



Seeking Bipartisanship: My Life in Politics

Ray LaHood, Frank H. Mackaman

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The twenty years since 1995 have seen their share of landmark events. Among them a contested presidential election result (2000), a terrorist attack on U.S. soil (2001), the beginning of a war in Iraq (2003), economic calamity (2008), the election and reelection of the nation's first African American president (2008, 2012), two changes in party control of the presidency, three changes in party control of the House (including the first Republican majority in 40 years as a result of the 1994 congressional elections), and five changes in party control of the Senate. Throughout these volatile times, one theme stands out: political polarization has characterized American politics, creating gridlock in Washington and breeding distrust of government among the nation's citizens. Few first-hand accounts from those who witnessed and participated in these events currently exist. Their experiences and evaluations of trends and events, however, not only help us understand the dynamics and impact of partisanship over two decades but also suggest possible remedies. This book provides a personal perspective from one of a very few individuals who served both in Congress and in a presidential Cabinet during these tumultuous times. LaHood's account covers his 14 years in Congress with 10 chapters centered on four pivotal events. The first relates to the "Gingrich Revolution" when Republicans seized control of the House in 1995. As a former staffer to House Republican leader Robert H. Michel, LaHood occupied a unique vantage point as his party won and eventually lost their majority amidst the intrigue of intraparty leadership battles and increasing confrontation between the two political parties. As the only elected Republican selected for President Obama's Cabinet, LaHood sought to bridge the partisan divide between the new Democratic administration and Republicans on Capitol Hill. It proved to be a struggle compounded by the president's governing style and Republican intransigence. President Obama's promise to govern in a bipartisan manner went unrealized for reasons LaHood addresses in this book. This book is an important volume for all political science and history collections focused on presidents, presidential administrations, Congress, political biography, and political partisanship. The book will also appeal to general readers and to political practitioners. See www.cambriapress.com/books/9781604979053.cfm for more details on this Cambria Press publication. The book includes reproductions of White House photographs and archival materials

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