than the mayor-council form. Accountability was to be formally provided by the frequently exercised right of city councils to fire the manager if he (early managers were males, frequently engineers) did not do as they wished. But accountability was also provided by improved budget documents that demonstrated how well public money was being spent.

Major spurts in adoptions of the council-manager form occurred after the two world wars. From 1945 to 1959 the number of council-manager adoptions increased from 637 to almost 1,500.[28] One reason was that the infrastructures of the cities were in a state of neglect, and technical problems required competent staff and an activist approach. In the past few years, the number of council-manager cities has actually exceeded the number of strong mayor cities, but what has caught the eye of the news media has been some major cities' abandoning the council-manager form and adopting the strong mayor form instead.

Often in these abandonments of the council-manager form a highly popular and well-known mayoral candidate pressed for charter changes that enhanced his or her own mayoral power. The shift often followed corruption scandals, long-term community decline, or severe financial problems with implications of incompetence or cover-up. In Richmond, Virginia, former governor Douglas Wilder campaigned in 2003 for a charter change to abandon the council-manager form and directly elect the mayor. Then he ran for the office, winning handily, after which, in early 2005, the council gave him the line-item veto and enhanced appointment powers. In Oakland, California, Jerry Brown, another popular ex-governor, got an amendment to the charter onto the ballot before his landslide victory in the mayoralty race in 1998; the measure passed by a wide margin. For a trial period, the city manager would report to the mayor rather than the council. In 2004 the measure expired, and after a campaign, it was made permanent by the public. Some claimed that there was little distinction in people's minds between the mayor and the form of government. San Diego had a successful abandonment election in 2004. There the mayor took on the manager's budget responsibilities, but the council received its own budget analyst and the ability to override the mayor's veto with only five votes. "The October firestorms exposed the severe underfunding of city fire services, the pension fund deficit has ballooned to $1.1 billion, and federal authorities are investigating errors and omissions in disclosure documents used to sell municipal bonds."[29] These issues weakened the city manager, and the mayor seemed to be distancing himself from the decisions by blaming the manager for them, though the mayor and council had accepted the manager's recommendations.

In each of these council-manager abandonments, successful elections to enhance the powers of the mayor followed years of unsuccessful efforts by mayors and their supporters. The time, circumstances, and candidates have to be right to secure a shift of budget responsibilities to the mayor.

Summary and Conclusions

At the federal and state levels, with clear distinctions between the executive and legislative branches, much of the change over time has to do with the shifting balance of budgetary power between branches of government. But at the state level more of the budget process is embedded in constitutions, rather than laws, with the result that it is harder to change. Reformers can lock their policy preferences into processes that are binding for generations, a result that makes it difficult to adapt to changing circumstances and has major implications for democracy, since later generations are bound by the decisions and preferences of earlier ones. To get around rigid rules there may be more informal budgeting at the state level, in processes that occur behind closed doors and involve negotiations. At the local level, much of the ongoing tension is between the state government, which is legally responsible, and the local governments, which are legally dependent on the states, over the degree of autonomy the local governments have in budgeting. The tension is ongoing in part because the rigidity and durability of state laws make it difficult for local governments to adapt and to make decisions that match local preferences.

At all levels of government when a budget process becomes extreme in any way, there are pressures to move it back toward the middle, even when it takes many years. Thus in Indiana, state-mandated budget processes affecting the localities have changed only slowly, but gradually they have become more neutral and respectful of local democratic priorities. In New York, extreme powers of the governor have generated multiple efforts by the legislature to win back some budgetary say. Sometimes the pendulum seems to swing back and forth, as when strong mayor systems are replaced by council-manager forms of government, only to be replaced again later by a strong mayor form. At the national level, if the president takes too much policy control away from Congress, Congress responds by taking some power back for itself. Change is more likely when a budget process fails to accomplish that which is supposed to be its strength—Gramm-Rudman-Hollings failed to balance the budget; the council-manager form in San Diego failed to provide sound financial management.

