pervasive hardship upon the have-nots of the state. In response to this emergency, the posture of the delta landholders and business/financial elites who controlled state and local government was to cut services and wait on federal relief programs, disregarding or even dispersing popular protest activities to the contrary (Whistler, forthcoming).

Only when World War II carried a generation of Arkansas GIs beyond the state's boundaries and back, determined to create in their home state the quality of life they had found elsewhere, did the spirit of public service begin to burn brighter than that of self-service among Arkansas' political class. Ex-GIs such as Governor Sid McMath, who cleaned up the organized crime haven of Hot Springs, Governor Francis Cherry, who refused to bow to the interests of the local Democratic machines and was dumped for it, and Governor Orval Faubus, who for a time displayed New Deal tendencies, ran for office to make Arkansas a better place (Donovan et al., 1995). Then Faubus, in an astounding desertion of his own values in order to preserve his political career (Reed 1997), brought on the Little Rock school integration crisis of 1957-59 that would, fairly or not, define Arkansas in the American mind until the Clinton presidency.

Not surprisingly, then, the leading students of contemporary Arkansas political culture have found, based upon a 1982 Arkansas Household Research Panel sample,³ that while Arkansans have the "least faith" in the national government (49.5 percent), followed by local government (25.8 percent) and state government (16.6 percent), they nevertheless select local government (37.7 percent) rather than state government (22.0 percent) as the level in which they have the "most faith."⁴ Indeed, even the national government at 31.0 percent supercedes state government's share of those indicating the level of government in which they have the "most faith" (see Table 1). They conclude from this anomaly that "Presumably state government is less

salient" to Arkansans than either their local government or the national government (Savage and Blair, 1984, 65).

Table 1. Comparative Political Trust of Arkansans, As Measured in 1982 Arkansas Household Panel & 1997 UCA Sample of Central Arkansas High School Seniors.*

1. Which one of the following levels of government do you have the most faith and confidence in?					
SAMPLE YR	LOCAL	STATE	NATIONAL	DONT KNOW	n
1982	37.7%	22.0%	31.0%	9.4%	523
1997	44.8	27.7	27.4	n/a	674
2. Which one of the following levels of government do you have the least faith and confidence in?					
SAMPLE YR	LOCAL	STATE	NATIONAL	DONT KNOW	n
1982	25.8%	16.6%	49.5%	8.0%	523
1997	24.9	19.2	55.9	n/a	687

*Data from 1982 Arkansas Household Panel adapted from Savage & Blair, 1984, 82, Table 18. Data from 1997 UCA Sample adapted from Wekkin & Whistler, 1998, Table 5.

Research by Whistler and Wekkin (1998) based upon a more recent (1997) and larger sample (N=703) of central Arkansas youth found that these distributions of confidence in the different levels of government continued to prevail in Arkansas in the late 1990s. Their sample of 18 year-olds found 55.9 percent identifying the national government as the level in which they had the least confidence, and only 27.4 percent identifying the national government as the level in which they had the most confidence (see Table 1). Clearly, local governments, which are appendages of the states in constitutional doctrine, enjoy much more political support than does the national government in Table 1, and by proportions very similar to those reported in the Arkansas Household Survey of 1982 (Table 1). Where Whistler and Wekkin's results differed from those reported by Savage and Blair is in the somewhat higher level of confidence in state government versus the national government, which is significantly different than the 31.0 to 22.0 percent edge that the national government enjoyed over state government in the 1982 Arkansas Household Survey sample. This turnabout is consistent with survey data throughout the nation that show a similar refocusing of Americans' emphasis upon state and local government (Roeder 1994, 56).

We contend that this ambivalence toward state government is, instead, a logical consequence of being socialized within a national political culture that distrusts government in general, conjoined with a mutative state political subculture grown accustomed to the dismal legacy of state governmental performance summarized above. While most Arkansans may not be able to cite chapter and verse of their state's history of class division and state governmental indifference, they nonetheless have undergone prolonged exposure to a populist atmosphere of distrust of native political elites, and therefore insist on maintaining constitutional limits upon the power of state government over their lives.

