

George Nigh, Carl Reheman, and Bob Burke. *Oklahoma Government Today: How We Got There*. (Nigh Institute of State Government, Edmond, Oklahoma: University of Central Oklahoma), pp 160. (\$15.95 ISBN unavailable at time of printing)

Oklahoma Government Today—How We Got There is a brand new text which provides a brief overview of Oklahoma history and politics. The authors bring a wealth of political and scholastic experience and “star power” to this project. The heart of the effort is focused on the structure, function, and finance of Oklahoma state and local governments. However these descriptions are supplemented by a brief history of the state and information which puts Oklahoma’s experience within a greater context. Inserts throughout the book also contain snippets or additional materials which add texture or detail to the major themes. This text is especially relevant for those with limited or no background on Oklahoma history or politics or for use by students in lower division courses on either state or Oklahoma politics. Somewhat like the older Strain publication which many of us used as our reference to Oklahoma politics in the 1980s, this text provides a wide variety of information whether used as a handy reference on our shelf or used as a supplement when teaching State and Local Politics.

One should not compare this text with *Oklahoma Politics and Policies* by Morgan, England, and Humphreys or other similar texts or articles. Despite the title, *Oklahoma Government Today—How We Got There* is generally informative rather than explanatory. This is not where you will find a deep analysis of the role of women in Oklahoma politics, why Oklahoma has experienced high levels of political corruption

of other worthy research driven topics. Rather, the reader will experience an approachably written text, a straightforward overview of Oklahoma history and politics, and more than a few interesting anecdotes which inform the reader about some of the characters and idiosyncracies of Oklahoma politics. *Oklahoma Government Today—How We Got There* delivers on all of these levels.

Some portions of the text have greater utility or significance. Standout chapters include Chapter 3, “The Role of Oklahoma Government in the American System”; Chapter 6 “The Oklahoma Court System”; Chapter 8 “County Government”; and Chapter 10 “Funding of Oklahoma Government”. All of these chapters represent materials or subject areas over which students sometimes struggle; the authors’ no nonsense approach works well. They articulate the basics about these areas without complicating the material. Specific examples would include the authors’ general discussion about federalism and their overview of the Oklahoma court system, which are especially praiseworthy. Other chapters are generally solid, and retain a student-friendly style and a simple presentation of the material which makes this text a good choice for the classroom.

The authors also include a chapter on patriotism and include some important speeches. While these speeches are obviously important, they do seem a bit out of place.

Another of the more helpful aspects of the book is the number of small highlighted materials. These brief asides often give information on important individuals, events, or concepts and help to lighten the subject matter as well as potentially further educate the reader on Oklahoma politics and processes. A number of these references are memorable.

In sum, *Oklahoma Government Today—How We Got There* is a worthy addition to the growing literature on Oklahoma politics and history. It fits well as an introduction to those subjects and as a reference most of us could use on our shelves.

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