



# Public Service, Ethics, and Constitutional Practice (Studies in Government and Public Policy)

*John A. Rohr*

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For civil servants who take an oath to uphold the Constitution, that document is the supreme symbol of political morality. Constitutional issues are addressed by civil servants every day, whenever a policeman arrests a suspect or members of different branches of government meet. But how well do these individuals really understand the Constitution's application in their jobs?

This book encourages civil servants to reflect on specific constitutional principles and events and learn to apply them to the decisions they make. Twenty seminal articles by a preeminent scholar seek to legitimate public service by grounding its ethics in constitutional practice.

John Rohr stresses that ethical practice demands an immersion in the specifics of our constitutional tradition, and he offers a guide to attaining a greater sense of those constitutional principles that can be translated into action. Along the way he considers such timely issues as financial disclosure, the treatment of civil servants as second-class citizens, and instances of civil servants caught between executive and legislative forces.

Rohr's opening essays demonstrate that responsible use of administrative discretion is the key issue for career civil servants. Subsequent sections examine approaches to training civil servants using constitutional principles; character formation resulting from study of the constitutional tradition; and the ethical choices that are sometimes posed by separation of powers. A final group of chapters shows how a study of other countries' constitutional traditions can deepen an understanding of our own, while a closing essay looks at past issues and future prospects in administrative ethics from the perspective of Rohr's long involvement in the field.

Throughout this insightful collection, Rohr seeks to remind public servants of the nobility of their calling, reinforce their role in articulating public interests against the excesses of private concerns, and encourage managers to make greater use of constitutional language to describe their everyday activities. Although his work focuses on the federal career civil servant, it also offers valuable lessons applicable to state and local civil servants, elected officials, judges, military personnel, and those employed in the nonprofit sector.

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