Our argument is that the continuing reluctance of Arkansans to replace the constraining constitution of 1874 reflects, in part, this history of dismal governance. Since its adoption, Arkansas voters have firmly rejected every attempt at wholesale reform of that constitution and the limited government that it allows. The fruits of state constitutional conventions in 1918, 1970 and 1978 were rejected at the polls (the latter vote actually occurred in 1980) by margins of 61 to 39 percent (Terral 1921, 104), 57.4 to 42.6 percent (Ledbetter et al., 1972, 221), and 62.7 to 37.3 percent (Blair 1988, 128), respectively; and Governor Jim Guy Tucker's 1995 call for a mini-convention of 26 appointed legislators who would consider "limited" constitutional reform

was defeated on 12 December 1995 by a resounding 80 to 20 percent of the electorate (O'Neal 13 December 1995).

This string of defeats is conventionally explained in the literature of Arkansas politics as occurring because of interest groups trying to preserve their vested interests by investing in publicity campaigns aimed at exciting public fears of tax increases, bloated government bureaucracy, etc. During the campaign to ratify the 1970 draft constitution, county judges opposed ratification out of fear of loss of administrative power to newly strengthened county legislatures, chancery judges resisted out of fear of consolidation with courts of law, and realtors raised the specter of increases in property taxes (Blair, 1988, 130). Liquor dealers fearing loss of their price monopoly on liquor, bond buyers and out-of-state land investors fearing various tax increases, and pro-gambling interests in Hot Springs financed an opposition advertising campaign (Ledbetter et al., 1972, 184), a principal component of which warned that the proposed new constitution "provides 22 new ways to increase your taxes" (Blair, 1988, 130); see also Meriwether, 1971). In 1980, the Arkansas Education Association feared loss of independence (from the Governor's Office) for the Department of Education, organized labor feared that the state's 10 percent usury limit would be lifted, fundamentalists feared that revision of the constitutional equal protection clause would facilitate backdoor adoption of equal rights for women--and, of course, everyone was susceptible to the fear that higher taxes would be the inevitable result of modernizing and strengthening the state government (Blair, 1988, 130).

The recent overwhelming (four-to-one against) electoral repudiation of Governor Tucker's 1995 call for a mini-convention of 26 appointed legislators who would consider "limited" constitutional reform illustrates that popular resistance to constitutional reform continues to exist in Arkansas despite the numerous socioeconomic transformations presently underway in the state since 1980, and grows even stronger (by nearly 20 percent) at the prospect of a convention dominated by a few hand-picked legislative elites, despite the promise of a "limited" agenda of change.

Problem Statement

Based upon an objective review of the pace of socioeconomic change in Arkansas and the limited institutional capacity of Arkansas state government to match that pace, one might expect, political culture aside for a moment, that Arkansans would support constitutional reform to bring about greater state government capacity to cope with the rate of change in the 21st century. The population growth and development of the "collar counties" surrounding Little Rock, the even larger population and economic boom in the state's northwest corner, the state's central location within the strategic Midsouth, and its position astride the major rail and highway arterials linking eastern Canada, the northeastern United States, and NAFTA partner Mexico are bringing unprecedented economic and social diversification, along with overcrowded roads and freeways. Midwestern retirees and Hispanic jobseekers are entering the state in force. Public schools are bursting at the seams even as increasing numbers of Arkansans are choosing private schools or home schooling for their children. These are but a few of the new challenges vying for attention alongside older, familiar problems that never seem to go away, such as prison over-crowding and school funding.

The Arkansas state government, as presently organized, is overmatched by such changing needs and popular demands. Its executive branch, at 52 agencies and 388 boards and commissions (Murphy Commission 1997, 1-8), is too large and unwieldy to lie within the "span

of control" of its chief executive officer (governor), whose appointive, administrative, and legislative powers could use strengthening: at present, the governor has the power to appoint only 21 of the heads of the 52 agencies listed underneath his/her office, must suffer the administration of major policy areas (*viz.*, highways and game and fish) by officials accountable to independent boards, rather than the Governor's Office, and has a line-item veto that can be overridden by a mere majority in both legislative chambers (Weckin 1999). Popular accountability and administrative flexibility of the executive branch is also weakened by the usual plural-executive arrangement of independently-elected constitutional offices (attorney general, secretary of state, treasurer) that could as well be appointed by the governor.⁵ Such problematic institutional arrangements are a standing invitation to constitutional reformers bent on rationalizing the state's institutional capacity to the modern, ever-changing socioeconomic circumstances the state finds itself in.

