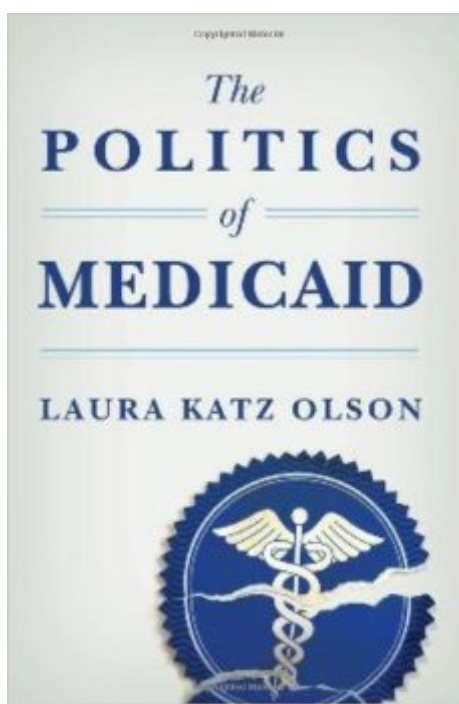


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# The Politics Of Medicaid



## Synopsis

In 1965, the United States government enacted legislation to provide low-income individuals with quality health care and related services. Initially viewed as the friendless stepchild of Medicare, Medicaid has grown exponentially since its inception, becoming a formidable force of its own. Funded jointly by the national government and each of the fifty states, the program is now the fourth most expensive item in the federal budget and the second largest category of spending for almost every state. Now, under the new, historic health care reform legislation, Medicaid is scheduled to include sixteen million more people. Laura Katz Olson, an expert on health, aging, and long-term care policy, unravels the multifaceted and perplexing puzzle of Medicaid with respect to those who invest in and benefit from the program. Assessing the social, political, and economic dynamics that have shaped Medicaid for almost half a century, she helps readers of all backgrounds understand the entrenched and powerful interests woven into the system that have been instrumental in swelling costs and holding elected officials hostage. Addressing such fundamental questions as whether patients receive good care and whether Medicaid meets the needs of the low-income population it is supposed to serve, Olson evaluates the extent to which the program is an appropriate foundation for health care reform.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is an excellent book for one wanting a clear, relatively short history of the Medicaid program and how it impacts the individual states as well as the federal government. My only complaint is that

the author unnecessarily taints her narrative with an obvious bias against big business which she supports, in each section or chapter, largely with one or a few anecdotal examples or a governmental study of questionable utility. As a former healthcare executive with over twenty years experience, I know that many of her generalizations about the nursing home, hospital, managed care and physician segments of the healthcare market are either incorrect or don't tell the complete story, which would change her conclusions. This could have been rectified by learning more about the industries or, best of all, leaving the bias out altogether. In fact, the book would have rated a five star if the author would have left out the bashing, general statements altogether. For instance, she could have said that the nursing home industry spent "x" amount for lobbyists or that the hospital industry appears to earn profits even on Medicaid patients without saying, in effect, that our healthcare crisis is caused by a bunch of greedy big businessmen which is, obviously, an over simplification. Just give us the facts and the readers can draw their own conclusions. This would make the book a pleasure to read in twenty-five years, rather than date it by its polemics. Once again, a book worth reading! I don't usually write reviews. However, it bothers me when a book this good is unnecessarily blemished by high-level rhetoric that distracts any reader with a high level of knowledge of the industry she discusses. I hope the author continues to explore the health care industry's history, but can write with a more objective viewpoint.

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