

PERSPECTIVES IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS

REFORMING HEALTH CARE IN THE UNITED STATES, GERMANY, AND SOUTH AFRICA

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES
ON HEALTH

SUSAN GIÀIMO



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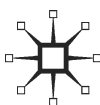
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Reforming Health Care in the United States, Germany, and South Africa

Comparative Perspectives on Health

Susan Giaimo

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*For all the uninsured and those who otherwise
lack access to good health care*

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S E R I E S E D I T O R ' S F O R E W O R D

Reforming Health Care in the United States, Germany and South Africa: Comparative Perspectives on Health by Susan Giaimo presents a timely topic in contemporary politics, as do all the books in the Palgrave series, *Perspectives in Comparative Politics*. Like them, this book offers an introductory overview, followed by three case studies, and concludes by summarizing the findings and what they suggest for the future work of scholars and for today's makers of policy. Throughout these books there also runs a quiet subtext: note what we can learn when we compare cases that are vastly different in some respects and strikingly similar in others, recognize the power of this kind of comparative study.

The topic of this particular book, the politics of health care reform in the United States, Germany, and South Africa, is unusually timely and vital. Professor Giaimo reviews in well-documented detail these three nations' efforts to bring about massive reforms in the quality and quantity of health care available to their citizens. She shows us three sets of problems, daunting in every case, and three paths of reform. In all three cases the paths have been—and to a greater or lesser extent still are—fraught with peril. The dangers include more than inadequate resources, the outbreak of a powerful epidemic, and the difficulties of achieving democratic consensus when opinions honestly differ as to what works best for whom. They also include past histories and present narratives of racially based inequalities of access, policies based on misinformation, bureaucratic and scientific inefficiencies, and outright corruption. They include politics.

And yet the three stories are also stories of victories and triumphs, and these too are the fruit of politics. Perhaps only governments could get it so wrong, but it is also true that only governments can put things right in ways that apply to all and have a chance of enduring beyond the lifetimes of individuals and administrations. As we observe the torturous road forward to passage and implementation of the Affordable Care Act (still menaced with dismantlement), the twists and turns the German

path has taken through compromise after compromise in region after region to resolve problem after problem, and the heartbreaking journey South Africans have been forced to travel through prejudice, poverty, and plague, we cannot but marvel at the fortitude of those who have endured, resisted, and finally prevailed, using political power to achieve what progress they could, significant progress that has changed the lives—*preserved* the lives—of millions.

Professor Giaimo tells these stories clearly and well, in scholarly depth and with compassion. I welcome her and her work to the series and urge her readers on to valuable new understandings of one of the most difficult and most important problems facing governments throughout the world.

KAY LAWSON,
Series Editor,
Perspectives in Comparative Politics

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