Zuckert, Michael P. *The Natural Rights Republic.*

Natural rights have long dominated American political theory. And this is no surprise, according to Zuckert, since the founders pledged allegiance to natural rights at the inception of the new republic by commissioning them to define the limits of political authority. Zuckert examines the Declaration of Independence for insight into the nature of rights. Among the fruits of his labor is the intriguing thesis that the founders did not believe that the truths announced in the Declaration were really self-evident but simply held them to be. Moreover, they held that all Americans must hold these truths to be self-evident—which amounts to taking them to be the first principles of *practical* reasoning. But if a "real" American is one who reasons exclusively from natural rights, then all "real" Americans must presumably disavow utilitarianism and perhaps Kantianism as well—a provocative thesis to say the least. A broad implication of this book is that American political theory (from Jefferson up to Rawls and Nozick) is most essentially a history of attempts to articulate what it means to be an American. Zuckert nicely explains why natural rights figure so prominently in this history.

D. L. D.