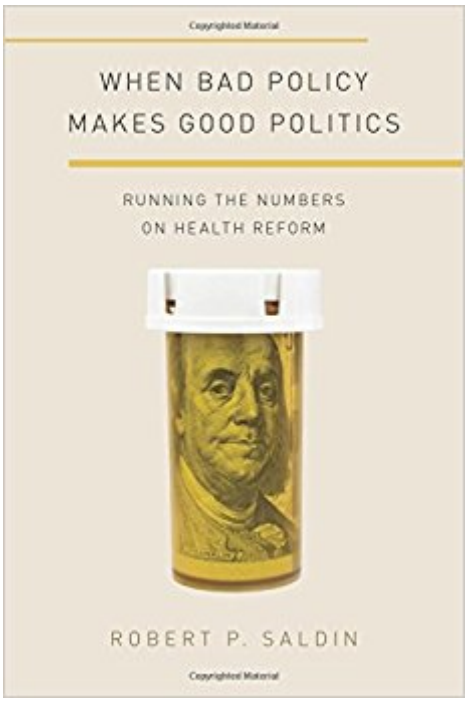
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When Bad Policy Makes Good Politics: Running The Numbers On Health Reform (Studies In Postwar American Political Development)



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Synopsis

Since the 1960s, America’s policymaking system has transitioned from one in which leaders like Lyndon Johnson could simply disparage the concept of budget projections to one in which policymakers consciously manipulate cost estimates. Paradoxically, the very safeguards put in place to thwart economically unsound legislation now cause chaos by incentivizing the development of flawed, even blatantly unworkable, policies. As Robert Saldin shows in When Bad Policy Makes Good Politics, the pathologies of the new system are illustrated by the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports Act and its role in aiding passage of President Obama’s landmark health reform law. CLASS was supposed to bring much needed relief of America’s dysfunctional long-term care system, but critics argued that its flawed design rendered the program unviable. However, what appeared to be a naÃƒÂ ve proposal was actually a carefully framed policy designed to fit the rules of the game, particularly the Congressional Budget Office’s cost-projection process. Although CLASS was destined for a "death spiral" requiring massive government bailouts, the CBO estimated it would save tens of billions of dollars. These official "savings" made CLASS an appealing add-on to the Affordable Care Act. But when the Obama administration later announced that CLASS was impossible to implement, America’s long-term care system was left in crisis. This skillful examination of CLASS and the machinations of Congress provides insight into how the contemporary policymaking process really functions.

Book Information

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"A remarkable book that illuminates how government really works. Saldin guides us through the Congressional wonderland: Shrewd legislators organize a much needed reform that 'scores' well in the all important budget analysis and, as a result, enables the entire Obamacare proposal-even though everyone knows it cannot possibly work. Along the way we learn about Congress, health care, policy, liberals, conservatives, Washington, DC, and America itself. Fascinating, elegant, important and highly recommended."-James A. Morone, Brown University"Come for the story of long-term care reform, stay for the critique of CBO scoring! Saldin makes a provocative argument about the incentives for politically viable if economically unviable policymaking encouraged by the budget process reforms of the 1970s. Not all will agree, but all will learn a lot from this absorbing account of the CLASS Act and the contemporary policy process."-Andrea Louise Campbell, MIT"Every student of health policy or disability should read When Bad Policy Makes Good Politics, the best account of the CLASS Act's implosion, a tragic, oddly overlooked, episode in the history of health reform."-Harold Pollack, University of Chicago

Robert Saldin is Associate Professor of Political Science, a Mansfield Center Fellow, and the Director of the Project on American Democracy and Citizenship at the University of Montana. He is also the author of War, the American State, and Politics since 1898.

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