Reading Number 58
from Politicians Don’t Pander
By Lawrence Jacobs and Robert Shapiro

p. 401, ¶ 2– “The way Congress handled the impeachment of President Bill Clinton revealed a lot about American politics.”

p. 402, ¶ 2– “The impeachment spectacle reveals one of the most important developments in contemporary American politics– the widening of the gulf between politicians’ policy decisions and the preferences of the American people toward specific issues.”

Ibid., ¶ 3– “The conventional wisdom that politicians habitually respond to public opinion when making major policy decisions is wrong…”

Ibid., ¶ 5– “…Republicans disregarded public opinion on impeachment because their political goals of attracting a majority of voters was offset by their policy goals of enacting legislation that politicians and their supporters favored.”

p. 403, ¶ 1– “… the Republicans’ relentless pursuit of impeachment was largely driven by the priority that the domineering conservative wing of the party attached to their policy goal (removing Clinton) over their political goals (appealing to the majority of Americans). Moderate Republicans could not ignore the risk of opposing impeachment– it could lead to a challenge in the next primary election and diminished campaign contributions.”

p. 404, ¶ 1– “Politicians respond to public opinion… in two quite different ways. In one, politicians assemble information on public opinion to design government policy.”

Ibid., ¶ 2– “Politicians respond to public opinion in a second manner– they use research on public opinion to pinpoint the most alluring words, symbols, and arguments in an attempt to move public opinion to support their desired policies.

p. 405, ¶ 4– “Although news reports largely represent the genuine contours of American politics, the media’s organizational, financial, and professional incentives prompt them to exaggerate the degree of conflict in or to produce simple, captivating stories for their audiences.”

p. 406, ¶ 5– “The most important implication of raising responsiveness is to reaffirm the spirit and content of democracy in America. The continued slippage in government responsiveness threatens the foundation of our democratic order and the meaning of rule by and for the people.”