A note from authors Edward Greenberg, David Doherty, Scott L. Minkoff, and Josh M. Ryan

on *The Struggle for Democracy*

Dear Colleagues,

This has been a challenging year for those of us who teach American Politics. Beyond the fact that many of us found ourselves thrown into a world of remote or hybrid teaching, it has often felt like the American political landscape has been upended. The year began with the impeachment and acquittal of President Trump. By April many Americans were living under government imposed stay-at-home orders and Congress had passed the CARES Act which specified over two trillion dollars in new federal spending. By summer the nation was gripped by widespread protests that emerged in response to the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. November saw a presidential election with record turnout where two traditionally "red states"—Arizona and Georgia—flipped to "blue," in part due to their growing and changing metropolitan areas. As we entered 2021, Trump was still refusing to concede, making false claims of voter fraud, and blocking the Biden transition team, while many members of Congress publicly encouraged his behavior.

In revising *The Struggle for Democracy,* now it its 14th edition, we came to a new appreciation of the core themes of the book: the causes and consequences of persistent racial and economic inequalities and changing demographics, as well as the ways in which the United States meets—and falls short of—being fully "democratic." Protests drew attention to ongoing racial inequalities in the country; conflict surrounding this activism—and, in some cases, law enforcement responses to the protests—highlighted the fact that struggles to remedy the shortcomings of American democracy are not always pretty. Government efforts to contain the virus highlighted the contemporary challenges of federalism, as well as the tradeoffs between protecting personal freedoms and public health imperatives. President Trump's refusal to accept the outcome of the election—and the breadth of Republican support for his position—demonstrated the extent to which democracy relies on shared norms, expectations, and values. It also called into question whether ambition can be expected to counter ambition in an era of sharp party polarization.

Although the topics we cover in *Struggle* are similar to those covered in many introductory American government textbooks, each chapter also includes an analytical framework (the pyramid) for linking core concepts to government outcomes, as well as a discussion of the normative question "How democratic are we?" We find that these tools help our students digest the material we cover and better understand what can feel like an endless, chaotic flood of political news. Importantly, our commitment to providing you with an up-to-date book does not come at the expense of historical context. We believe it is critical to help students understand that while this political moment may be unique, it does not come without precedent.

We are particularly proud of the Revel version of the text. In addition to being well-suited to evolving teaching practices, it allows us to continue engaging students with on-going events in ways that are simply not possible with print texts. We begin each chapter with a Current Event Bulletin that draws students' attention to recent events and begins forging connections between the events that matter to students and chapter themes before they even begin reading the core chapter material. The Revel version also includes the most up-to-date information about the aftermath of the 2020 elections. Finally, the digital format allows us to present students with figures that draw on recently released public opinion data. For example, the chapter on Public Opinion will

include data from the soon-to-be-released 2020 General Social Survey and 2020 American National Election Study—data that would not be available in time to produce and ship a print version of the text in time for fall classes.

We are incredibly grateful to be able to work on this book at this moment in history. As teachers we know that you have a lot of options when it comes to textbooks and that you want to feel good about how your students spend their money. That is a responsibility we take very seriously.

Sincerely,

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