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201 [2001]). Requiring the privilege to be asserted by high executive officers makes the decision to invoke it more visible and thus more accountable; activates political checks and partisan oversight; and forces a kind of deliberation by responsible principals with a systemic perspective, as opposed to subordinates with tunnel vision. Here, there is a useful distinction between first-order and second-order transparency. Even if the content of the state secret is not transparent, the executive must make the very decision to assert the privilege in a publicly accountable fashion, producing a kind of second-order transparency: the executive can keep secrets, but cannot keep secret that it is doing so. Too much secrecy will become politically costly, as the recent elections seem to evidence.

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The Broken Branch: How Congress Is Failing America and How to Get It Back on Track by *Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2006. 288 pp. \$26.00.

Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein, in *The Broken Branch: How Congress Is Failing America and How to Get It Back on Track*, lay out the institutional development of Congress over the last twenty years, a history during which they “have grown more and more dismayed” (p. x). Their long list of grievances against the modern Congress includes “a loss of institutional identity, an abdication of institutional responsibility vis-à-vis the executive, the demise of regular order (in committee, on the floor, and in conference), and the consequent deterioration of the deliberative process” (p. 215).

Most of their criticism regarding the way Congress operates today is aimed at the Republicans, who have been in control since the 1994 elections (with an eighteen-month respite for the Democrats in the Senate when Jim Jeffords switched parties in 2001). But this book cannot be dismissed as a visceral attack on Republicans by authors who are self-confessed Democrats. The authors generously pass around the blame. For Democrats who want to absolve themselves of the guilt of the branch’s brokenness, Mann and Ornstein remind, “Few of the steps Republicans took in the majority were invented by them” (p. xi), an obvious allusion to the highly partisan tactics of Speakers Jim Wright and, less so, Tom Foley.

The authors methodically retell congressional history extending back to the framing of the Constitution. They don’t intend for this to be a history-of-Congress kind of book, but they nicely show the historical roots of the problems present in today’s Congress. The evidence they bring to bear on the argument of the book is behind-the-scenes stories and examples that show the worst side of Congress. They admittedly cherry pick in their selection of stories, but, by the end of the book, even the biggest proponent of Congress

or most loyal Republicans will be disgusted by the overall picture Mann and Ornstein paint.

Though the authors are not particularly optimistic, they do offer several suggestions that might, if implemented, re-attach the broken branch to the tree of American democracy. These potential fixes include challenger-friendly campaign finance law revision, redistricting reform, a new congressional schedule, new rules for debate, earmark reform, ethics reform, and the prohibition of leadership political action committees (pp. 229–237).

In the end, though, the authors too easily let the Democratic Party and/or the American public off the hook. Let us not forget that it was the consistent drumbeat that the Republicans played in the lead-up to the 1994 election that led to the tsunami in the November 1994 elections. If the Republicans had not been effective at selling their plan, the voters might have kept the Democrats in power. The Republicans, however, masterfully kept the eye of the public focused like a laser beam on the dismal failings of Congress. If the Republicans of today are that much more abusive to the institution of Congress than the Democrats of the 1980s, it is the Democrats' duty to sound the alarm and organize themselves in the way that the Republicans did in 1994. If they do, but the cynicism of the American public precludes them from answering the alarm, we will end up with the legislative branch that we deserve—a branch that is, indeed, broken.

This book is a must read for everyone interested in American politics. Few political scientists have their feet planted so firmly in the world of Washington DC politics and the halls of academia as Mann and Ornstein. Undergraduates will be given an entire semester's worth of information in an interesting, compelling, and concise read. Scholars who do not study Congress will walk away with a more complete understanding of how Congress has developed and the role it plays in today's politics. Congressional scholars, who are quite familiar with the story that Mann and Ornstein are telling, will get a book's worth of anecdotes, stories, and quotes to enliven their theories of congressional decision making. Finally, politicians, political observers, and politically interested readers will be rewarded with a nice mix of anecdotes and political science; the latter will give them a framework for understanding congressional development not only over the last twenty years, but also for the next twenty years.

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Whistling Past Dixie: How Democrats Can Win Without the South by
Thomas F. Schaller. Riverside, NJ, Simon & Schuster, 2006. 320 pp.
\$26.00.

Thomas Schaller has strong views about what strategy Democrats should pursue in future presidential elections. Specifically, in *Whistling Past Dixie*,