

## Excerpts from:

Why Government Fails So Often - And How It Can Do Better - Peter Schuck - 2014

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. . . we do not acknowledge the role played by our inattention, apathy, cynicism, ignorance, and demand for many more government services than we are willing to pay for. p.6

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. . . many people whom a policy will make worse off are not aware of this fact until the policy is operative - and often not even then. "making for invisible victims" p.55 (a reason for effective and timely stakeholder analysis)

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. . . members (of Congress) tend to have selective hearing, attending far more to the arguments, desires and complaints of well organized interests than to more diffuse ones. p.70

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. . . the administrative agency occupies a peculiar position in our government, being not directly accountable to the citizenry, claiming the authority of expertise that the public does not readily grant, and often exercising vast, difficult-to-control discretionary powers to shape policies in ways that can affect the vital interests of all citizens. p.70

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This belief in individualism causes Americans to place unparalleled emphasis on the notion of individual rights in every area of social life, defining public issues as matters of conflicting rights rather than of different preferences. p.102

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Citizens, she (Mary Glendon) claims, see almost all social controversies as a zero-sum clash of competing rights instead of a field of competing interests in which accommodation is desirable. p.104

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Ambiguity is the trusted handmaiden of compromise, whether the disagreement occurs among legislators, administrators, judges, contract negotiators, parents or other decision makers. p.295

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Schuck urges . . . a cautious, incremental approach to reforming complex systems. p.372

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(Derek) Bok . . . canvasses many possible structural forms but ends up being equivocal about almost all of them - for reasons that help explain why most durable public policies evolved gradually through a series of smaller rather than through comprehensive, radical lurches. p. 373

## Reviews & References

"To improve government performance, he (Shuck) recommends programs designed to engage the self-interest of recipients rather than changing their behavior. Mindful of "the remorseless law of unintended consequences," he advocates a cautious incremental approach to reform that precludes radical change. Schuck supports field-testing through pilot programs. And he calls for enhanced enforcement and audits." Glenn C. Altschuler - The Boston Globe - 4/9/14

"Most initiatives — whether of the left, right or center — are likely to fail, and politicians should contend with this fact by crafting policies as simple and incremental as possible." YUVAL LEVIN - WSJ - 6/9/14

<http://online.wsj.com/articles/book-review-why-government-fails-so-often-by-peter-h-schuck-1402355950>

"The most pressing is the need for better information about (1) the likely effectiveness of programs before they are launched, and (2) their actual effectiveness in the past. Both of these require a substantial increase in the resources devoted to policy analysis and evaluation by technocratically competent and substantially independent agencies such as GAO, CBO, OMB, independent inspectors general, and outside assessment institutions." Schuck in Why Does Government Fail So Often - John Sides - 5/29/14 - The Washington Post

"Schuck argues for a "cautious incremental approach" to accomplish it. Consonant with America's overarching political principles and underlying political culture that favor individual freedom, his approach appeals to interests, concentrates on incentives, and seeks to alter circumstances rather than change character. "Policy environments," he writes, "are more tractable than the people who inhabit them." . . . government policy should be "tailored to its institutional means and capacities," which are necessarily limited and crude." Peter Schuck's Rx for Big Government's Ills - Peter Berkowitz - March 25, 2014 - Real Clear Politics

[http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2014/03/25/peter\\_schucks\\_rx\\_for\\_big\\_governments\\_ills\\_122035.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2014/03/25/peter_schucks_rx_for_big_governments_ills_122035.html)

The Top 12 Government Programs Ever - What did they get right that so many others don't? Peter Schuck 4/21/14

[http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/jurisprudence/2014/04/the\\_top\\_dozen\\_federal\\_government\\_programs\\_in\\_history.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/jurisprudence/2014/04/the_top_dozen_federal_government_programs_in_history.html)

By encouraging, coordinating, and structuring citizen participation, technology can make government both more open and more effective at solving today's complex social and economic problems. Wiki Government describes how this model can be applied in a wide variety of settings and offers a fundamental rethinking of effective governance and democratic legitimacy for the twenty-first century. Wiki Government: How Technology Can Make Government Better, Democracy Stronger, and Citizens More Powerful - Beth Simone Noveck - 2010 - <http://www.govtech.com/e-government/Beth-Novecks-Wiki-Government-Book-Review.html>

"If we are to make the best and sanest use of our laws and liberties, we must first adopt a sober view of man and his institutions that would permit reasonable things to be accomplished, foolish things abandoned, and utopian things forgotten." James Q. Wilson