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*Color Coded: Party Politics in the American West,
1950–2016* by Walter Nugent (review)

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Color Coded: Party Politics in the American West, 1950–2016. By Walter Nugent. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018. Pp. x, 374. \$34.95 hardcover)

Walter Nugent notes in his new book *Color Coded: Party Politics in the American West, 1950–2016* that unlike the South and Northeast, the West defies a coherent political analysis. As a region, the western states broadly conceived do not share the common historical narrative, or demography, or geography that translates into bloc-voting behavior. Insisting that “no theoretical proposition or thesis is being tested,” Nugent is nevertheless in search of western political patterns and their causes (p. 6). He thus undertakes the Herculean task of gathering data over nearly seven decades about the West’s nineteen states and their more than five thousand elections for president, governor, and U.S. Congress.

The tale is complex. Using our current political color code signifying Democratic as blue and Republican as red, Nugent organizes his book by reviewing state trends in party allegiance over time. The “switchers” moved from blue to red (Oklahoma and Texas) or red to blue (Oregon and California). The “stayers” remained red (Kansas, Nebraska, the Dakotas, Wyoming, Utah, Idaho, and Alaska) or blue (Hawaii and Washington). Meanwhile, the “swingers” took on a purple complexion (Arizona, Montana, Nevada, Colorado, and New Mexico), repeatedly crossing the border between the Democratic and Republican parties.

The tale is also far more than statistical. State by state, Nugent outlines idiosyncratic political happenings over time. On a base of changing economies and populations, he relates the nuts and bolts of political life: strategies and tactics, electoral skirmishes, the building of party machines, the impact of personalities, the rise of charismatic leaders, and the burdens of miscalculation. Familiar names highlight the narrative: Harry Bellmon of Oklahoma; George McGovern of South Dakota; Wayne Aspinall of Colorado; Texas’ Sam Rayburn, Lyndon Johnson, and Bill Clements; California’s Brown family, Barbara Boxer, Dianne Feinstein, and Nancy Pelosi; Sarah Palin of Alaska; Patty Murray and Warren Magnuson of Washington; and Daniel Inouye and Patsy Mink of Hawaii. Arizona readers will not be disappointed in Nugent’s discussion of the highpoints of the state’s political history. These include the labor of long-serving senator Carl Hayden and the funding of the Central Arizona Project, the rise of the Republican machine in the 1950s under the direction of Barry Goldwater, the contributions of Stewart and Mo Udall, and the growing influence of Latino voters on Arizona elections. Nugent concludes with reflections tying together the varied state histories and election returns. These include advice regarding party organization and voter mobilization, term limits and their influence on

party success, incumbency and election results, and redistricting and the balance of power in the different states.

Much of the statistical data supporting Nugent's encyclopedic analysis appears in an appendix of almost sixty pages. The *Almanac of American Politics* is a valuable source of information. In addition, Nugent has extensively mined the secondary literature as well as newspaper and magazine articles, enabling him to provide the essential commentary to augment numerical information.

If denying theory and interpretation, *Color Coded* cannot escape debate. Some will question Nugent's expansive inclusion of nineteen states as the West, believing it more valuable to talk of a leaner region: the land beyond the Hundredth Meridian to the Pacific Coast or the U.S. Census Bureau's thirteen western states. Still, others will argue for a West that can best be understood as sub-regions—California and its satellites or the states of the Great Plains or the Rocky Mountain states. With the West as a region so fragile a concept, an elaborate conceptualization of the subject is essential.

Nugent's analysis is broad, but not deep. Nearly one-third of the book is devoted to happenings in California and Texas. While these states are certainly important, other states do not receive their due. Events over nearly seven decades in Utah, New Mexico, Wyoming, and five other states are each covered in six pages or less. The pace is dizzying and the space too short to texture or nuance the histories.

The book's color-coded organization and state-focused chapter outline hamper conceptualization. Nevertheless, a pattern does emerge from the individual state histories and election data. It suggests the nationalization of western politics. Three key trends are apparent. Latino, Asian, and African American voters have exercised increasing power at western polls. Nugent documents the growing importance of minority group voters in eight states including California, Texas, Colorado, and Arizona giving substantial weight to the Democratic Party. Meanwhile, the Christian Right and evangelical voters have flocked to the Republican Party in Texas, Oklahoma, Oregon, and four other states. Finally, particularly important in deciding western elections is the urban-rural divide in the majority of states. Racial fault lines are also clearly visible here. Houston, Portland, Salt Lake City, Seattle, Tucson, Las Vegas, and Denver among many other cities have become Democratic strongholds. This trend is particularly important in a region so heavily urbanized. In the West, party affiliation as a marker of identity goes beyond ideology to encompass race and place.

Walter Nugent's *Color Coded* is the necessary first stop for anyone interested in American western politics. It provides a valuable

scaffolding that will surely encourage broad conceptualization, but also in-depth studies of state and local history. It is the work of long hours and truly the gift of an accomplished historian.

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The Making of a Mexican American Mayor: Raymond L. Telles of El Paso and the Origins of Latino Political Power. By Mario T. Garcia. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2018. Pp. xix, 221. \$26.95 paper; \$26.95 ebook)

Mario Garcia's 2018 edition of *The Making of a Mexican American Mayor: Raymond L. Telles of El Paso and the Origins of Latino Political Power* is a welcome update of an important book. The election of the first Mexican American mayor in El Paso, Texas, in 1957 and one of the first in the nation offers valuable insights into the working of ethnic and racial politics in the Southwest. Garcia documents a pivotal moment in Mexican American history and a racial success story taking place far earlier than the elections of black and Latino mayors in the post-civil rights era. The book documents Telles's upbringing in South El Paso, his mayoral administration, and his later career, but the real page turner is the 1957 election. Garcia recreates the tension and excitement of an election where the young politician unseated a seasoned Anglo mayor. Telles's long family history of service in the segregated southside gave him a strong base, and the organizing skills of his brother Richard Telles drove the campaign forward. An exhaustive door-to-door campaign spread the word of his candidacy and urged that individuals register to vote and pay their poll tax on time. The Telles campaign conducted voter education sessions and even made mock voting booths out of refrigerator boxes so new voters could feel more comfortable with the process.

The Making of a Mexican American Mayor is a timely reminder that the race-baiting tactics utilized against Telles are still in use today. El Paso's Anglo mayor raised the specter of a racial threat and charged that a Telles administration would be corrupt, incompetent, harmful to the local economy, and introduce machine politics into the state's fifth largest city. Even Raymond Telles's Catholicism came under attack under the guise of separating church from state. To counter these attacks, Telles assembled and headed a "peoples' ticket" of Anglo candidates for