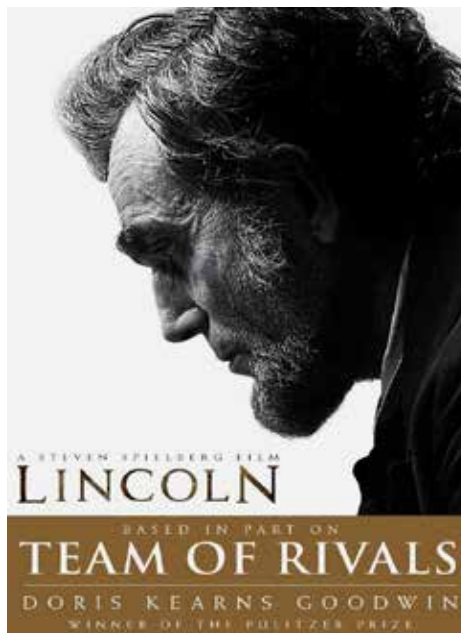


10 Books Every Legislator Should Read

From high-minded to hilarious, our unranked list has something for lawmakers of all stripes.

As the end of the year approaches, the time to start brainstorming New Year’s resolutions draws near. A new gym membership or a healthier diet will help your body, and a newly reorganized garage should calm your psyche. But hopefully, for your mind, you’ll squeeze in some time for reading. We asked a bevy of legislative experts, leaders and staff, along with NCSL officers and directors, what reading material—besides this magazine, of course—should be on every legislator’s nightstand. Here, in no particular order, are their top 10 recommendations.



“TEAM OF RIVALS,” BY DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN Amid the fratricidal carnage of the Civil War, it was Lincoln and the “team of rivals” in his cabinet who held the Union together. Goodwin details how this unlikely president channeled his enemies’ talents into cooperation, winning the war despite searing acrimony nationally and within his own administration.

Julie Lays, State Legislatures editor, and Kevin Frazzini, assistant editor, compiled this list.



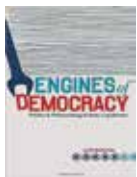
“GOOD TO GREAT,” BY JIM COLLINS Although focused on the private sector, the acclaimed management expert presents the characteristics that make any kind of organization great. Collins’ research stands alone in its thoroughness and scope, providing paradigm-shattering insight into leadership, organization and results.



“THE COMPLETE CALVIN AND HOBBS,” BY BILL WATTERSON The comic strip “Calvin and Hobbes” ended in 1995, when Watterson retired. But the rollicking adventures of Calvin, a rambunctious 6-year-old, and Hobbes, his pet tiger (known to everyone else as a stuffed animal) live on in this collection. Political scientist James Q. Wilson described the strip as “our only popular explication of the moral philosophy of Aristotle.” Thankfully, it’s also a lot of fun.

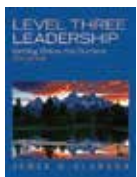


“THE EVOLUTION OF AMERICAN LEGISLATURES,” BY PEVERILL SQUIRE For the true legislative junkie, this book offers a meticulous history of state legislatures. Beginning with the colonial legislatures, influenced heavily by British traditions, Squire charts the course of their evolution into uniquely American institutions. Nearly every component of modern legislatures—the committee system, staffing, procedures, etc.—traces its heritage to this centuries-long transformation. Drawing on this wealth of historical analysis, Squire concludes with his take on possible changes still to come.



“ENGINES OF DEMOCRACY,”
BY ALAN ROSENTHAL No list would be complete without something from the late, great Alan Rosenthal of Rutgers University.

Rosenthal was the pre-eminent observer of state legislatures, and his final book distills his vast knowledge of policymaking. Also notable among the more than 20 titles he wrote or co-authored are “Legislative Life,” a comprehensive look at all things related to legislatures; “The Decline of Representative Democracy,” a sobering look at the forces threatening the institution; and “Heavy Lifting: The Job of the American Legislature,” his take on what makes a good legislature.



