

In the *COMMONWEALTH*

Gerard J. Fitzpatrick
Editor

Once again, this issue of *COMMONWEALTH* confirms the old adage that “good things come to those who wait.” The number of manuscripts submitted for review over the past two years continued to be low, while the rejection rate remained high—a testament to the demanding standards of our anonymous reviewers. Thanks to them, we can present a diverse group of five scholarly articles. Two of them involve Congress, one concerns the judiciary, one examines the electoral process, and one explores public policy. Moreover, three of the five articles focus on Pennsylvania, as do all seven of our reviewed books.

In our lead article, **David R. White** traces the ill-fated political career of John Inscho Mitchell, the progressive Republican who represented Pennsylvania in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate during the Gilded Age. A reluctant “compromise candidate” who won his Senate seat under the most inauspicious of circumstances, Mitchell served his state honorably but unhappily, for he was an honest man living in an era of rampant political corruption. White shows that Mitchell was much better suited temperamentally for the judicial service he later performed on several state courts in Pennsylvania.

One of the courts on which Mitchell served, the Pennsylvania Court of Common Pleas, is the focus of **Heather Frederick’s** article, which explains why women are underrepresented as judges on this level of the state bench. Finding that neither incumbency advantage nor various methods of judicial selection fully accounts for the gender disparity between male and female judges, she emphasizes instead the adverse impact on women of basic sexism in the form of stereotypes and tokenism. On the bright side, Frederick notes that over the course of the past 15 years women have been more likely than men to be appointed to the Courts of Common Pleas.

Blyden Potts continues the theme of injustice in Pennsylvania’s governmental institutions, this time focusing on the discriminatory treatment accorded by the state’s election law to independent and third party candidates trying to get on the ballot. Drawing upon his direct involvement in the failed U.S. Senate bid of Green Party candidate Carl Romanelli in 2006, Potts argues that state Democrats—aided by an array of state and federal courts—used the *letter* of the law to sabotage Romanelli’s signature petition, thereby undercutting the law’s *spirit* and along with it the rights of the candidate and the interests of the voters.

The theme of *representation* also pervades **Robin Lauermann's** article, which explores how individuals belonging to various demographic groups perceive and evaluate the political behavior of their particular representative in the U.S. House. She finds not only that various social and political identities shape the ways in which different groups of constituents understand and assess the actions of their representatives, but also that politically savvy House members recognize the importance of the demographic composition of their districts and cultivate personal, policy, and electoral relationships with their constituents accordingly.

Shifting the focus from politics to public policy, **Arthur M. Holst** examines the leadership role that local governments are increasingly playing with regard to the adoption of “greening” policies in the realms of energy use and environmental protection. With the advantage of proximity to environmental problems as well as to the people who cause them and are affected by them, municipalities across the nation have enacted in recent years an array of policies, programs, and incentives that show how the public and private sectors can work together effectively and why economic growth and ecological health need not be in conflict.

In closing, I wish to acknowledge the work and dedication of several people. First, **Michael R. King**, Executive Director of Pennsylvania's Legislative Office for Research Liaison (LORL), has widened our distribution network and reduced our operating costs. Second, **Michael E. Cassidy**, Executive Director of the Office of the House Democratic Caucus, has proved that his gift for managing governmental affairs is transferable to managing a journal as well. Third, the skills of copy editor **Barbara C. Stone** have turned *COMMONWEALTH* into a work of art, visually. Finally, my debt to associate editors **Thomas J. Baldino** and **Donald G. Tannenbaum** can be simply put: Tom + Don = *COMMONWEALTH*.