



The People's Agents and the Battle to Protect the American Public: Special Interests, Government, and Threats to Health, Safety, and the Environment

Rena Steinzor, Sidney Shapiro

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Reasonable people disagree about the reach of the federal government, but there is near-universal consensus that it should protect us from such dangers as bacteria-infested food, harmful drugs, toxic pollution, crumbling bridges, and unsafe toys. And yet, the agencies that shoulder these responsibilities are in shambles; if they continue to decline, lives will be lost and natural resources will be squandered. In this timely book, Rena Steinzor and Sidney Shapiro take a hard look at the tangled web of problems that have led to this dire state of affairs.

It turns out that the agencies are not primarily to blame and that regulatory failure actually stems from a host of overlooked causes. Steinzor and Shapiro discover that unrelenting funding cuts, a breakdown of the legislative process, an increase in the number of political appointees, a concurrent loss of experienced personnel, chaotic White House oversight, and ceaseless political attacks on the bureaucracy all have contributed to the broken system. But while the news is troubling, the authors also propose a host of reforms, including a new model for measuring the success of the agencies and a revitalization of the civil service. *The People's Agents and the Battle to Protect the American Public* is an urgent and compelling appeal to renew America's best traditions of public service.

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