On the other hand, factoring Arkansas' history and political culture into the equation, it is not so surprising that constitutional reformers should see their proposals come to naught time and again at the polls, for it is not the institutions of government themselves but rather the political elites who inhabit them that are distrusted by the public. Such distrust of elites is explicit not only in the increased margin by which Tucker's mini-convention plan was rejected in 1995, but also in the electorate's passage in 1992, with 60 percent of the vote, of an amendment to the state constitution establishing term limits for all state elected offices.

Distrust of the state's political class can be expected to have survived, rather than abated, since that time as prominent state government officials such as Attorney General Steve Clark (1990), Secretary of State Bill McCuen (1994), and Governor Jim Guy Tucker (1996) have been indicted and convicted, federal prosecutors investigated the possible involvement of Bill and Hillary Clinton in the Whitewater real estate/savings and loan scandal, and several powerful senior state legislators have been indicted and convicted.⁶ A sample taken in May 1996, after Tucker's conviction, found Arkansans listing the "Governor situation" (at 13 percent) as "the single most important issue facing Arkansas today," trailed by crime, education, unemployment, and "corruption/honesty in government" (at 6 percent). Further down the list followed the "Whitewater problem" (in fifteenth place, at 2 percent) and "President Clinton" (twenty-first, at 1 percent) as separate, but perhaps related variants on the broader theme of trust in government (Kieran Mahoney, 30 May 1996). Then, in August 1996, a statewide sample found 46 percent of the respondents agreeing, and 39 percent disagreeing, with the statement that "One party rule by the Democrats in Arkansas has led to corruption and it's time for a change" (Kieran Mahoney, 28 August 1996). Evidence that this continues to be the case is provided by 1999 "Arkansas Poll" results showing that, despite elite commentary assuring us that term limits truncate legislators' experience and increase their dependence on interest group inputs, Arkansans are twice as likely to feel that the "large number of new state legislators" has improved the legislature (30 percent), rather than detracted from its quality (16 percent). Moreover, 65 percent of them approve of continuing to include direct democracy measures (initiatives and referenda) on the ballot (Center for the Study of Representation, November 1999).

Consequently, we argue that there is a politocultural explanation of Arkansans' consistent pattern of rejecting large-scale constitutional reform that has been ignored in the efforts of participants and historians to itemize every interest group that contributed to the defeat of a particular plan. A constant variable that may have figured in each of the four ratification failures

is that popular distrust of political elites struck voters as a reason to retain, not replace, the limited government framework of the 1874 Constitution.

Data and Methods

We cannot travel back in time to verify that Arkansans' opposition to constitutional reform in 1918, 1970, 1980, and 1995 was indeed informed by populist distrust of elites. We can, however, draw useful, if not definitive lessons from existing data that may serve to demonstrate whether contemporary Arkansans' resistance to greater empowerment of governing officeholders is rooted in a condition of ignorance of, or awareness of, the state's antiquated institutional capacity (i.e., executive organizational structure and operating procedures). The data consist of the results of a battery of questions about the powers of the Arkansas Governor's Office that were asked of respondents in a May, 1998 random telephone sample funded by a University of Central Arkansas Foundation grant for general public service research. The sample was random digit dialed and drawn from all extant Arkansas telephone exchanges, with interviews recorded on CATI facilities in the Social Science Microcomputer Laboratory of the University of Central Arkansas. Interviews were conducted by salaried employees with prior telemarketing experience, under the direct supervision of one of the co-authors, who has directed more than 20 telephone surveys (Wekkin 1999). The sample size, at N=433, is slightly larger than that of professional tracking polls, and is broadly representative of the state: although African-Americans are underrepresented at 11 percent of the sample, the distributions for gender, age groups, educational achievement, and partisan orientation of the respondents are quite accurate and well within sampling error.

Findings

The data contain some evidence of popular confusion about the nature of the organization of Arkansas' executive branch. For example, 64 percent of the respondents think that Arkansas has Cabinet-style government, which is not really the case, given the Governor's limited powers of appointment to the very large number of units underneath that office in the state organizational flowchart (see Appendix). Moreover, while 80 percent of the respondents correctly identified the Governor as the chief executive officer of the state government, only one-third of the respondents identified the Governor as "responsible for seeing to it that laws and policies are implemented" (this question was, however, asked **before** respondents were asked, "which state official is the chief executive of the state government?").

