

Polycymaking 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 Health 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.