



# **On Politics and Parks: People, Places, Politics, Parks (Conservation Leadership Series, Sponsored by The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment, Texas State University)**

*George Lambert Bristol*

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When George Bristol first saw the mountains surrounding East Glacier, Montana, in the early summer of 1961, he was, in his own words, awed to his depths. Thus began a love affair with nature and public parks that has endured for more than fifty years. This same love affair would lead Bristol to become a crusader for America's national parks and, later, to be largely credited for the rescue of the ailing public park system in his home state.

In *On Politics and Parks*, Bristol tells his own story in lively prose that includes many intriguing peeks at behind-the-scenes events in Washington, Austin, and elsewhere. Beginning with his upbringing by a widowed young mother with a passion for music and literature, he narrates the converging of influences that led him to an influential political career, including active involvement in national campaigns for Lyndon B. Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, Lloyd Bentsen, and Jimmy Carter. After working for the Democratic National Committee and Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign, Bristol was asked to join President Clinton's administration.

However, what he really wanted was a place on the board of the National Park Foundation (NPF). With decades-old images of Glacier still burning brightly in his memory, he helped spearhead efforts to elevate the image of the National Park Service and helped establish a highly successful fundraising strategy for the NPF, giving both organizations greater national awareness and stature.

Having acquired a well-earned reputation for fundraising and effective advocacy, Bristol soon began to do for his home state what he had done for the NPF: solidify support and funding for the Texas park system. Over ten years and five legislative sessions, Bristol, through the Texas Coalition for Conservation, the nonprofit organization he founded, fought for the full claim of Texas state parks to the sporting goods tax. Utilizing his many contacts, his well-honed political sense, and his dogged patience, he forged an alliance that would win the day for everyone who loves the state's public lands. In 2007, in the last bill passed on the last day of the session, the Texas legislature nearly doubled the operating budget for parks.

*On Politics and Parks* is at once a lesson in conservation history and a captivating personal memoir that will inform, entertain, and inspire all those who share Bristol's love for the unspoiled beauty of the outdoors and his commitment to preserve that beauty for future generations.



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