However, there also is compelling evidence of opposition to constitutional revision of the executive branch and its powers despite considerable public awareness of the various restrictions upon that branch as presently arranged. The Arkansas public is not unaware of several of the specific structural problems that prevent the Governor's Office from conducting Cabinet-style government (even if they think that the Arkansas Governor does have a Cabinet). For example:

- 65 percent of the telephone sample agreed (and only 23 percent disagreed) that the state's executive branch of 52 agencies were too many for a governor to manage;
- 62 percent agreed (and 23 percent disagreed) that "the governor's power over state agencies should be strengthened in order to keep them responsible to

the public;"

- 69 percent (compared with 26 percent who disagreed) felt that the state's independent highway commission "should...answer to the governor;"
- and 61 percent (as opposed to 29 percent) agreed that the state's independent game and fish commission "should...answer to the governor" (see Appendix for complete data and full text of questions).

However, when subsequently asked "Do you think the state constitution should be amended in order to strengthen the powers of the Governor's Office, reduce the powers, or should they be left as they are," only 23 percent of these same respondents voted for amending the constitution to strengthen the governor's powers, compared to 49 percent who voted for leaving the constitution and the governor's powers there-under alone, and 10 percent who actually wanted to reduce the powers of the office (see Appendix).

More specifically, although 80 percent of the sample correctly identified "the Governor" as the chief executive officer of the state, only 21 percent selected "the Governor" when asked "who should have the responsibility to see to it that...funds are spent as directed," and only 46 percent endorsed the idea that the governor *should* appoint the heads of all of the agencies beneath him in the executive branch. The latter figure is interesting because 63 percent of this same sample believed that the Governor of Arkansas at present has the power to appoint the heads of all 52 of the agencies that are supposed to be accountable to his office, whereas in fact the Governor has the power to appoint the heads of only 12 departments *without* the approval of the state Senate or a state board, the heads of another 9 departments with Senate approval, and the head of one department (AEDC) with the approval of both a board and the Senate.⁷ Obviously, this datum suggests the existence of some public ignorance or confusion about the appointment powers of the Governor; however, it also suggests, when compared to the 46 percent who felt that the Governor *should* have the power to appoint all subordinate managers, that perhaps as many as 17 percent of the respondents might favor constitutional revision to weaken, rather than strengthen, the Governor's appointive powers.

Nor was there very much sentiment for strengthening the Governorship by replacing the Jacksonian concept of an elected plural executive with a gubernatorially-appointed Cabinet. Majorities of 79 percent, 78 percent, 74 percent, and 69 percent, respectively, favored continuing to elect the state attorney general, secretary of state, state treasurer, and state auditor,⁸ rather than filling such posts by gubernatorial appointment (see Appendix). To be sure, such support for electing, rather than appointing, such officials is normal in the Jacksonian-influenced American states--but it should not be forgotten that not long prior to the collection of these data, an Arkansas attorney general and a secretary of state, respectively, had been convicted for defrauding the state during their terms in office. Those events do not seem to have weakened support very much, if at all, for the elected plural executive plan in the Arkansas statehouse.

Finally, the legislative powers of the Governor's Office did not fare much better than the afore-going managerial powers did with the sample respondents, 52 percent of whom agreed with the 1874 Constitution's requirement that a majority vote in both houses of the legislature may override a gubernatorial veto. Only 42 percent felt that it should take more than a mere majority of both chambers to override a gubernatorial veto, and of these only 7 percent would

support the U.S. Constitutional norm of two-thirds of both chambers as the minimum necessary to override a governor's veto.

CONCLUSION

Four times in the century just passed (1918, 1970, 1980, and 1995) Arkansans have rejected wholesale changes in the state's restrictive constitution, a constitution ratified in 1874. Our polling data show continued strong sentiment against lifting the most important of the constitutional restrictions imposed on state government, namely, restrictions on the Governor's legal authority. Moreover, they express this opposition in the face of rapid changes in the socioeconomic situation within the state, and despite the fact that (like Americans generally) Arkansans have recently refocused their trust from the national level of government to the state and local levels.

The governmental inefficiency in Arkansas seems to be viewed not as a reason for replacing or revising the state's archaic Constitution of 1874, but rather as the reason for maintaining it. As long as state government remains disorganized, inefficient, and therefore weak, state officeholders cannot do much harm, regardless of whether their names be Rector, Sevier, and Conway, or Powell and John Clayton, or Clark, McCuen, and Tucker.

