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Main content

Article Preview :

Who Governs? Presidents, Public Opinion, and Manipulation by James N. Druckman and Lawrence Jacobs. Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press, 2015.192 pp. \$25.00.

At least since Joe McGinniss's classic *The Selling of the President* 1968, political observers have understood that presidents use image-making techniques to get elected and to some extent while governing. Among the many good books written since, Lance Bennett's *News: The Politics of Illusion* and Mark Hertsgaard's *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency* are among my favorites.

Given this common knowledge, it is surprising that James N. Druckman and Lawrence Jacobs, in their new book *Who Governs? Presidents, Public Opinion, and Manipulation*, seem so disillusioned to find, after investigating the use of private polling during the Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, and Ronald Reagan administrations, that White House staff track and try to shape what the public thinks about the president's character, that they pay special attention to particular groups central to their electoral coalitions, and that...

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In *Who Governs?*, Druckman and Jacobs combine existing research with novel data from US presidential archives to show that presidents make policy by largely ignoring the views of most citizens in favor of affluent and well-connected political insiders. Presidents treat the public as pliable, priming it to focus on personality traits and often ignoring it on policies that fail to become salient. Additional series titles follow the index. *Who Governs? Presidents, Public Opinion, and Manipulation*. James n. druckman and lawrence r. jacobs. The university of chicago press. Presidents, Public Opinion, and Manipulation. By James N. Druckman and Lawrence R. Jacobs. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015. 192p. "Can Learning Constituency Opinion Affect how Legislators Vote? Results from a

