



American Federalism in Practice: The Formulation and Implementation of Contemporary Health Policy

Michael Doonan

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American Federalism in Practice is an original and important contribution to our understanding of contemporary health policy. It also illustrates how contentious public policy is debated, formulated, and implemented in today's overheated political environment.

Health care reform is perhaps the most divisive public policy issue facing the United States today. Michael Doonan provides a unique perspective on health policy in explaining how intergovernmental relations shape public policy. He tracks federal-state relations through the creation, formulation, and implementation of three of the most important health policy initiatives since the Great Society: the State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), both passed by the U.S. Congress, and the Massachusetts health care reform program as it was developed and implemented under federal government waiver authority. He applies lessons learned from these cases to implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

"Health policymaking is entangled in a complex web of shared, overlapping, and/or competing power relationships among different levels of government," the author notes. Understanding federal-state interactions, the ways in which they vary, and the reasons for such variation is essential to grasping the ultimate impact of federalism on programs and policy. Doonan reveals how federalism can shift as the sausage of public policy is made while providing a new framework for comprehending one of the most polarizing debates of our time.

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