Our data strongly support (although do not conclusively prove) the interpretation that the long history of Arkansas' elites governing in their own interests has given rise to a public distrust of its elites, which is probably the key to understanding why Arkansans continue to refuse to approve wholesale constitutional changes. This (along with Democratic Party domination of the General Assembly) also may explain why the very recent publicity-seeking activities of the Arkansas Citizens' Commission to Streamline State Government (aka Murphy Commission) have come to naught. Over the two-year period of 1997-1999, this reform group, consisting mainly of business elites, released numerous studies critical of the growth of state government bureaucracy, state taxation and spending levels, and specific state policy outputs (e.g., Murphy Commission 1997, 1998; Berry 1998; Hy and Weekin 1997; Hy and Veasey 1998; Mazander 1998; Morgan 1998), all in the name of promoting governmental restructuring. Pointing out what is allegedly wrong with state government, however, does not earn any points for reform with Arkansas voters, who see the government's problems not as one of structure but rather as the elites themselves.

Of course, distrust of government is an old anti-federalist theme that is a part of the generic heritage of all Americans, including Arkansans, but distrust of elites is a populist theme that is a part of the specific heritage of Arkansans.⁹ Even so, when convinced that it is in the public interest, Arkansans have been willing to approve specific changes to the 1874 Constitution--they have, after all, approved 75 amendments to it. Before any further attempts at major constitutional reforms are undertaken in Arkansas, professional students of opinion and political culture and political activists should thoroughly understand and take steps to sufficiently counter the legacies of distrust among Arkansans.

REFERENCES

- Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR). 1986. *Measuring State Fiscal Capacity*, 1984 edition. Washington DC: Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, September.
- Berry, S. Keith. 1998. *Taxes and Savings in Arkansas: A Report to the Murphy Commission*. Little Rock, AR: Murphy Commission.
- Black, Merle, David M. Kovenock, and William C. Reynolds. 1974. *Political Attitudes in the Nation and the States*. Chapel Hill, NC: Institute for Research in Social Science.
- Blair, Diane D. 1988. *Arkansas Politics and Government: Do the People Rule?* Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Blendon, Robert J. et al. 1997. "Changing Attitudes in America." In Nye, Joseph S. Jr., Philip D. Zelikow, and David C. King, eds., *Why Americans Don't Trust Government*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: 205-216.
- Center for the Study of Representation. 1999. "Arkansas Poll." [Http://plsc.uark.edu/arkpoll](http://plsc.uark.edu/arkpoll).
- Donavan, Timothy B., Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., and Jeannie M. Wayne, eds. 1995. *The Governors of Arkansas*, 2nd ed. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press.
- Easton, David. 1965. *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*. New York: John Wiley.
- Elazar, Daniel. 1966. *American Federalism: A View from the States*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.
- Finklestein, Arthur J. and Associates. 24 April 1994. *Survey of Arkansas Voters*. Professional consultant report prepared for Republican Party of Arkansas. University of Central Arkansas Archives, Conway AR.
- Ginsberg, Benjamin. 1982. *The Consequences of Consent: Elections, Citizen Control, and Popular Consent*. Reading MA: Addison-Wesley.
- _____ and Martin Shefter. 1990. *Politics by Other Means: The Declining Importance of Elections in America*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hy, Ronald John and R. Lawson Veasey. 1998. *Improving Productivity by Reducing Taxes: A Report to the Murphy Commission*. Little Rock, AR: Murphy Commission.
- Hy, Ronald John and Gary D. Weekin. 1997. *Mandate for Public Education Reform: Arkansans' Attitudes Toward Public Education, Parental Choice, Charter Schools, and Academic Performance Issues. A Report to the (Murphy) Arkansas Citizens' Commission*
-

for Streamlining State Government. Little Rock, AR: Arkansas Policy Foundation, May 1997; 38 pp.

