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None of these weaknesses eclipse the substantial contribution this book makes to our understanding of a vitally important phenomenon. Although some surprises remain unpredictable (p. 4), the RPM framework developed in chapters 7–9 provides a wealth of practical tools that flow directly from the causal linkages identified in part two of the book and represent the most comprehensive arsenal of techniques currently available for anticipating and heading off avoidable disasters. Those holding positions of responsibility in government, business, and elsewhere will find this book useful and perhaps indispensable.

JONATHAN KELLER
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Overruled? Legislative Overrides, Pluralism, and Contemporary Court–Congress Relations by Jeb Barnes. *Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2004. 224 pp. \$50.00.*

This book seeks to understand the interaction between Congress and the federal judiciary in the drafting and interpretation of statutes. In doing so, it tells us something useful not only about the relationship between these two institutions but also about the internal politics of each.

The book is specifically concerned with the congressional override, through the passage of new legislation, of judicial interpretations of prior statutes. Overrides were once portrayed as disrespectful to the courts and a type of threat to judicial independence, but they are more commonly viewed now as a natural process through which legislators try to more effectively achieve their policy objectives. The existing literature has largely been concerned with identifying when Congress will pass an override statute, but Jeb Barnes breaks new ground in focusing on the character of congressional deliberations on overrides and the effects of such statutes on subsequent judicial behavior. These are difficult items to study, and Barnes pursues an innovative research design to gain some leverage on the problems before him.

The book asks two quite distinct questions. The first is straightforward: do overrides matter? The central issue here is whether Congress is actually capable of controlling the independent judiciary through statute, or do the courts go their own way in making public policy. A related issue is whether Congress is willing and able to draft clear legislation when passing such overrides, or whether it is content to simply pass showy but vaguely worded bills that leave a great deal of discretion to judges. The second question is whether the overrides reflect relatively open, democratic deliberation on public policy. Here, Barnes sets up a three-way debate between pluralists (who expect a deliberative process leading toward consensus), capture theorists (who expect powerful interests to ram through legislation awarding them victories that they were not able to win in court), and hyperpluralists (who expect politics to be so fragmented that little of substance can be passed through Congress and who believe that judges act on their own policy preferences).

In order to answer both questions, Barnes engages in what he calls “large-N process tracing.” Using a random sample of 100 congressional legislative responses to judicial statutory interpretation decisions between the years 1974 and 1990, Barnes determined whether each override was intended to wholly or only partially resolve the issue at hand, whether courts reached effective consensus on the meaning of the law before and after the override, and whether the congressional hearings that produced the override were one-sided or fairly representative of the competing interests.

The results of this analysis are complicated—unfortunately, rather too complicated, with a host of categories and lots of idiosyncratic vocabulary. Nonetheless, the creative approach produces some interesting findings. When passing overrides, Congress does tend to enter into areas in which judges have had difficulty agreeing on the law, and the legislative intervention generally does lead to greater judicial agreement. Barnes finds little evidence that the override process is captured by a narrow set of interests. The process of passing overrides is almost always open to competing views. In most cases, legislators are nonetheless able to come to some agreement on what they want judges to do, but in a number of instances, they manage to do little more than punt the issue back into the courts. Barnes also finds a few intriguing instances of judicial resistance to congressional instructions. Overall, this is a useful study that hopefully will encourage further research on these difficult but important questions.

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School Board Battles: The Christian Right in Local Politics by *Melissa M. Deckman*. Washington, DC, Georgetown University Press, 2004. 224 pp. Cloth, \$39.95; paper, \$26.95.

During the last decades of the twentieth century, America’s educational establishment came under fire for what critics called its “liberal bias” and its attempts to undermine parental authority. Chief among these critics was the Christian Right, a religiously grounded social movement that seeks to bring America’s social institutions and policies into conformity with its worldview assumptions.

In the early to mid-1990s, the Christian Right targeted school board elections because these were typically lightly contested and offered a strategic means to achieve the end of “taking back” America’s public schools.

In *School Board Battles*, Melissa Deckman offers the first systematic analysis of these contested elections by focusing on the motivations, strategies, and electoral success of Christian Right candidates. The central questions Deckman raises are whether the critics of the Christian Right are correct in their charges that candidates are motivated and trained by Christian Right organizations, that Christian Right candidates use stealth tactics in their election campaigns, and that when elected, Christian Right school board members used their power to advance a Christian Right agenda.