

# Preface

The origins of this book go back to a dinner at the house of Lowell E. Gallaway. After dinner, Lowell and I retired to his den while our better halves stayed in the dining room to chat. I had only recently started my academic career and I was eager to pick Lowell's brain about the publication process. After all, by that time he had only published in six decades! Much of our conversation focused on his book with Richard K. Vedder, *Out of Work*, and the difficulty they had in getting some of the individual chapters published as refereed journal articles. This caused me to ask Lowell if he ever had a favorite paper that never got published in some form. Of course he did and he was glad to give me a yellow, faded copy of a 1979 working paper.

While driving home that evening I thought about the paper sitting in my back seat. As far as I knew, the only copies that existed were hard copies in private hands. What a shame that other scholars had no way to access these insights. Upon returning home, I confirmed that the only traces of the paper on the Internet were in citations in papers published around the time the paper was originally written. The fact that the paper was cited at the time suggests that the paper had value for scholars then and thus would be likely to have value for future scholars, if only those following the footnotes to papers published around 1980.

I began to take notes of papers that were cited several times as conference presentations or working papers but never published. A public economist by training, these papers tended to be in the field of public economics, especially public choice. When I went to conferences and would talk to more experienced economists, I began to ask them if they had a favorite paper that never quite found a home. Inevitably they did.

After several years, I found myself in possession of eleven interesting papers by prominent economists on important topics in the area of public economics. These papers had numerous citations and in some cases significant media attention and yet without intervention they might be lost to history. At a minimum, the fact that most of them were not available through libraries or the Internet meant that they could not be of use to scholars in public economics. Thus, this book was born, and I am incredibly grateful to Springer and Lorraine Klimowich for their help and patience in bringing this product to fruition.

The papers in this volume deal with issues that are at the core of the economics analysis of politics. For example, the volume begins with a paper on voting by the late Nobel Laureate Gary S. Becker and Casey B. Mulligan. Why people vote has been a prominent topic in the economic analysis of politics since before Downs seminal analysis in *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. Similarly, the concepts of public goods and externalities are taught in every undergraduate public economics class. Bruce L. Benson and Roger E. Meiners deepen our understanding of these topics with their respective chapters. The volume contains a variety of different methods—theory, empirical, experimental, and historical. However, they all speak to issues (e.g., political corruption, media and presidential voting, school competition, and global warming) that are important parts of public policy and thus the field of public economics today. I hope you agree.

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