- Jackson, John S. III, Barbara L. Brown, and David Bositis. 1982. "Herbert McCloskey and Friends Revisited: 1980 Republican and Democratic Elites Compared to the Mass Public." *American Politics Quarterly* 10: 158-180.
- Jennings, M. Kent and Richard G. Niemi. 1974. *The Political Character of Adolescence*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Kieran Mahoney Associates. 22 March 1996. *Survey of Arkansas Voters*. Professional consultant report prepared for Republican Party of Arkansas. University of Central Arkansas Archives, Conway AR.
- _____. 30 May 1996. *Survey of Arkansas Voters*. Professional consultant report prepared for Republican Party of Arkansas. University of Central Arkansas Archives, Conway AR.
- _____. 28 August 1996. *Survey of Arkansas Voters*. Professional consultant report prepared for Republican Party of Arkansas. University of Central Arkansas Archives, Conway AR.
- Ledbetter, Calvin R., Jr. 1993. *Carpenter from Conway: George Washington Donaghey as Governor of Arkansas, 1909-1913*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press.
- _____. and George E. Dyer, Robert E. Johnston, Wayne R. Swanson, and Walter H. Nunn. 1972. *Politics in Arkansas: The Constitutional Experience*. Little Rock, AR: Academic Press of Arkansas.
- Maggiotto, Michael A. and Gary D. Weekin. 2000. *Partisan Linkage in Southern Politics: Elites, Voters and Identifiers*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press.
- Mazander, Charles et al. 1998. *The Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department: Improving Performance, Restructuring, and Saving Taxpayer Dollars*. Little Rock, AR: Murphy Commission.
- McCloskey, Herbert, et al. 1960. "Issue Conflict and Consensus among Party Leaders and Followers." *American Political Science Review* 54: 406-427.
- Meriwether, Robert W. 1971. "The Proposed Arkansas Constitution of 1970." *Nebraska Law Review* L, No. 4 (Summer): 600-621.
- Morgan, Charles. 1996. *The Role and Function of State Government in Arkansas*. Little Rock, AR: Murphy Commission.

- Murphy Commission (Arkansas Citizens' Commission to Streamline State Government). 1997. *The Current Structure of State Government in Arkansas: Trends in Growth, Organization, and Spending*. Little Rock, AR: Murphy Commission.
- _____. 1998. *Making Arkansas' State Government Performance Driven and Accountable*. Little Rock, AR: Murphy Commission.
- Nye, Joseph S. Jr., Philip D. Zelikow, and David C. King, eds. 1997. *Why Americans Don't Trust Government*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Orren, Gary. 1997. "Fall from Grace: The Public's Loss of Faith in Government." In Nye, Joseph S. Jr., Philip D. Zelikow, and David C. King, eds., *Why Americans Don't Trust Government*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: 77-107.
- O'Neal, Rachel. 13 December 1995. "Voters Say No to Constitution." *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* (Little Rock, AR), 1A.
- Ostrom, Vincent. 1987. *The Political Theory of a Compound Republic*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Reed, Roy. 1997. "Orval Faubus: Out of Socialism into Realism." In Richard P. Wang and Michael B. Dougan, eds., *Arkansas Politics*. Fayetteville, AR: M and M Press: 352-369.
- Rosenthal, Alan. 1974. *Legislative Performance in the States*. New York: The Free Press.
- Sabato, Larry J. 1983. *Goodbye to Good-Time Charlie: The American Governor Transformed*, 2d ed. Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.
- Savage, Robert L. and Diane D. Blair. 1982. "Arkansans and their Institutions: The Question of Public Confidence Again." *Arkansas Business and Economic Review* 15 (3): 10-14.
- _____. 1984. "Regionalism and Political Opinion in Arkansas: An Exploratory Survey." *Arkansas Political Science Journal* 5: 59-85.
- Terral, Tom J. 1921. *Biennial Report of the Secretary of State, Arkansas*. Little Rock, AR: H. G. Pugh and Co.
- Wekkin, Gary D. 1999. "Hogtied!: The Powers of the Arkansas Governor's Office." Paper presented at annual meeting of the Arkansas Political Science Association, Pine Bluff, AR, 13 February.
- _____ and Donald E. Whistler. 1998. "The Political Socialization of Central Arkansas High School Seniors: Jennings and Niemi Revisited." Paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Arkansas Political Science Association, Russellville, AR, 14 February.
- Whistler, Donald E. Forthcoming. *The Arkansas General Assembly*.
-

APPENDIX: Wording of Question-Items Drawn
from May, 1998 Statewide Random Digit Dialed Sample,
UCA Social Science Microcomputer Laboratory

1. Who do you think is responsible for seeing to it that state laws and policies are implemented?
{open-ended}

"the Governor"	32%
"the Legislature"	22
"the Courts"	5
"Law enforcement officials"	9
"the People"	9
"Other..."	8
"Don't Know"	16
	N = 430

2. "Which state official is the chief executive of the state government?" [*Interviewer: If respondent cannot reply, begin to read response categories to respondent*]

"Governor"	80%
"Lieutenant Governor"	3
"Attorney General"	3
"Secretary of State"	1
"Other..."	1
"Don't Know"	12
	N = 432

3. "Does the Governor have a Cabinet consisting of the heads of the major departments?"

