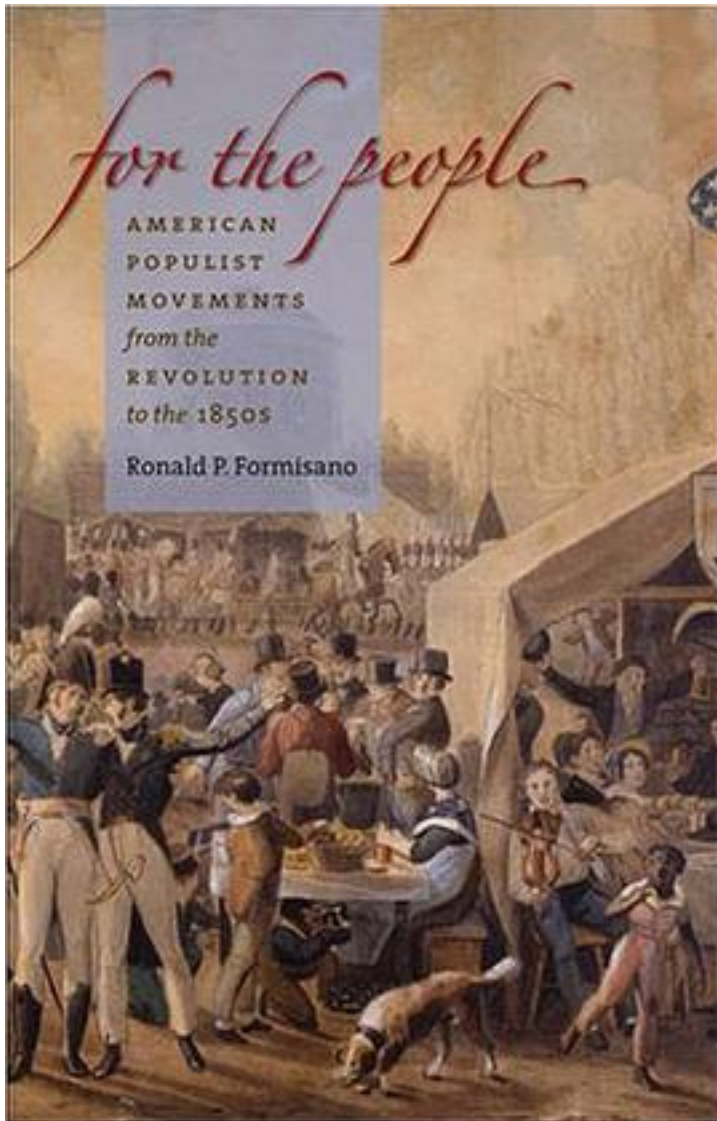


# For the People



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The stakes have seldom been higher for public service. Security concerns are surging to the foreground. New or neglected economic and social problems demand fresh thinking and deft action. Technology-driven improvements in the business sector raise citizens' expectations for performance. Government's capacity to deliver, meanwhile, too often falls short. The perception of government as bureaucratic and inflexible --and the blunt reality of uncompetitive salaries --can make talented people hesitate to take on public jobs. Many civic-minded young Americans opt reluctantly for business careers or turn to the nonprofit sector as a more appealing setting for doing good. Yet as John Adams advised his son, "public business must be done by someone." In our day, as Adams's, the urgency and complexity of much public business call for the talents of the very best. In this wide-ranging book, scholars from the Visions of Governance in the Twenty-First Century program at Harvard University examine what is broken in public service and how it can be fixed. Three interrelated long-term trends are changing the context of government in this century: "marketization," globalization, and the information revolution. These forces are acting to diffuse a degree of power, responsibility, and even legitimacy away from central governments. Public service in the era of distributed governance depends less on traditional aptitudes for direct administration and more on a subtler, sophisticated set of analytical and managerial skills. Those who labor for the people still need to discern public value through policy analysis and work the organizational machinery of government. But they must also be able to orchestrate the operations of far-flung networks involving a range of actors in different sectors. The authors argue that we are witnessing not the end of public service, but its evolution. While the evidence and arguments presented in this book make it hard to deny that many aspects of public service are strained, bent, or even broken, they also offer grounds for optimism that public service can be refurbished and reshaped to fit today's shifting challenges.

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