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Letter from the Editor

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Dear Readers,

In light of the recent state and national elections, I've been thinking a lot about the concept of governing. It's been pointed out that winning is easy compared with governing. Winning an election can involve taking ideological positions to energize a partisan base. Governing usually requires compromise. The word "govern," according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, had its first known English use in the fourteenth century and traces back to through Anglo-French to Latin *gubernare*, "to steer, govern," and ultimately to Greek *kybernan*. Along with referring to the process of controlling and directing policy-making and administration, governing can also mean "holding in check or restraining," ("income must govern expenditures") or "serving as a precedent or deciding principle" ("customs that govern human decisions").

The articles in this issue approach the idea of governing and government in a number of different ways, with a number of different messages. Diane E. Kenty, Ann R. Gosline, and Jonathan W. Reitman note that there are difficult problems that no single level of government can solve. They discuss the usefulness of public collaboration, a process in which people from multiple sectors work together to find solutions for such problems, and give detailed examples from recent Maine case studies. Alan Caron and David Osborne argue that Maine government, at all levels, needs to change fundamentally, to be "reinvented," if the state is to address the pressing economic needs of the twenty-first century. Richard Powell's article discusses Maine's pioneering effort to reduce the influence of private donations on elections through the Maine Clean Elections Act of 2000; he analyzes the impact of public funding of elections on competitiveness in the state's legislative races. Andrew Helman recommends ways in which policymakers can help the growing number of seniors in Maine who are cash poor but have equity in their homes, by strengthening private-sector "reverse mortgages." Peter Mills, who recently ended sixteen years of service to Maine in the legislature, writes in the Margaret Chase Smith essay about the virtues of incremental change, what he calls "bite-sized democracy."

Previewing what you can expect in 2011, our first issue will be focused on the important topic of food, with guest editors Deb Felder and Andrea Perry. Our second issue will be on an equally important topic, sustainability.

Best,