Though change in the process will almost always be justified on the basis of its ability to solve some public problem, in reality it is difficult to distinguish between changes aimed at enhancing the power of individuals and factions and changes that are aimed at solving particular public policy problems. Citizens seem unable to distinguish between giving more power to popular elected officials and changing the structure for the long term. The politicians pushing for enhanced powers often seem to make charter amendments referendums on their own popularity.

The shifts in process through time can be visualized as pendulum swings between extremes, but the reality is that the pendulum sticks in places. Several factors cause that stickiness and slow the rebalancing of budgetary powers or revamping of budgeting processes. Among them are structural rigidities, constitutions, charters, and laws, on the one hand, and highly unbalanced powers on the other. Those who are truly powerless in the budget process have trouble changing it because those who would have to give up power choose not to; powerful governors reject the reform proposals of legislatures that would reduce their power, as in the New York example. These sticky places hold up formal change and breed a variety of informal processes instead, some of which are dysfunctional. The informal processes may include holding up the budget to force negotiations or threat of vetoes to impose the executive's will. Informal processes are often changeable from year to year and carried out behind closed doors.

Though the ideal might be some kind of equilibrium—a budget process that avoids the extremes and balances the voices of a variety of legitimate stakeholders—sometimes equilibrium is not achieved. Budgets may not only be late, they may not arrive at all before the beginning of the fiscal year, with chaotic results for managers of programs and agencies and those dependent on government spending. Fiscal discipline may dissolve, with spending routinely outrunning revenues, piling up debt for future generations and limiting their ability to address their own problems collectively. Much time can be wasted fighting over process each year instead of working out priorities. In short, budget processes can deteriorate into ad hoc negotiations behind closed doors, with key figures and consequences blocked from public view. These episodic failures of process highlight the importance of building consensus around relatively neutral rules that share budgetary power wisely, so there will be minimal pressure to work around the process or derail it.

Useful Websites

For a rich oral history of congressional budget process, see **G. William Hoagland's oral history interviews on the Senate oral history project website** (www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/resources/pdf/OralHistory_HoaglandBill.pdf). Hoagland was staff director of the Senate Budget Committee for many years. He gave his interviews in 2006 and 2007. Hoagland gave another oral history interview in 2011, which outlines in detail some of the **informal evolution of the congressional budget process** (http://digitalassets.lib.berkeley.edu/roho/ucb/text/hoagland_william.pdf). This oral history comes from a collection of interviews from a special project at the Bancroft Library at the University of California Berkeley, "Slaying the Dragon of Debt: Fiscal Politics and Policy from the 1970s to the Present," a project of the Walter Shorenstein Program in Politics, Policy and Values. There are many other interviews in this series besides Hoagland's.

The Government Printing Office offers both a convenient **history of the Senate appropriations committee through 2008** (www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CDOC-110sdoc14/pdf/CDOC-110sdoc14.pdf) as well as a **history of the Senate budget committee through 2006** (www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CDOC-110sdoc14/pdf/CDOC-110sdoc14.pdf).

For an idea of the mandates that federal and state governments impose on local governments, see **Virginia's Catalog of State and Federal Mandates on Local Governments** (September 2011, www.dhcd.virginia.gov/Commission on LocalGovernment/PDFs/2011_mandates_catalog.pdf), from the Commission on Local Government, Department of Housing and Community Development, of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The report is several hundred pages long, which gives an idea of the number of mandates. Some information is presented on each one, though not a cost estimate. The report is issued annually, allowing for information about new mandates or deleted mandates over time.

The Council of State Governments (CSG) publishes an annual volume called the *Book of the States*. Table 4.4 lists the budget powers of governors across the states. A link to the 2012 and earlier editions can be found at **CSG Knowledge Center** (http://knowledgecenter.csg.org/kc/). Because prior years of the volume contain similar tables, some historical tracking is possible, though CSG doesn't do a new survey every year.

A nice description of how the emergency supplemental for relief from disasters has worked since 1990, and the degree to which this emergency spending has been offset with cuts from elsewhere or new revenue, is reported in a 2012 Congressional Research Service study by William Painter, **"Offsetting Supplemental Appropriations, the Disaster Relief Fund, FY 1990–2013"** (www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42458.pdf).