

Caroline J. Tolbert

CAROLINE J. TOLBERT is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Kent State University. She received her Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 1996. Her research on direct democracy includes a book, co-edited (with Shaun Bowler and Todd Donovan) entitled, *Citizens as Legislators: Direct Democracy in the United States*, Ohio State University Press (1998) and several chapters in this volume. The book received an outstanding (O) rating for books published in 1998-1999 from the American Association of University Presses for exceptional content and subject matter. "Outstanding" titles are defined as "essential editions to all or most library collections." Just over 100 books are designated as "Outstanding" each year across all disciplines.



Her research focuses on direct democracy politics and processes, specifically issues of governance, social policy and health policy. The research suggests ballot propositions have a direct impact on public policy in the American states; states with frequent use of ballot initiatives are more likely to adopt a range of policies-electoral/governmental reform, fiscal constraints, health care reform, language policy-than states without or low use of this mechanism. Other research focuses on voting and elections, suggesting that over time ballot initiatives lead to increased political participation (voter turnout) and a more informed electorate. Research suggesting state ballot initiatives increase voter turnout by stimulating interest in elections, was written up in *The Washington Post*, September 17, 2000, in an article entitled, "Unconventional Wisdom; New Facts and Hot Stats From the Social Sciences." Finally, research examining the important role of direct democracy in American political development over the past century suggests increased use of direct democracy (ballot initiatives) may function as an adaptive mechanism realigning government institutions with new social and economic conditions in the twenty-first century.

She has published articles (or has forthcoming article) in the *American Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Politics*, *Political Research Quarterly*, *American Politics Research*, *Women and Politics*, *Political Science Quarterly*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Government and Policy*, and *Party Politics*. She has given numerous presentations on direct democracy at national conferences over the past decade.