



School Board Battles: The Christian Right in Local Politics (Religion and Politics series)

Melissa M. Deckman

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If there is a "culture war" taking place in the United States, one of the most interesting, if under-the-radar, battlegrounds is in local school board elections. Rarely does the pitch of this battle reach national attention, as it did in Kansas when the state school board -- led by several outspoken conservative Christians -- voted to delete evolution from the state's science curriculum and its standardized tests in August 1999. That action rattled not only the educational and scientific communities, but concerned citizens around the nation as well.

While the movement of the Christian Right into national and state politics has been well documented, this is the first book to examine their impact on local school board politics. While the Kansas decision was short-lived, during the past decade in school districts around the country, conservative Christian majorities have voted to place limits on sex education, to restrict library books, to remove references to gays and lesbians in the classroom, and to promote American culture as superior to other cultures.

School Board Battles studies the motivation, strategies, and electoral success of Christian Right school board candidates. Based on interviews, and using an extensive national survey of candidates as well as case studies of two school districts in which conservative Christians ran and served on local boards, Melissa M. Deckman gives us a surprisingly complex picture of these candidates. She reveals weaker ties to national Christian Right organizations -- and more similarities between these conservative candidates and their more secular counterparts than might be expected.

Deckman examines important questions: Why do conservative Christians run for school boards? How much influence has the Christian Right actually had on school boards? How do conservative Christians govern? *School Board Battles* is an in-depth and in-the-trenches look at an important encounter in the "culture war" -- one that may well determine the future of our nation's youth.

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