"Yes"	64%
"No"	11%
"Don't Know/Not Sure" (combined)	25
	N = 433

4. "Currently the governor heads an executive branch made up of 52 agencies. Do you think this is too many agencies to manage?"

"Yes"	65%
"No"	23
"Don't Know/Not Sure" (combined)	12
	N = 433

5. "Who do you think appoints the heads of all of these executive agencies?" [Interviewer: Read response categories to respondents]

"The governor appoints all"	63%
"Independent commissions appoint.."	2
"Civil service selects..."	2
"The legislature names..."	4
"A combination of the above picks..."	15
"Don't Know"	14
	N=431

6. "Who do you think SHOULD appoint the heads of these agencies?"

"The governor"	46%
"Independent commissions"	7
"Civil service"	2
"The legislature"	8
"A combination of the above"	23
"Don't know"	15
	N=431

7. "Once the legislature has authorized funds to be spent, who should have the responsibility to see to it that those funds are spent as directed: the governor, or the head of the agency receiving the funds, or the legislators?"

"The Governor"	21%
"The head of the agency"	32
"The legislators"	24
"All of these should be responsible"	15
"Don't know/not sure" (combined)	7
	N = 430

8. "Currently the state's game and fish populations are managed by an independent commission. Should this commission answer to the governor?"

"Yes"	61%
"No"	29
"Don't know"	9
	N=429

9. "State highways are run by an independent commission. Should this commission answer to the governor?"

"Yes"	69%
"No"	26
"Don't know"	5
	N=428

10. "Members of the highway commission are appointed to serve for ten years. Do you think this term in office is too long?"

"Yes"	65%
"No"	30
"Don't know"	5

N=426

11. "Do you think the state constitution should be amended in order to strengthen the powers of the Governor's Office, reduce the powers, or should they be left as they are?"

"Strengthen"	23%
"Reduce"	10
"Leave as is"	49
"Don't know/not sure" (combined)	19

N=424

12. "Do you think that the State Commissioner of Lands should be elected, or appointed by the governor, or chosen some other way, or should the position be eliminated?"

"Elected"	45%
"Appointed by Governor"	14
"Chosen another way"	9
"Eliminate the position"	17
"Don't know/not sure" (combined)	15

N=424

13. "Do you think that the State Treasurer should be elected, or appointed by the governor, or chosen some other way, or should the position be eliminated?"

"Elected"	74%
"Appointed by Governor"	13
"Chosen another way"	7
"Eliminate the position"	3
"Don't know/not sure" (combined)	4

N=424

14. "Do you think that the State Auditor should be elected, or appointed by the governor, or chosen some other way, or should the position be eliminated?"

"Elected"	69%
"Appointed by Governor"	12
"Chosen another way"	9
"Eliminate the position"	5
"Don't know/not sure" (combined)	5

N=424

15. "Do you think that the state Attorney General should be elected, or appointed by the governor, or chosen some other way, or should the position be eliminated?"

"Elected"	79%
"Appointed by Governor"	12
"Chosen another way"	4
"Eliminate the position"	2
"Don't know/not sure" (combined)	3
	N=424

16. "Do you think that the Secretary of State should be elected, or appointed by the governor, or chosen some other way, or should the position be eliminated?"

