BOOK REVIEW

“Budgeting: Politics and Power”

By Carol W. Lewis and W. Bartley Hildreth
Oxford University Press
384 pages; $44.95

Inside the Budget Process
Reviewed by Peggy Kerns

It’s tough out there in the budgeting world. Writing, reading, analyzing
and voting on a state budget can be grueling, tedious and painful.

Carol W. Lewis and W. Bartley Hildreth, however, make this complex
subject easier to understand. This is not a dry and deadly “how to” guide
on different procedures in the various states, nor is it a boring, bombastic
book on budgeting.

With depth and often humor, the authors tackle the subject in a sub-
stantive and nonacademic way. Although written primarily for the college
classroom, the book is valuable for staff who crunch the numbers, budget
committees who wade through the details, and elected officials who make
the decisions. And it is particularly significant to help an often ill-informed
public understand the politics and power plays that influence how budget
decisions are made.

In addition to the text, each of the 10 chapters includes graphics, a case
study, a tightly written thumbnail, website resources, questions for discus-
sions and even an occasional cartoon. Snoopy appears in Chapter 1 sitting
on his roof in the rain lamenting that “Every time there’s a good suggestion,
someone brings up the budget.” How true.

Government budgets are built around values. Budget writers don’t
start with a certain amount that must be spent. They start with the priori-
ties of the elected officials, who were voted in to make public policy that
reflects constituents’ interests.

These priorities then are overlaid with ethical considerations. Should
more money go into education or highways? Should health care for the
poor be cut to fund state employee pensions? Should corrections funding
be focused on punishment or rehabilitation?

This is a book on understanding how budgets are developed. It’s about
how budget committee members and elected officials think and make
decisions when, faced with less money, they are forced to make uncom-
fortable choices among well-deserving programs.

The end result is that the reader, by understanding what’s behind bud-
get-writing, may better respect the hard work and difficult choices await-
ing elected officials each year.

Peggy Kerns directs the Center for Ethics in Government at NCsl. The authors of
“Budgeting: Politics and Power” used material from the National Conference of State
Legislatures and consulted with Kerns for the case study described in Chapter 6, “Spending
Public Resources.”
Chapter 13 Power and Politics. Learning Objectives. After reading this chapter, you should be able to do the following: Understand the meaning of power. Recognize the positive and negative aspects of power and influence. Recognize the sources of power. Understand and recognize influence tactics and impression management. If you want a larger budget to open a new store in a large city and you get the budget increase, you have used your power to influence the decision. Power distribution is usually visible within organizations. For example, Salancik and Pfeffer gathered information from a company with 21 department managers and asked 10 of those department heads to rank all the managers according to the influence each person had in the organization. Start by marking "Budgeting: Politics and Power" as Want to Read: Want to Read saving… Want to Read. Unlike other texts on the subject—which typically focus only on budgeting issues at the federal level—this book emphasizes budgeting at the state and local levels to translate budgetary politics in a way that will be more relevant to the vast majority of students. In order to help students dissect the material and integrate it in a meaningful way, Lewis and Hildreth organize each chapter around key questions about core issues in a democracy. Informed by the authors' own individual backgrounds and expertise, the text presents a thorough—and unbiased—account of the different arguments a This item: Budgeting: Politics and Power by Carol W. Lewis Paperback $72.99. Only 6 left in stock (more on the way). Ships from and sold by Amazon.com. FREE Shipping. Details. Budgeting and Financial Management for Nonprofit Organizations by Lynne A Weikart Paperback $85.82. Editorial Reviews. Review. "The best current book on politics and the budgetary process."--Scott A. Frisch, California State University, Channel Islands. "A must-read. This book is not only informative but engaging and very practical. The authors provide great insight into state and local budgeting."--Nicholas John Swartz, James Madison University. "Easy to read and comprehend."--Marcus D. Mauldin, The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. About the Author.