

the prison for years potential locations. e would receive the ed a natural choice, id then-Mayor Dirk was suffering, Boise ty; site, and consistent l system because its ccalillo began their ps, the state legisla- Cecil Andrus and to al trade. Cashing in s, or elites demand vors or allegiances. relied heavily on I been instrumental nger David Leroy. ad helped deliver ortes the previous ile in his political use Pocatello had prison being built servers of politics, g up for a race for t for support from ty of trading and rections to "recon- ack in the running r words, the pro- who, in turn, used of Corrections. t political winner, all that had to be in Pocatello. Yet, new site, Cusick new site, Cusick ples of pluralism, group entered the its environmental area because the ; protected from ecting the local itical opposition al congressional (D). Stallings,

no longer in Congress, had been somewhat supportive of Idaho environmentalists. Because the new prison site would require congressional action to delist it as a federal watershed, the Sierra Club's connection to Stallings was a strong political resource. Calling themselves "Citizens to Save the West Bench," this group of local residents feared that the new prison would harm their quality of life and lower their property values. Many of these residents expressed safety concerns and concerns over noise, traffic, and light coming from the prison. This group stressed to the local media that while the prison might benefit the community as a whole, the costs were being dumped unfairly on the citizens in the neighborhood surrounding the new site. Fearing that the opposition might result in Pocatello once again losing the project, elected officials and pro-prison interest groups engaged in the very political art of compromise. This is also consistent with the principles of pluralism. First, to remove opposition from the local chapter of the Sierra Club, the city government and prison-backers agreed to zone the rest of Cusick Creek as a "nondevelopment zone" and to improve hiking trails in the area. The Sierra Club was willing to accept some loss of land in exchange for the assurance of future protection for the rest of the area. The Sierra Club even helped the city receive access to House member Stallings, and the city requested and received permission from the federal government to use the land. Second, to stop the opposition from the Citizens to Save the West Bench, the city of Pocatello agreed to move the prison location some 500 to 1,000 yards farther up the mountain and away from the neighborhood. Officials also gave assurances to the residents that the new prison would not be an eyesore (no big spotlights, no barbed wire, no tower guards). The neighborhood group, satisfied with the compromise and realizing that they were out of political resources, removed their objections. The path was now clear for the prison to be built in Pocatello and indeed it was. Now over 25 years later, the prison has expanded in terms of its mission, and its size and impact on the local economy remain an important fixture of the Pocatello economy.

The mini-case illustrates the principles of pluralism, group theory, and elitism, as well as the political process of policy formation. Is this a good or bad process for government? The answer depends on your political values. Many would argue that the siting was simply the result of powerful elites looking out for their own best political interests. Certainly the mayor and the Pocatello City Council received considerable praise and support from local interest groups who wanted the prison. Certainly the governor benefited by maintaining his popularity and support in Pocatello and Boise. Further, Mayor Kempthorne benefited by gaining support for his successful run for the U.S. Senate. In 1998 he ran successfully for governor, although he left that job when nominated by President Bush (and confirmed in May 2006 by the U.S. Senate) to be the Secretary of the Interior. Therefore, some would argue that only these elites benefited from the prison siting in Pocatello. Maybe the rational location for the prison would have been Boise. There are, though, other interpretations. Economically hard-hit Pocatello benefited by having new employment and new state money pumped into its economy. The university in Pocatello benefited from new programs in corrections. The local neighbors were able to retain the quiet nature of their neighborhood, and the Sierra Club traded some development for a promise of no future development on the city's west mountain bench. The political nature of policy formation does not necessarily produce bad policy, but the process is certainly messy and often untenable to those who do not like the give and take of politics.