"Elected"	78%
"Appointed by Governor"	12
"Chosen another way"	3
"Eliminate the position"	3
"Don't know/not sure" (combined)	5
	N=424

17. "Currently it takes a majority vote in both houses of the legislature to override the governor's vetoes. Do you think it should require more than a majority, such as two-thirds of both houses, or remain as is?" [Interviewer: read response categories to respondent]

"Require a majority (remain as is)"	52%
"Require more than majority, but less than two-thirds"	35
"Require two-thirds or more"	7
"Don't know"	6
	N=422

Notes

1. Niemi and Jennings (1974) report that their 1965 sample of 17 year-olds in several American cities found that 74.5 percent had the most confidence in the national government, 13 percent had the most confidence in their states, and 11 percent had the most confidence in their local governments. Youth, however, are typically more idealistic in this regard than adults (Blendon et al., 1997, 208-09). Data from the 1968 Comparative State Elections Project (CSEP), reported in Black, Covenock and Reynolds (1974), indicate that 44 percent of the adult respondents had the most confidence in the national government, 18 percent in the states, and 17 percent in local governments. This rank-order of confidence in the three levels continued to hold firm, although the percentages had changed, in the 1972 NES study, as well (Roeder, 1994, 41).
2. When Niemi and Jennings replicated their study of 17 year-olds in 1973 (the year of televised Watergate hearings, Vice President Spiro Agnew's plea bargain, and American withdrawal from Vietnam), the percentage of youths indicating most confidence in the national government had fallen to 27 percent, while the percentage indicating greatest confidence in state or government had risen to 32 and 41 percent, respectively. The 1976 NES study found that local government, at 39 percent, ranked first in confidence, followed by national government at 33 percent and state government at 28 percent (Roeder, 1994, 41).
3. The Arkansas Household Research Panel of the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville is a randomly selected sample of households across the state that have agreed to respond to at least four omnibus mail surveys per year. Obviously, the panel requirements and use of self-administered mail surveys result in over-representation of white, educated, older, and wealthy Arkansans.
4. Further note that when Arkansas respondents' level of confidence in various nongovernmental as well as governmental institutions is investigated, local government (46.6)(2) continues to be preferred to state institutions such as the State Legislature (40.1) and the Governor's Office (38.9), but fares less well than churches (80.8), medicine (72.6), banks (70.8), higher education (69.0), television news (50.9), and newspapers (49.1). The only nongovernmental institutions trailing local government, the legislature, and the governor in public confidence were utilities (29.8), organized labor (28.2), and oil companies (23.1). Pairing this set of findings with those preceding, Savage and Blair conclude that "more altruistic, less remote, and more decentralized institutions receive stronger votes of confidence" from Arkansans (1984, 65).
5. Not to mention another elected statewide office--the state commissioner of lands--that was labelled "obsolete" almost a century ago by then-Governor George Donaghey (Ledbetter 1993, 106), who however failed in his declared intention to eliminate the post.
6. Such scandals can have a powerful impact upon short-run public opinion, as illustrated for example by the fall of Governor Tucker from a 63 percent favorable (compared to 16 percent unfavorable) opinion share in April 1994 (Finkelstein, 24 April 1994) to a 28 percent favorable (compared to 48 percent unfavorable) opinion share as his trial approached in March 1996 (Kieran Mahoney, 22 March 1996). The latter sample also found that 41 percent of the respondents believed "The charges against Jim Guy Tucker are true," compared to 18 percent who disagreed, and 41 percent who either didn't know or didn't respond.

7. The rest of the agencies have directors whose appointment is determined by statute (four agencies), or appointed by boards without any confirmation (seven agencies), or are appointed by boards, subject to gubernatorial confirmation (10 agencies).

8. The election of a State Commissioner of Lands, on the other hand, was endorsed by only 45 percent of the sample, inasmuch as fully 17 percent of the sample responded that the position should be eliminated (in accordance with Governor George W. Donaghey's opinion).

9. Indeed, such distrust of political elites may very well help explain the other great mystery of Arkansas electoral behavior, which is the state electorate's notorious political independence, as illustrated in the confounding three-way ticket-splitting that went on during the 1968 general election (in which the state re-elected the Democrat, Fulbright, to the U.S. Senate, the Republican, Rockefeller, to the Governorship, and gave its electoral college votes to the third-party candidate, Wallace) and in the electoral musings of Blair and Savage (1986). The two major American political parties are, after all, quasi-public utilities (Epstein, 1986) since they not only organize government but are protected as well as regulated in state constitutions and election laws, and their organization members are regarded as "elites" not only by the public but also in the professional literature (see McCloskey et al. 1960, Jackson, Brown & Bositis 1982, and Maggiotto & Wekkin 2000). The relationship between popular distrust of government and political partisanship/independence in Arkansas is a question worth future exploration by Arkansas political scientists.