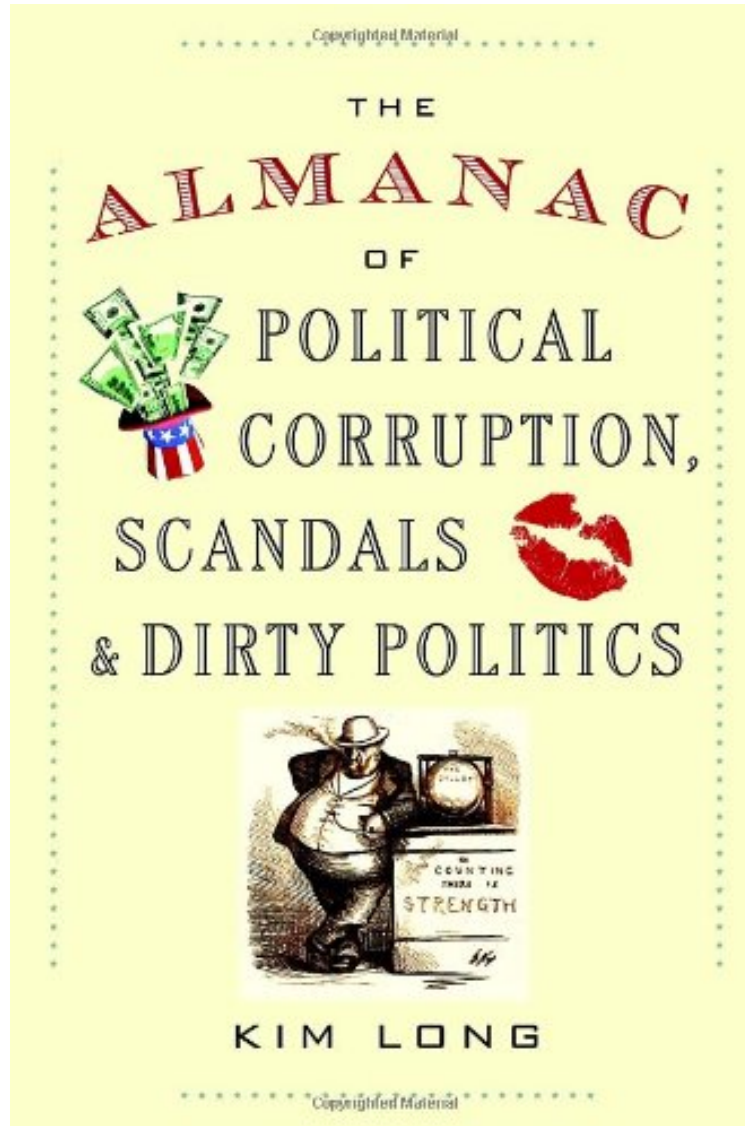


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The Almanac of Political Corruption, Scandals Dirty Politics

Kim Long

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Kim Long : The Almanac of Political Corruption, Scandals Dirty Politics before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Almanac of Political Corruption, Scandals Dirty Politics:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A PlusBy LeoHa. Great book. Politicians haven't changed one iota from the beginning of our nation to now, as the author so ably illustrates in humorous stories. They'd actually be funny if they weren't true.

Watergate. Billygate. Iran-Contra. Teapot Dome. Monica Lewinsky. American history is marked by era-defining misdeeds, indiscretions, and the kind of tabloid-ready scandals that politicians seem to do better than anyone else. Now, for the first time, one volume brings together 300 years of political wrongdoing in an illustrated history of politicians gone wild—proving that today's scoundrels aren't the first, worst, and surely won't be the last.... From high crimes to misdemeanors to moments of licentiousness and larceny, this unique compendium captures in complete, colorful detail the foibles, failings, peccadilloes, dirty tricks, and astounding blunders committed by politicians behaving badly. Amid stories of brawlers, plagiarists, sexual predators, tax evaders, and the temporarily insane, this almanac tells all about: •The only (so far!) president to be arrested while in office: Ulysses S. Grant, who was allegedly issued a ticket for racing his horse and buggy through the streets of Washington, D.C. •The former New Jersey state senator David J. Friedland, who disappeared during a scuba diving accident in 1985. It turns out he staged the accident and served nine years in prison after being captured in the Maldives. •Tape-recorded instructions from highbrow president Franklin Delano Roosevelt on how his staff should carry out some low-down political tricks •The bizarre story of U.S. congressman Robert Potter, who castrated two men he suspected of having affairs with his wife. Potter won election to the state house while in jail—but was kicked out for cheating at cards. •Texas congressman Henry Barbosa Gonzalez: he was charged with assault in 1986 after he shoved and hit a man who called him a communist. Gonzalez was seventy years old at the time. At once shocking and hilariously funny, here's a book that exposes the history of American politics, warts and all—and makes for hours of jaw-dropping, fascinating, illuminating reading.

