

PUBLIC POLICY

- I. INTRO – review the details of the immigration reform policy on page 469
- II. DEFINING PUBLIC POLICY
 - a. PUBLIC POLICY- a specific course of action that government takes to address a problem
 - i. Government and convey a public policy to the nation in
 - 1. Laws passed by Congress and signed by the president
 - 2. Opinions issued by the Supreme Court
 - 3. Rules written by administrators
 - b. POLITICS is the interaction of people and their government, while POLICY is the product of that give and take
 - i. Review table 17-1 on page 470
 - c. TYPES OF PUBLIC POLICY
 - i. DISTRIBUTIVE POLICY- benefits all groups in society, such as Social Security or Medicare, National Parks, national defense, education funds
 - ii. REDISTRIBUTIVE POLICY- taking resources away from one group (usually in the form of taxes) to distribute to another group – Head Start, Welfare; redistribution of income
 - 1. Also known as ZERO-SUM GAMES – rob Peter to pay Paul; one loses resources equivalent to one who gains resources
 - iii. COUNTERDISTRIBUTIVE POLICY- takes resources away from ALL groups to solve a common problem; improved mileage on cars
 - 1. Utilize a cost/benefit analysis to see if change makes sense

III. THE EIGHT STEPS IN MAKING PUBLIC POLICY

a. Review figure 17-1 on page 472; note that step 3 is the most difficult; easier to make a NONDECISION and do nothing

i. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE WORLD – policy makers tend to be pessimistic about the future when defining problems, while they are optimistic about the future when announcing solutions

ii. SETTING THE AGENDA- choosing the problem to be solved is essential in setting the POLICY AGENDA- the list of issues that the federal government pays attention to and wants to solve

1. A direct result of politics and reflects broad social goals

2. Can come from a variety of sources; emergencies, interest groups

3. Can be the subject of ongoing government monitoring; economic

4. Public's attention span can be very short

5. How an issue becomes prioritized is much the same as other political decisions, but assisting in formulating the decision are THINK TANKS, nongovernmental organizations that influence public policy

iii. DECIDING TO ACT

1. Policy makers understand that public pressure for action ebbs and flows over time

2. The public follows an ISSUE-ATTENTION CYCLE where each problem suddenly leaps into prominence for a short time and gradually fades from attention

a. Pre-stage problem

b. Alarmed discovery and enthusiasm

c. Change will incur significant cost

- d. Gradual decline of intense public interest
 - e. Post problem stage- prolonged limbo
- 3. Some problems take decades such as civil rights; others are more short term and specific, like car emissions
- iv. DECIDING WHAT TO DO
 - 1. How much to do...a comprehensive program like Social Security or a smaller program
 - 2. INCREMENTAL OR COMPREHENSIVE POLICY
 - a. INCREMENTAL POLICY- small-scale adjustment in an existing program
 - i. Easier to create, build upon past decisions
 - ii. Most frequent response to calls for change
 - b. COMPREHENSIVE POLICY OR PUNCTUATING POLICY- dramatic change in the federal government's role
 - i. Used when new image of a problem changes the overall perception of the issue
 - 3. IRON TRIANGLES AND ISSUE NETWORKS
 - a. Review figure 17-2 on page 477
 - b. Alliances called IRON TRIANGLES exist for decades
 - i. Has three sides
 - 1. A federal department or agency
 - 2. Set of loyal interest groups

- 3. House or Senate committee
 - ii. Each side supports the other two
 - c. Iron triangles have been largely replaced by much looser connections of **ISSUE NETWORKS** – a loosely organized group of interest groups, congressional committee, presidential aides, and other parties
 - i. Concentrate power in the relatively small number of individuals who organize and maintain them
- v. **CHOOSING A TOOL** – 5 tools
 - 1. Spending money
 - a. Direct payments to individuals, hospitals, corporations or other nations
 - b. Social Security and Medicare (to hospitals)
 - 2. Using taxes to regulate economy and encourage certain behaviors
 - a. Lower taxes to stimulate economy; higher taxes to cool hot economy
 - 3. Providing goods and services directly
 - a. National parks and museums
 - 4. Providing protection against risk
 - a. Federal loan guarantees
 - 5. Creating standards, incentives, or penalties
 - a. Using **REGULATION**- a policy that either encourages or discourages behavior by imposing legally-binding **RULES** – a precise statement of how a law is to be implemented
 - 6. All 5 tools are designed to produce **MATERIAL** benefits to society such as Social Security, new roads and bridges,

hospitals; some are tangible and others have SYMBOLIC benefits such as efforts to educate the public, study an issue

- vi. DECIDING WHO WILL DELIVER THE GOODS AND/OR SERVICES
 - 1. PRIVATE BUSINESSES- paid under contract with the federal government; operate screening at airports; Blackwater in Iraq
 - 2. COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES- especially if it includes research; every major university receives federal funding; source of many scientific breakthroughs
 - 3. STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS- collect trash, provide drinking water, vaccinate children; police and fire protection
 - 4. CHARITIES- American Red Cross, American Cancer Society; receive contracts and grants; “social benefit organizations”; tripled over past 50 years
- vii. MAKING RULES FOR IMPLEMENTATION – comes at the very end of the policy-making process and is almost invisible to most citizens
 - 1. Very important to have precise language; no abstraction
 - 2. Can be very detailed
 - 3. Can see the growth of rules in the FEDERAL REGISTER; see figure 17-4 on page 482
 - 4. Fairly straightforward process
 - 5. If the rule violates legislative intent, can produce judicial action

viii. RUNNING THE PROGRAM

1. Ongoing day-to-day running of the program is usually done by a federal department or agency
2. Requires millions of federal employees

ix. THE ORDER OF ACTION

1. Can start with any step and move forwards or backwards depending on the politics
2. The policy “streams” are shaped by citizens, interest groups, presidents, members of Congress and move through institutions in search of each other; always in a state of flux
3. Some policies are efforts to terminate a current program

IV. CITIZENS AND PUBLIC POLICY

- a. Public policy does not take place in a vacuum; confusing dance called politics and engages citizens, interest groups, political parties, legislators, judges, and government institutions
- b. Citizens are anxious to participate due to complexities; but there are ways
 - i. Voting
 - ii. Joining interest groups
 - iii. Writing letters
 - iv. Sending e-mails
 - v. Confronting legislators
 - vi. Running themselves
- c. Most successful when it involves clear ideas for alternative policies