

The APSA Public Administration Section's Electronic Newsletter Volume 1, Issue 1, Spring 2002

Greetings fellow public administration scholars!

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the PA Section Electronic Newsletter. We plan to issue this news bulletin biennially to everyone on the APSA-PA Section listserv. The Newsletter will provide basic information about section activities and events that are of broad interest to our community of political scientists who study bureaucracy, administration, and management. It also will contain the occasional topical editorial and a number of links to important information sources. The Newsletter is edited by [Patrick Wolf](#) of Georgetown University, with important technical assistance provided by [Ed Kellough](#) and [Chris Hinnant](#) of the University of Georgia and [Mel Dubnick](#) of Rutgers University-Newark. For a "fancier" HTML version of the Newsletter surf to: <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~pubadmin/newsletters/sp02.htm>. For a "Word" version of the Newsletter surf to: <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~pubadmin/newsletters/sp02.doc>.

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SEPTEMBER 11 AND THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

By Patrick Wolf

The tragic events of September 11, 2001 caused many Americans and sympathizers around the world to reconsider their priorities, values, and assumptions about the world. Religion and family became more important, as did patriotism and security. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 had many causes; however, inadequacies of administration clearly played an important and unfortunate role. Insufficient intelligence was gathered on the designs of Al Queda. Important information that was collected was either not made available to the right people or not pursued with sufficient zeal. Security systems at our borders and airports were weakened by faulty policies and operations. Shortcomings in the setting of goals, exchange of information, coordination of efforts, and sense of mission at key agencies of our government—in short, administrative flaws—contributed to making 9/11 both possible and so devastating. The recent delivery of Immigration and Naturalization Service Visa Approval notices to the flight school of two hijackers, six months after the terrorists perished in the horror of their own design, merely served to rub salt in the wound.

The public management failure was not complete, of course, as personnel of the New York City and Arlington, Virginia, fire and police departments, the Department of Defense, and, yes, even the troubled Federal Aviation Administration, responded to the attacks in ways both ameliorative and heroic. Hundreds of so-called “bureaucrats” lost their lives on 9/11 by simply doing their jobs well, thereby reminding us of why, in more appreciative settings, we call them “public servants.”

September 11 has ushered in an era of renewed attention to public administration. As Matthew Holden, Jr., argues (in a deft inversion of Norton Long’s famous claim), “Administration is the life-blood of power.” Power is necessary for a country to bring to justice those responsible for causing it so much harm, and to prevent such devastating attacks from happening in the future. Administration is a necessary instrument for power to achieve its purposes. As a result, we are witnessing an attention to serious questions of public administration like we have not seen in many years. An Office of Homeland Security has been swiftly established, with powers more informal than formal. A public debate has ensued regarding whether airport security personnel should be federal employees or private contractors. At the conclusion of that public management discussion, an anti-big-government presidential administration initiated the largest increase in federal employment since the Cold War. Decision makers are considering how to make our country’s borders more secure, while maintaining the free-flow of materials, labor, and ideas that are essential to our economy. We are pondering improvements in intelligence gathering and sharing, public health, and emergency response systems. Through all of this we wonder, how can we manage?

This renewed attention to public administration is welcome, though dearly purchased. We often feel unappreciated as scholars of management and governance. Much public and disciplinary attention is focused on elections, congressional voting, and public opinion polling, whereas key questions of “Who should implement the public’s will and how?” often remain as minor afterthoughts. September 11 has reminded us, painfully, that matters of coordination and organizational effectiveness are critical to our understandings of the body politic—how to protect and improve it—in sum, how to “manage” it. As scholars of public administration we have an important job to do. Through our theoretical formulations, empirical investigations, and practical applications, we need to shine the light of truth and knowledge on important matters of governance that will make our homeland more secure, our world more peaceful, our young people better educated, our society more just. That is the sense of mission that ought to inspire and direct our work, today.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION THRIVES AT APSA

The PA Section exerted a strong presence at the APSA meetings in San Francisco. Although the official number of panels originally allotted to PA was reduced to 9, PA Section Organizer [Charles Wise](#) was able to use his negotiation and coalition-building skills to push the actual PA panel number up to 12. Who says “those who can’t, teach”? Charlie painstakingly reviewed 124 paper proposals that were submitted to the section in

order to fill out the program. Only 21 of the proposals were submitted solely to PA, suggesting either that applicants use PA to help cover all bases or, more optimistically, reflecting the rich interdisciplinary nature of our sub-field.

Speaking of our talented and diverse group of scholars, [Lloyd Nigro](#) has been tapped to be our champion as PA Section Organizer for the 2002 meetings in Boston. Due to mob-like attendance at the 2001 PA panels, Lloyd is filling 14 panels with the hottest new PA scholarship available. Also, congratulations to [Greg Lewis](#), who has been elected PA Program Chair for 2001-2002. Thanks to outgoing Program Chair [Marissa Golden](#) for her exemplary service to the section during the previous year. Treasurer Ed Kellough continues to do such a great job ~~ooking~~ keeping the books—our balance increased again this year, to almost \$5k—that we will continue to entrust the section’s fiscal resources to his care. Ed has turned down lucrative offers from Enron Corporation and Arthur Anderson in order to continue his important work for the section.

UPDATE ON THE VOLCKER ENDOWMENT FOR PUBLIC SERVICE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

The Volcker Endowment was established to honor Paul Volcker, former Chair of the Federal Reserve Board, by promoting and supporting excellence in research and theory on public administration issues affecting governance in the U.S. and abroad. Three years ago, [Robert Durant](#), Chair of the Endowment Committee, first issued a call for public administration scholars to donate to the fund. Your answer to Bob’s call has been thunderous. As of January 2002, the Endowment fund passed the \$70k mark in contributions, pledges, and interest income. The initial Volcker fundraising push will end with the conclusion of the APSA Centennial Campaign in 2003, so there is no time like the present to make a contribution to this worthy cause or add to your previous level of support. For more details about the Volcker and how to support it, visit <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/%7Epubadmin/volcker/volcker0102.htm>.

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF UPCOMING EVENTS AND MATTERS OF INTEREST

The Public Administration Theory Network (PATNet) will hold its 15th International Conference at the Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University, May 30-June 1, 2002. The conference theme is “Writing and Re-Writing the Discipline.” For information about this exciting and timely event, go to <http://urban.csvohio.edu/patnet> .

The 24th Annual Research Conference of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management will take place November 7-9, 2002 in Dallas, Texas. The conference theme is “Assessing the Public Policy and Management Implications of Social Science Research.” See www.appam.org for more information.

The George H.W. Bush School of Public Service at Texas A & M University is home to a new organization called the Public Management Research Association. Led by [Kenneth Meier](#), the PMRA supports the bi-annual National Public Management Research Conferences and maintains electronic archives of NPMR Conference papers as well as the official Public Administration Archive. Membership in the PMRA brings with it a subscription to the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*. For more information visit <http://bush.tamu.edu/research/cpg/pmra/>.

It has come to our attention that [Matthew Holden, Jr.](#), eminent public administration scholar and Past-President of the APSA, recently was appointed to a new federal Electricity Advisory Board. The Board will “enlighten” Energy Secretary Spenser Abraham regarding policies and strategies for ensuring a “bright” future for the U.S. With Matthew’s expertise in “power and administration” (somebody stop me!), we are confident that he’ll “shine.” In all seriousness, congratulations!

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