About the Author Kim Long is the author of *The American Forecaster Almanac*, published annually since 1984. He has been a columnist with News America Syndicate, does market research for organizations and companies, and has written dozens of other books on history, business, and nature. He has been widely interviewed and has appeared on Good Morning America, CBS This Morning, NBC Sunday Today, CNN, NPR, CBS radio, Atlantic Monthly, Harpers, and USA Today. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION For many American adults, contemporary political history has been defined more by negatives than positives. In the past thirty-odd years, major scandals have marked the executive and legislative branches of the federal government in a relentless parade of revealing headlines. Keywords now brand the recent presidencies: Iran-Contra, Watergate, Abscam, Whitewater, Monica Lewinsky. The collective response has been to lower our approval rating for the very officials who require the highest confidence. When first exposed, any scandal now seems to have the potential to be career threatening, and too few voters are willing to take a politician's avowal of innocence at face value. Worse, many Americans believe that all politicians are tainted—with scandal, unethical standards, corrupt behavior, or similar substandard character—and the country is gradually regressing, losing its traditional values, and spiraling downward toward a degraded, immoral finale. Is this perception appropriate, much less accurate? One of the goals of this project is to provide a new measuring rod with which to gauge the breadth and depth of the current political environment, both the activities of politicians and the process of electing them. A chronological history—from our colonial roots onward—provides just such a unique barometer of reality. And it becomes quickly apparent, once this approach is under way, that the past provides a considerable wealth of evidence to support the folk saying, "The more things change, the more they stay the same." Pick any category of modern political wrongdoing—sins of the flesh, theft, bribery, extortion, lies, coverups, election fraud—and historical precedents are easy to find. Add an element missing from most political activity in the past few decades, bloodshed, and the historical record often outshines today's antics. Yet our human inclination to focus on the sensational does us a disservice. Even in colonial America, people read newspapers, the main source of information about current events, but then, as now, "normal" isn't news. As the saying goes, it's only news when the man bites the dog. The current and historical record of political misdoings covers just that, misdoings, not the standard, mundane, day-to-day operations that keep local and national systems operational. Consider the bigger picture. Since the first Congress, just under 12,000 individuals have served in the U.S. House and Senate, but far less than one percent of these have been expelled, indicted, or tried for criminal activity. Only two presidents out of forty-two have been impeached, and neither of those was convicted. Out of more than 2,100 governors, only fifteen have been impeached, with only seven convicted after impeachment. A similar record holds for federal judges: more than 3,100 have served and only seven have been convicted after impeachment. Politicians who screw up are the exception, not the rule. Even when politicians have erred and elections have been rigged, life goes on. The country and the Constitution have survived. Rules have been added to reduce opportunities for malfeasance, to remove barriers for participation in both politics and voting, and to provide fairer platforms for both. Those who do not play by the rules—then or now—are individuals who may be "good people making bad decisions," sinister manipulators, or followers more willing to imitate their peers than do what is right. But these miscreants have one thing in common: they are all in the minority. Here we focus on that minority with the knowledge that their brethren were tending to business while they were screwing up or screwing around. It's an equal opportunity exposé, with plenty of room for participation regardless of party affiliation, wealth, intelligence, age, race, ethnicity, gender, or geographical location. Most important, the story of this group of misfits is much more entertaining than that of their mainstream colleagues. And it is a story that is unlikely to end. With that in mind, we wrote the last line first... to be continued. In

1730, Jonathan Belcher (1682-1757) was appointed royal governor of Massachusetts and the province of New Hampshire. Belcher had on going problems with the residents, including charges of corruption. The legislature refused to grant him an annual salary, although this was an issue based more on colonial vs. British rights than a personal affront; the assembly refused the same request for twelve other governors. He remained in office until 1741, when he was forced out for receiving a bribe, a charge he successfully defended against. He later served as the governor of the Province of New Jersey and is credited as the founder of Princeton University.⁷ In 1734, George Burrington (1680-1759), royal governor of North Carolina, was sent back to England because of complaints about his leadership. Burrington had previously been the Lord Proprietor of North Carolina (1724-1725) before the territory was made a colony. While there, he had incurred charges of improper conduct, including an indictment for assaulting the previous governor. Some—or all—of the dislike for his rule may have been politically motivated. In any case, there was no shortage of vindictive descriptions of his character and activities. The slurs included: "notorious ignorance and profligacy," "vileness of character," "mad extravagance of behaviour," "drunken and quarrelsome," "character unadorned by a single virtue," and "dirty rogue and villain." One of his political enemies circulated a story that while in England, he had been convicted and imprisoned for physically attacking an old woman. He was reportedly killed in a street brawl in London.⁸ At the end of the colonial era in America, 130 governors had served as heads in the colonies, including those in the Caribbean Islands. Of those, forty died in office and the rest served terms of varying length before they were replaced. The record for the longest term was twenty five years, for Benning Wentworth in New Hampshire. The record for the shortest term was two days, for Sir Danvers Osborn in New York, who killed himself two days after his inauguration. Average term: about five years.⁹