



Teaching politicians the right thing to do is not the same as convincing them to do it. They well know their interests are vested in the present system of buying votes by reallocating property. For that to change, the public must first become aware of the corrupting effect of this system. This public awareness will not depend on which books the president reads. It will depend on which books the rest of us read.

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## ★ Steven Hayward

The problem of modern democratic government is not simply a tendency to bad policy; it is also that most modern politicians do not have a sufficient understanding of or respect for democratic institutions and procedures. A deeper understanding of the principles of limited government goes hand in hand with better policy. Hence what is most needed is remedial reading.

It may be wildly naive to suppose that, at the threshold of the Oval Office, our nation's pre-eminent political figure can be taught anything meaningful, but here goes. My first book is what I call "the owner's manual to the U.S. Constitution," *The Federalist*. Why not? Although it is true that these essays were the product of a partisan campaign, and are written in an unfamiliar idiom, there is nevertheless a carefully worked out theory of how our constitutional form of government should work. A president will learn as much from Publius's errors of judgment as from his wisdom. *The Federalist* shines especially brightly on the current problems of separation of powers, legislative and executive prerogative, and judicial review.

My second recommendation is Harvey C. Mansfield Jr.'s recent collection titled *America's Constitutional Soul* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991). In addition to Mansfield's always learned reflections on the state of constitutionalism and party politics in America, there are chapters analyzing the last four presidential elections, from which a president will learn that the distinction between politics and policy, between campaigning and governing, is false and pernicious. Mansfield's serious treatment of and obvious respect for the political ability and achievements of Ronald Reagan are a nice antidote to the standard clichés against Reagan.

My third recommendation is Jeremy Rabkin's *Judicial Compulsions: How Public Law Distorts Public Policy* (Basic Books, 1989). This may seem like an odd or narrow pick for a president's short reading list. But *Judicial Compulsions* focuses attention on a major crisis within our government that isn't receiving adequate attention and that impinges directly on a president's ability to administer the executive branch. Administrative law has become subject to a regime of judicial activism directed chiefly by special-interest litigation. What this means is that neither the executive branch nor the legislative branch

is really in control of policy. The point is, limited government and the rule of law require a properly limited judiciary, and the president who understands this and sets out to tame the judiciary will render the republic a noble service. And the judiciary will probably be easier to tame than Congress.

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## ★ Thomas W. Hazlett

In the 1988 V.P. debate an uppity journalist asked J. Danforth Quayle what recent book he had enjoyed reading. A bit of tension ensued, as America experienced a collective moment of embarrassment. To his staff's credit, Quayle had the name of some erudite tome at the ready. This put that pipsqueak reporter in his place (especially since the debate format allowed no time-out in which to test the senator's comprehension coefficient). While I have no staff (not counting my laptop), I have been given advance warning of the question: Which three marvelous books should the new president read?

1. Hedrick Smith's *The Power Game* (1989). This artistic hunk of applied political science describes the sources and uses of political clout in Washington, revealing everything Jimmy Carter should have known but was afraid to ask about the national government. Those boneheads who believe that the pols are crazy and that things get screwed up because we don't have enough smart, good citizens in Washington simply don't see what Hedrick Smith knows: Things happen in government for good reason (even if the results for the lowly American taxpayers are ugly).

"Some like to say that the power game is an unpredictable game of chance and improvisation," writes the *New York Times* reporter. "But most of the time politics is about as casual and offhand as the well-practiced triple flips of an Olympic high diver." Filled with insights (example: "Congress has a stake in the inefficiency of federal bureaucrats: It lets their staffs become important fixers..."), this volume is an excellent substitute for a Ph.D. at the Kennedy School for a busy chief executive on the go.

2. Ithiel de Sola Pool's *Technologies of Freedom* (1984). A masterful treatise on the evolution of free speech, this book explains how the opportunities for greater liberty afforded by the revolution in computer intelligence may be sabotaged by the political ghosts of censorship past. The American tradition broke historic new ground in moving firmly away from the stultification of a government-licensed press, yet our First Amendment rights have gone into retreat with the emerging electronic communications media.

