

Public Policy

Public Policy:

How does the legislative branch influence the formulation of the federal budget

After Congress receives and debates the budget package formulated by the Office of Management and Budget and the president, Congress modifies the president's proposal. Congressional committees hold hearings, analyze the budget proposals, and by September offer budget resolutions that must be passed by September 15. Congress then sends the bills to the president for approval.

Public Policy:

What is the role of the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives?

The agency was created by George W. Bush and added to the Executive Office of the President. The agency was created to allow local religious organizations to serve communities with food aid, housing aid, medical help, and educational services, and to apply for and receive federal funding to provide these services

Public Policy:

How does the bureaucracy provide social welfare to needy citizens?

Since 1996, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, giving fixed block grants to the states to design their own welfare programs. Whatever the states do not spend on their own programs, they can keep.

Public Policy:

What determines whether an issue is on the policymaking agenda?

The most important factors are shared political values, the weight of custom and tradition, the impact of events, the coverage of these events by the mass media, and changes in the way political elites think about politics.

Public Policy:

What is fiscal policy?

Fiscal policy is the policy of taxation and spending that makes up the nation's economic policy and is designed to improve the overall economic health of the nation.

Public Policy:

What is the state's role in criminal laws and sentencing?

Because each state has its own criminal laws, dramatic differences exist among states when it comes to sentencing. Mandatory sentencing exists for some states for some classes of crimes, thus taking away judicial discretion. In most cases, however, judges have great latitude within a state.

Public Policy:

What are at least two examples of the Supreme Court setting the public policy agenda?

The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* school desegregation case, the 1962 *Engle v. Vitale* prayer case, the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* abortion rights case, and the 1976 *Gregg v. Georgia* death penalty case are all instances of the Court setting the policy agenda.

Public Policy:
What is client politics?

When a policy confers a benefit on one group at the expense of other people it is known as client politics. For example, states regulate occupations, such as barbers, dry-cleaners, and so on. These regulations protect the public but also set standards for entry into these professions, allowing members to both charge higher prices and restrict entry.

Public Policy:
What economic powers are reserved to the states?

State governments have historically retained the power to regulate business, labor, and the professions. They also establish laws dealing with property ownership, contracts, corporations, and torts. States closely regulate insurance and banking, set the rules governing public utilities, and encourage business development. States administer and control natural resources.

Public Policy:
What are the two basic kinds of policy agendas?

The two basic kinds of policy agendas are the systemic agenda, which is a discussion agenda of all issues that are seen as meriting public attention, and the governmental or institutional agenda, which refers only to those problems that legislators or public officials feel are worth serious time and attention.

Public Policy:
The largest percentage of federal budget money goes to pay for what program?

The largest of money from the federal government goes to pay for the cost of entitlement programs such as social security. More money goes to pay for these programs than for any other expenditure.

Public Policy:

What are the major forces in public policymaking?

The major forces in policymaking include organized and disorganized groups, the courts, the bureaucracy, the Senate, and the national media.

Public Policy:

What role does Congress play in the formation of foreign policy?

Congress plays a role in the development of foreign policy by making recommendations to the president on foreign relations, approving treaties, and approving nominations of ambassadors.

Public Policy:

How much of federal revenue is derived from income taxes? Corporate income taxes?

The individual income tax is the federal government's biggest source of revenue. About forty-five cents of every dollar the government collects comes from this source. People also pay state income tax. Only 10 percent of federal revenue is derived from corporate income taxes.

Public Policy:

What was the effect of *Parenthood v. Casey*?

Planned Parenthood v. Casey (1992) lefts courts to grapple with abortion regulations through application of a new test: does the regulation in question place an undue burden on a woman's right to choose an abortion? Using this new test, courts have upheld some abortion regulations (such as waiting periods) while striking down others.

Public Policy:
Name at least three Supreme Court cases regarding the death penalty and their consequences.

