



Drawing the Line: Public and Private in America

Andrew Stark

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In *Drawing the Line*, Andrew Stark takes a fresh and provocative look at how Americans debate the border between the public realm and the private. The seemingly eternal struggle to establish the proper division of societal responsibilities—to draw the line—has been joined yet again. Obama administration initiatives, particularly bank bailouts and health care reform, roil anew the debate of just what government should do for its citizens, what exactly is the public sphere, and what should be left to individual responsibility.

Are these arguments specific to isolated policy issues, or do they reveal something bigger about politics and society? The author realizes that the shorthand, "public vs. private" dichotomy is overly simplistic. Something more subtle and complex is going on, Stark reveals, and he offers a deeper, more politically helpful way to view these conflicts.

Stark interviewed hundreds of policymakers and advocates, and here he weaves those insights into his own counterintuitive view and innovative approach to explain how citizens at the grass-roots level divide policy debates between public and private responsibilities—specifically on education, land use and "public space," welfare, and health care. In doing so, *Drawing the Line* provides striking lessons for anyone trying to build new and effective policy coalitions on Main Street.

"All of these debates... are typically portrayed as conflicts between one side championing the values of the public sphere... and the other those of the private realm.... [A] closer look shows that each side asserts and relies coequally on both sets of values... but applies them in inverse or opposing ways." —From the Introduction

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