



# Wisconsin Politics and Government: America's Laboratory of Democracy (Politics and Governments of the American States)

*James K. Conant*

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Throughout the twentieth century, Wisconsin won national visibility and praise for its role as a “laboratory of democracy” within the American federal system. In *Wisconsin Politics and Government* James K. Conant traces the development of the state and its Progressive heritage from the early territorial experience to contemporary times. Conant includes a discussion of the four major periods of institutional and policy innovation that occurred in Wisconsin during the twentieth century as well as an examination of the state’s constitution, legislature, office of the governor, courts, political parties and elections, interest groups, social welfare policy, local governments, state-local relations, and current and emerging issues.

Readers of *Wisconsin Politics and Government* are likely to find a close correspondence between Wisconsin's social, economic, and political experience during the twentieth century and the essential democratic characteristics Alexis de Tocqueville describes in his classic work *Democracy in America*. For example, Wisconsin’s twentieth-century civil society was highly developed: its elected and administrative officials continuously sought to improve the state's political and administrative institutions, and they worked to enhance the economic and social conditions of the state's citizens. Other modern characteristics of the state's democratic experience include issue-oriented politics, government institutions operating free of scandal, and citizens turning out to vote in large numbers.

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