



**Inventive Politicians and Ethnic Ascent in
American Politics: The Uphill Elections of Italians
and Mexicans to the U.S. Congress (Routledge
Research in American Politics and Governance)**

Miriam Jiménez

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This innovative book investigates the process through which ethnic minorities penetrate into higher echelons of political power: specifically, how they succeed in getting elected to the U.S. Congress. Analysts today see ethnic politicians largely in relation to their collectivities, but by actually studying what ethnic minority politicians *do* and the issues they have faced, Jiménez's book offers an original perspective of analysis.

Jiménez utilizes a ground-breaking comparative dataset of elected members of Congress organized upon the basis of national origin, the first available. Using the cases of Mexican-Americans and Italian-Americans, Jimenez analyzes and compares the different ways that these ethnic politicians have been elected to the national legislature from the beginning of the 20th century until the present. Her study examines Italian and Mexican-American politicians' actions and interactions with local political parties, identifies various layers of political power that have influenced their successes and failures, and uncovers the strategies that they have used. Jimenez argues that the politically active segment of an ethnic group matters in the process of political incorporation of a group. She also asserts that regular access of ethnic groups into upper levels of political office and the full acceptance of new ethnic players only occurs as a consequence of an institutional change.

Jiménez's pioneering documentation and analysis of the strategies of ethnic minority politicians and the ways that political institutions have influenced these politicians is significant to scholars of political incorporation, race and ethnicity, and congressional elections. Her book demonstrates the need to reconsider several standard ideas of how minority representation occurs and deepens our understanding of the role that political institutions play in that process.

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