

## Editor's Note

*Rachel Mosher-Williams*

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U.S. governments, both federal and state, are at a challenging crossroads. Many American communities are plagued with crime, people mistrust and are angry with their government, and a general lack of social connection in this country is leading political leaders and citizens alike to cry out for a return to "civil society." At the same time, dwindling resources and new perceptions of the appropriate role for government are causing the reform of programs and policies formerly considered invulnerable. Legislators and public administrators are thus in the paradoxical position of having to develop innovative ways to improve citizens' quality of life while scaling back on the traditional means to do so.

This issue of *Policy Perspectives* presents a timely mix of articles that illustrate the efforts of governments at all levels to facilitate our transition to a civil society. Federal policy is examined by three authors. Robert Garretson presents an analysis of recently proposed reforms of the Social Security system and offers a policy recommendation aimed at striking an appropriate balance between the government's and the individual's role in providing support for retired persons. Loren Southard proposes a serious reform of U.S. cryptographic policy that includes the concerns of business as well as national security. Kevin Kessler Cullather considers the widely varying philosophical beliefs about the role of humankind in the natural environment that influence federal regulation of our wilderness.

Three authors look at state innovations in enhancing citizens' quality of life. Jason Orlando analyzes the "zero tolerance" approach to fighting urban crime and highlights the success of such a program in New York City. Charisse Smith discusses the tax reforms undertaken in Michigan to both stabilize and make more equitable the state's funding of public education. Finally, in her article on recent changes in product liability law, Theresa Fallon focuses on legislative efforts that succeed on the state level but have failed at the national level.

David Weitzer rounds out this journal's presentation of important policy topics with a review of Supreme Court decisions made during the past term which affect public administrators.

Without the assistance and efforts of many people, the 1996-1997 edition of *Policy Perspectives* would not have been published. My first thanks go to our faculty advisor, Professor Jill Kasle, whose expertise, patience, and guidance serve as a model for editors everywhere. I am equally grateful to Managing Editor Joanne Finkelstein, who was variously my partner, friend, and sounding board throughout the whole process. Thank you also to Heather Johnston, last year's Editor in Chief, for all of the time she spent helping me make the transition into this role.

The contributions of the editorial staff toward the completion of this journal are immeasurable. I would like to

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As a student-produced academic journal, *Policy Perspectives* is particularly reliant on the policy professionals in Washington, DC, and around the country who serve as peer reviewers for submitted manuscripts. Without the insightful comments and technical recommendations offered by these reviewers, the papers in this year's *Policy Perspectives* would certainly not have developed into the in-depth and valuable finished products that cover these pages. We are indebted to these experts for sharing their time and vast knowledge.

Many members of the faculty and administration at The George Washington University helped launch *Policy*

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