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Editorial

If you live in Pennsylvania, you cannot help but be aware—in this election season—of the important role that politics plays in this state and that Pennsylvania plays in the political life of the nation. In recognition of the important choices that citizens of this commonwealth would be weighing this elections year, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania decided to make the topic of "politics and civic engagement" the underlying theme of our activities this year. Coincidentally, over the last several years *PMHB*'s editorial board has puzzled over the dearth of articles and books in recent years on politics in this state. And we have discussed the idea of publishing a special issue on the topic both to highlight some of the best recent work and to encourage further work on the topic. This year, it seemed, would be a good time to publish that special issue.

The issue you have before you is the result of the hard work of two generous historians who got more than they bargained for when they agreed to guest edit an issue on this topic. Michael J. Birkner is the Franklin Professor of the Liberal Arts and Professor of History at Gettysburg College. Mike's scholarship focuses on aspects of nineteenth and twentieth-century America: political, urban, oral and biographical history. His numerous publications include books on presidents James Buchanan and Dwight Eisenhower. Mike is a former journalist and continues to write op-ed pieces for national publication. Randall M. Miller, William Dirk Warren '50 Sesquicentennial Chair and Professor of History at Saint Joseph's University, also leads both an academic and a public life. Philadelphians hear him frequently on the radio and TV and read his insights in the newspaper. He has published on a wide variety of topics, including the Civil War, the birth of the Republican Party, and the

history of Pennsylvania, and he has served as an editor of *PMHB*.

Mike and Randall have pulled together a selection of essays that invite us to take a fresh look at the political history of the state. The essays published here are not a comprehensive, or even a representative, history. There are glaring omissions. Women, for example, are almost completely absent. The civil rights movement does not take center stage here. Nor does politics in Harrisburg, or in the commonwealth's many cities and towns. The essays, therefore, encourage us to think in new ways about old, and new, topics, but also to explore the many remaining stories about politics in/and Pennsylvania that need to be told.

Tamara Gaskell
Editor