



Lincoln and the Union Governors (Concise Lincoln Library)

William C. Harris

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Over the course of the Civil War, fifty-nine men served as governors of the twenty-five Union states.

Although these state executives were occasionally obstructionist and often disagreed amongst themselves, their overall cooperation and counsel bolstered the policies put forth by Abraham Lincoln and proved essential to the Union's ultimate victory. In this revealing volume, award-winning historian William C. Harris explores the complex relationship between Lincoln and the governors of the Union states, illuminating the contributions of these often-overlooked state leaders to the preservation of the nation.

Lincoln recognized that in securing the governors' cooperation in the war he had to tread carefully and, as much as possible, respect their constitutional authority under the federal system of government.

Contributing to the success of the partnership, Harris shows, was the fact that almost all of the governors were members of Lincoln's Republican or Union Party, and most had earlier associated with his Whig party. Despite their support for the war, however, the governors reflected different regional interests, and Lincoln understood and attempted to accommodate these differences in order to maintain a unified war effort.

Harris examines the activities of the governors, who often worked ahead of Lincoln in rallying citizens for the war, organizing state regiments for the Union army, and providing aid and encouragement to the troops in the field. The governors kept Lincoln informed about political conditions in their states and lobbied Lincoln and the War Department to take more vigorous measures to suppress the rebellion. Harris explores the governors' concerns about many issues, including the divisions within their states over the war and Lincoln's most controversial policies, especially emancipation and military conscription. He also provides the first modern account of the 1862 conference of governors in Altoona, Pennsylvania, which provided important backing for Lincoln's war leadership.

By emphasizing the difficult tasks that both the governors and President Lincoln faced in dealing with the major issues of the Civil War, Harris provides fresh insight into the role this dynamic partnership played in preserving the nation's democratic and constitutional institutions and ending the greatest blight on the republic—chattel slavery.

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