“LEVEL THREE LEADERSHIP”
(FIFTH EDITION), BY JAMES CLAWSON A staple in MBA programs, the “Level Three” model espouses leading based on values

and worldview. As opposed to primitive “command and control” styles, this strategy steers organizational behavior, influences change and motivates people to perform at their highest level.



“THE 7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE,”
BY STEPHEN COVEY This classic best-seller is still relevant for a simple reason: It ignores trends and pop psychology

in its step-by-step guide to solving personal and professional problems with fairness, integrity, service and human dignity. Also mentioned was another Covey book, “Principle-Centered Leadership.”



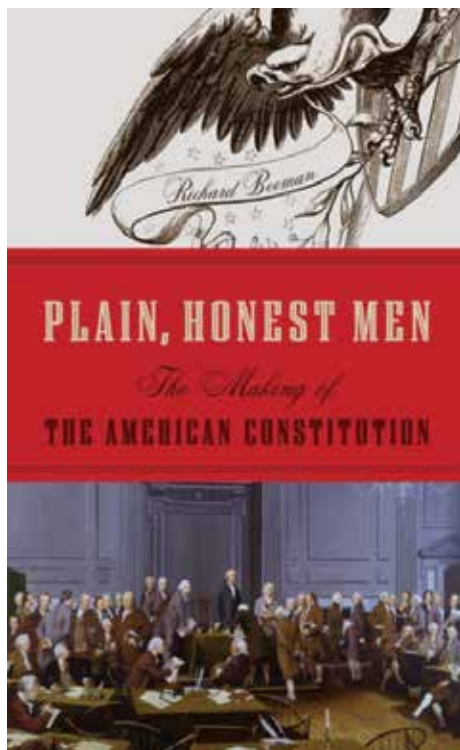
“FIRST PERSON POLITICAL,”
BY GRANT REEHER In an era of unprecedented cynicism and disengagement from politics, Reeher provides a refreshing look at politicians

as human beings. Drawing from extensive interviews with state legislators, he paints a portrait of the lawmaker as civil servant, deeply committed to the public good yet burdened by the harsh realities of politics.



“KEEPING THE COMPOUND REPUBLIC,”
BY MARTHA DERTHICK James Madison coined the term “compound republic” as he grasped

at fitting nomenclature for his young country’s great experiment in governance. In this collection of essays, Derthick examines this unique federal system and its careful balance between local autonomy and national authority. Through the lens of the 20th century’s tectonic shifts, she traces the enduring features and changing character of the idea.



“PLAIN, HONEST MEN: THE MAKING OF THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION,”
BY RICHARD BEEMAN Chronicling the four grueling months of negotiation, debate and compromise that produced the Constitution, this book illustrates the great rewards of cooperation and the hard work it requires. Beeman unwittingly provides a possible solution to partisan gridlock: Simply lock everyone in an un-air-conditioned room in the heat of summer until they arrive at a compromise.

No List Is Exhaustive

If you’ve already read all 10 of these, here’s a dozen more to consider.

“I Rose Like a Rocket: The Political Education of Theodore Roosevelt,” by Paul Grondahl

“The End of Inequality,” by Stephen Ansolabehere and James Snyder Jr.

“Storm Over the States,” by Terry Sanford

“Miracle at Philadelphia,” by Catherine Drinker Bowen

“1776,” by David McCullough

“The Killer Angels: The Classic Novel of the Civil War” (part of a trilogy), by Michael Shaara

“Give and Take: A Revolutionary Approach to Success,” by Adam Grant

“Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values,” by Robert Pirsig

“Profiles in Courage,” by John F. Kennedy

“David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits and the Art of Battling Giants,” by Malcolm Gladwell

“Master of the Senate: The Years of Lyndon Johnson” (third of four volumes), by Robert Caro

“Leadership on the Line,” by Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky

Will any of these make your list of resolutions? Do you have other recommendations? If you’ve read a book you think should have made this list, please let us know.