

Editors' Note

As Volume 18 of *Policy Perspectives* goes to print, a government shutdown remains imminent, workers in Japan tire feverishly to rebuild its North Coast and avert a full-on nuclear catastrophe, and American fighter jets scream over Libya as unrest sweeps through North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.

Crises like these will always steal much of our attention, and rightly so. But they do not replace the myriad policy issues that confront us. While we can't always control the dynamic, even capricious, nature of our national political agenda, we can always strive to deepen our knowledge of every issue that we know will shape our future.

And that's the credo of the new *Policy Perspectives*: a commitment to expand our knowledge on issues of national importance. This year's staff is committed to developing and promoting new ideas, and to examining more carefully the ones that have been around for years – the ones that have been bounced from wall to wall in the pinball machine that is the policy-making process. *Policy Perspectives* represents a commitment to do what we can as students, as academics, as leaders, and above all as concerned human beings to produce the best outcomes given problems we are loath to ignore.

This volume marks our attempt to fulfill that commitment. The diverse collection of articles show our commitment to breadth, as it follows policy issues both near and far. The articles commit to analytical depth, as they highlight some of the best research and analysis in the fields of public administration and public policy. And the authors commit to an intellectual candor – never shying away from an unpopular topic or conclusion.

In addition, this year's journal comes out with a bold new look. Having undergone a much-needed makeover, the journal better embodies the power and importance of the analysis that fills its new and larger pages. Form and function – as well as compelling, critical research – work in tandem to bring the sexy back to public policy.

Volume 18 boasts six articles, four book reviews and, honoring an old journal tradition, an interview for the first time in four years.

Kanika Metre's article, *Using Mobile Banking Services to Improve Financial Access for the Poor: Lessons from Kenya, the Philippines, the United States, Haiti, and India* pulls from case studies from countries all over the world to discuss how the private, public, and non-profit sectors can work together using mobile banking to meet the financial services needs of the poor.

Nicole D. Rodriguez's *The Asian Carp Threat to the Great Lakes: An Analysis of Alternatives for Preventing Asian Carp Migration* tackles a fishy problem that the US cannot take for granted. She evaluates three policy options to prevent the spread of Asian carp throughout US waterways before they destroy the Great Lakes.

Sarah V. Ficenec addresses the wicked problem of how we can house the homeless. In her *The Economics of Housing the Homeless: What Causes the Problem and Why Haven't Federal Policies Helped?* she outlines the causes of homelessness from an economic perspective and explains why some solutions don't address the root of the problem.

Sarah Griswold's paper, *Actively Combating Childhood Weight Gain: An Evaluation of Federal Policy Interventions* deals with the ever-growing issue of childhood obesity and why it is a pertinent domestic policy program that needs to be addressed now. She examines three federal interventions that could help reverse this dangerous trend.

Rebecca Hinze-Pifer and **Daniel S. Ramsey** co-wrote a report on *Evaluating Education Information Systems: Implementation of Longitudinal Student Data Systems in Six School Districts* where they discuss the efforts spent on and the difficulties encountered in adopting integrated, longitudinal computer systems to help reform and improve today's convoluted public education system.

Jennifer Javier dissects our nation's policy towards the unauthorized student population in her paper, *The Unauthorized Student Population: Examining the Alternatives*, while addressing the failed DREAM Act. Her article explores three options that would help these students fully realize their potential and live out the American Dream.

Although crafting our own policy analysis is important, we also pay tribute to those who show their commitment to ensuring good policy decisions via their published books. We're fortunate to present you with the following book reviews:

Jonathan P. Kelly reviews Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson's *Winner Take All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer – And Turned Its Back on the Middle Class*; **Jeff Williams** talks about Eric Pooley's *The Climate War: True Believers, Power Brokers, and the Fight to Save the Earth*. **Brendan Boerbaitz** critiques Christopher Hood's *The Blame Game: Spin, Bureaucracy, and Self-Preservation in Government* and **Megan C. Bourke** discusses her opinion of Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi's *Food Justice*.

Lastly, we're happy to publish an interview with Admiral Thad Allen, MPA '86, 23rd Commandant of the US Coast Guard. The Admiral doesn't miss a beat as he nonchalantly wows us with his heroic tales of his unwavering leadership during Hurricane Katrina, rescuing Elian Gonzalez, and cleaning up the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. We are truly honored to have the privilege to talk with him candidly.

We wish to thank the staff of Volume 18: Rachel Brody, Whitney King, Alicia Mazzara, Joshua D. Nadas, Sarah Trumble, Jeff Williams, Meghan Wills, and J. Perry Yates for their hard work and commitment. In addition, we'd like to thank Deborah Lesser, MPA '86, for helping edit the book reviews and Rachel Schallom, for her assistance with our redesign. Without Rachel's creative know-how, this year's face-lift would not have been possible. Special thanks are due to our faculty advisor Michael Harmon and Trachtenberg School Director Kathy Newcomer. We would also like to give thanks to the members of the wonderful GW administration and faculty who provided us with valuable support, guidance, and expertise during the grueling editing process. It is our sincere hope that *Policy Perspectives* continues to contribute a meaningful voice to today's pertinent public policy and administration issues.

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