Policymaking for Health Care and the Environment
Health Care Policy

• The Health of Americans
  – Americans generally lag behind in some key health statistics
  – Specifically a lower life expectancy and higher infant mortality rate.

• The Cost of Health Care
  – Americans spend more than any other country.
  – Reasons for high costs: private insurance pays much of the cost, emphasis on new and expensive technology, increase in malpractice suits results in “defensive medicine.”
Health Care Policy

• Uneven Coverage, Uneven Care
  – Health Insurance
    • About 43 million Americans have no health insurance.
    • Often linked to having a job - lose the job, lose the health insurance.
    • Health insurance is closely tied to race and income.
Health Care Policy

• Uneven Coverage, Uneven Care
  – Managed Care
    • HMO: provide health care for a yearly fee through contracts or insurance companies. Covers about 60 percent of Americans.
    • Designed to reduce costs through oversight and limiting patient choices.
    • Patients’ bill of rights would give patients rights against medical providers, including right to sue.
Health Care Policy

• The Role of Government in Health Care
  – Government in the United States has the smallest role.
  – Medicare: provides hospitalization insurance for elderly and optional coverage for other medical expenses.
  – Medicaid: public assistance program to provide health care for the poor. Paid for by national and state governments.
Health Care Policy

• Policymaking for Health Care
  – The Politics of Health Care
    • Equality of care and cost containment take a back seat to technological advance.
    • Interest groups (medical profession, elderly, business, insurance companies) play a major role in health care policy making.
Health Care Policy

• Policymaking for Health Care
  – The Clinton Heath Care Reform Plan.
    • Main concern guaranteeing health care coverage for all
    • Paid for by requirement for employer insurance and tax increases
    • Health alliances would collect premiums, bargain with health plans, and handle payments.
    • Interest groups lobbied hard against this bureaucratic and complicated plan.
    • Eventually died in Congress.
Health Care Policy

• Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) 2009
  – Mandated health insurance to all Americans
  – Increased coverage for poor in Medicaid
  – Highly controversial
    • Republicans want competitive marketplace
    • Democrats want single payer system (gov’t)
    • Series of court cases challenging law
      – Supreme Ct. upheld based on Congress’ ability to tax
Health Care Policy

• Policymaking for Health Care
  – The Health Policy Issues ahead
    • Polls show Americans are fairly satisfied but want reform.
    • Main concerns are access and cost.
    • Remains complex, confusing and expensive with all the providers and governments involved.
Environmental Policy

• Environmental Policies in America
  – Environmental Impacts.
    • Environmental Impact Statements: report that specifies likely environmental impact of a proposed action - filed with the EPA.
    • Used by environmental groups to challenge and delay projects they object to.
  – Clean Air.
    • Clean Air Act of 1970: reduce auto pollution.
    • 1990 amendments allowed emissions trading.
Environmental Policy

• Environmental Policies in America
  – Clean Water.
    • Water Pollution Control Act of 1972: intended to clean up the nation’s rivers and lakes requiring the use of pollution control technology.
    • Has helped reclaim numerous rivers and lakes since its passage.
    • But it misses “runoff” pollution from city streets and other areas.
Environmental Policy

• Environmental Policies in America
  – Wilderness Preservation
    • The U.S. is a world leader in wilderness preservation.
    • The national parks and national forests may be restricted to keep them for future generations.
  – Endangered Species
    • Government protects those species listed as endangered - regardless of costs (Endangered Species Act).
    • Exceptions may be made in some instances.
Environmental Policy

• Environmental Policies in America
  – Toxic Wastes
    • Superfund was created by Congress in 1980 to clean up hazardous waste sites.
    • Has virtually eliminated haphazard dumping of toxic waste, but less successful in cleaning up existing waste.
    • Nuclear waste presents a serious challenge.
Energy Policy

• Energy Sources and Energy Politics
  – 87% of the nation’s energy comes from coal, oil and natural gas.
  – Coal is the most abundant fuel, but also the dirtiest.
  – Oil accounts for 40% of our energy, but creates a dependence on foreign (especially Middle East) sources.
  – Most controversial energy source is nuclear.
Energy Policy

• The Global Warming Debate Heats Up
  – Scientists argue about the effects of accumulations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.
  – The only way to reduce the problem is to reduce the amount produced.
  – The costs to do this are immediate, but the effects won’t be visible for decades, if ever.
Groups, Energy, and the Environment

– The issue is political since it puts “public” goods against other private concerns.
– There are more groups and more people getting involved in protecting the environment.
– They are still opposed by those who want to use the land for their own purposes.
– Policies will be controversial & expensive.
Understanding Health Care and Environmental Policy

• Democracy, Health Care, and Environmental Policy
  – The issues involve all levels of governments.
  – High-tech issues limit citizen’s participation.
  – Relies heavily on group participation.
  – Groups can afford the research into the science and policy of the issues.
Understanding Health Care and Environmental Policy

• The Scope of Government and Health Care and Environmental Policy
  – As citizens want more health care reform, the size of government will increase.
  – Increased environmental protection will also cause the size of government to go up.
  – With party divisions, incremental change is most likely.