This uncivil rejection of our libertarian values is all the more ironic in light of the immense possibilities for genuinely democratic free speech that the new technology has given us. Our

transition from a press of newsprint to one of electronics is now a century along; computer technologies are stupendously accelerating the passage. Yet our law and institutions have strangely afforded smaller scope for freedom to the newer forms of speech than to the old, a delineation that makes poor sense legally and no sense technically. (It makes perfect sense politically; see Hedrick Smith, above.) Pool, the late, famous professor of political science at MIT, reminds us of our magnificent heritage as the world's freest speakers nestled happily under the protections of the Constitution's First Amendment. Upholding such, Mr. President, will be your job.

3. Robert Caro's *The Years of Lyndon Johnson* (either of the two volumes out now, or of the two due out soon). Caro's due diligence turned up the dirt on President Johnson, years after the legends (promulgated by the fearsome commander-in-chief himself) had been swallowed whole by journalists and biographers alike. Read Caro on Johnson and you will know a scoundrel. In glorious detail and riveting prose. Yecceccckkkkk! An odious perversion of public power on display for all the world to see. Can this massive dose of posthumous public shame inoculate our future president from hubris disease? Let us hope. Please read Robert Caro and remember: Someone will be watching. Closely.

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## ★ David R. Henderson

Mr. President, you need three main things from your reading. First is a sense of what people's rights are and how a just government should treat them. Second is a basic understanding of how the world works. Third is a perspective on the 1980s. The following list meets the bill, to the extent any three books can.

1. Richard Epstein, *Takings: Private Property and the Power of Eminent Domain*. This book by a law professor starts from each person's right to his or her own body and ends up showing, on that basis, that government has no right to take people's property without just compensation. Epstein then shows, with flair and buzzsaw logic, that the Fifth Amendment's ban on takings without just compensation invalidates most zoning laws, all price controls, "progressive" taxation, and most government spending.

2. Paul Heyne, *The Economic Way of Thinking*. Because understanding how the world works requires a basic understanding of economics, I recommend this introductory textbook. It lays out beautifully how cooperation among people works in a free-market economy. It gives you a basic understanding of how a price system works, and works magnificently, to turn conflict into harmony. Among other things, Heyne's book shows why free trade makes both sides better off and how price controls cause destruction.

3. William A. Niskanen, *Reaganomics*. You cannot under-

stand the 1980s without understanding what economic policies were and what effects these policies had. Niskanen, even though a Reagan partisan, gives the most even-handed treatment of Reagan's economic policies available. Indeed, Herb Stein, no partisan of Reagan himself, called Niskanen's book, "a lucid analysis of Reagan's economics by that rare creature, an objective insider." Lou Cannon, a "liberal" *Washington Post* columnist, called Niskanen's book, "a definitive and notably objective account of administration economic policy." Niskanen tells the good—some budget cuts, large cuts in marginal tax rates, and a substantial reduction in inflation—along with the bad—failure to get spending under control, huge deficits (caused by the failure to control spending), and protectionist trade policies. Niskanen also gives a sense of the relative importance of various economic issues.

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## ★ Rick Henderson

The health of the economy will be the most important issue the next president will address. Effective economic policy is no longer a purely domestic matter. It requires a global view.

Economists Richard McKenzie and Dwight Lee recognize this. In *Quicksilver Capital: How the Rapid Movement of Wealth Has Changed the World*, they say that the information revolution allows nations, not just local regions, to compete for investments in capital and labor.

Fifty years ago, F. A. Hayek argued that central planners never possess enough information to efficiently direct economic activity. Back then, when planners tightened their grip on entrepreneurs and employees, those people suffered. Now, say McKenzie and Lee, capital can (and does) move faster than central planners can try to manipulate it. Policy makers who try to increase taxes and regulations will find their capital bases moving to more hospitable climes. The authors also insist that, so long as government remains intrusive, no amount of "investment" in worker retraining and public works can prevent private capital from fleeing. There's plenty here for either George Bush or Bill Clinton to chew on.

The president will also face a nation with decaying cities, disintegrating families, and a breakdown of what European liberals call "civil society"—the informal network of neighborhoods, churches, and other voluntary arrangements that (besides work) provide meaning and relevance to people in their everyday lives. Charles Murray's *In Pursuit: Of Happiness and Good Government* argues that government attempts to replace that voluntary sphere in poverty-stricken