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The siting impasse and a rational choice model of regulatory behavior: An agency for power plant siting [â††](#)

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Abstract

Reasons for the current siting impasse, including participatory activism, regulatory failure, the multiplication of considered interests, and the "investigative caveat," are reviewed, and the existing logic of regulator behavior, viewed as a rational choice model, is summarized. Three sets of goals for agency participants are identified: personal goals of agency decision-makers, organizational goals of the agency as a whole, and goals of agency clients; and the incentive system of a new administrative agency structured so as to make satisfaction of these goals contribute toward informed and impartial decision-making. Major structural components of the agency would be a Director, a Corps of Examiners, counsel(s) for special interest(s) of special merit, a Public Counsel, and a Research and Information Office. The model is applied to the case of a regional or state-level agency to handle power plant siting.



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This is a revised version of Barry M. Mitnick and Charles Weiss, Jr., "Rational Choice Models and Institutional Change in Regulation: The Case of Power Plant Siting," paper delivered at the 1973 Annual Meeting of the Public Choice Society, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, March 22-24, 1973. That paper was based in part on Mitnick and Weiss, "An Agency for Power Plant Siting" (October 1970), unpublished paper written with the partial support of the Salk Institute's Columbia University Urban Ecology Program, and Mitnick, "An Agency for Power Plant Siting," 1970-1971 Ripon Society Public Policy Prize competition paper, an edited version of which appeared in the *Ripon Forum* (January 1972). The authors are grateful for the suggestions and criticisms of several readers of earlier versions of the present paper.

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