Furman v. Georgia (1972) invalidated all then-existing death penalty laws based on the inherent arbitrariness of their application; in *Gregg v. Georgia* (1976) the Court upheld Georgia's new capital –sentencing procedures; in *Atkins v. Virginia* (2002) and in *Roper v. Simmons* (2005) the Court ruled that the death penalty is unconstitutional when applied to the mentally retarded and to person under the age of eighteen, respectively.

Public Policy:
How has the USA Patriot Act increased federal investigation powers?

With a court order, the government may tap every phone a suspect uses instead of having to get a separate order for each phone. The attorney general may hold any noncitizen who is thought to be a national security risk for up to seven days, and if not charged or detained, can continue to hold the suspect if he or she is deemed to be a security risk.

Public Opinion:
What are the key steps in the budget-making process?

First, House and Senate budget committees review the major provisions of the president's budget proposals. These committees prepare a concurrent resolution that shows the total federal spending and tax plan for the coming fiscal year. Next, various House and Senate committee fit the spending and taxing plans with existing programs. The House then passes and appropriations bill, officially setting aside money for all expenditures approved.

Public Opinion:
What is the debate over deregulation in economic policy?

In the 1970s and 1980s, economic regulations came under fire as anti-competitive and anti-consumer. Many people saw regulating agencies as protecting the industries' profit margins rather than the public good. The fervor over economic deregulation seems to be waning, though, as consumer protection is gaining popularity.

Public Opinion:
How has dealing with deficits driven state policy agendas?

By January 2002, growth in state Medicaid costs, a shortfall in revenue, and a sudden surge in funding for homeland security measures found most states dealing with budget deficits/ thirty-nine out of fifty states made budget cuts and thirty out of fifty states cut services to compensate for revenues below projections.

Public Policy:
How does the Federal Reserve Board use the money supply to manipulate monetary policy?

The Federal Reserve Board can manipulate monetary policy by altering the reserve requirement (the amount of deposits member banks are required to keep in hand and not loan out), changing the discount rate (the rate of interest that member banks have to pay to borrow money from the Fed), and buying and selling securities in the open market.

Public Policy:
What are the most prominent recent examples of national programs in the areas of education and income security?

In education, the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act set national standards for schools and for students. Income security programs designed to relieve poverty generally take two forms: non-means based programs that provide cash assistance to any qualified beneficiary (such as the Social Security program), and means-tested programs that require that beneficiaries first meet certain standards before receiving benefits like food stamps.

Public Policy:
How do the federal courts make public policy with their decisions?

First, a congressional statute or presidential action can be ruled unconstitutional. Second, national policy can be changed whenever the Supreme Court opts to decide an issue differently. Third, the Supreme Court can say that certain issues are political questions and therefore not proper subjects for judicial resolution.

Public Policy:

The most recent grouping of issues added to the policy agenda were a result of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. What parts of the bureaucracy are dealing with these issues?

The Department of Homeland Security and the military have been dealing with these issues.

Public Policy:

How has *Brown v. Board of Education* affected the policy of racial integration of schools?

Brown had the effect of desegregation the public schools with "all deliberate speed." However the de facto segregation process was slow and tumultuous for many cities in both the North, such as Boston, and the South, such as Little Rock.

Public Policy:

Even though there is no national healthcare system in the United States, the largest portion of government spending is for what entitlement program?

The Medicare and Medicaid programs account for the largest portion of government spending.

Public Policy:

What is the difference between discretionary and no-discretionary spending?

Discretionary spending refers to expenditures on programs and projects based on choices made by government planners. Non-discretionary spending refers to expenditures required by existing laws for current programs without debate or discussion. In recent years, the percentage of discretionary spending has decreased while the percentage of non-discretionary spending has increased.

Public Policy:
How is the federal budget formulated?

First, each federal agency submits a detailed estimate of its need for the year to the Office of Management and Budget. Then the OMB hold meetings to coordinate all requests into a single budget request, which the president will then submit to Congress in January or February.

Public Policy:
What was Proposition 209 in California?

Proposition 209 was an initiative placed on the ballot in California that would make affirmative action illegal. Groups involved in the fight for the passage included the governor and the California Civil Rights Initiative. The YWCA, the California American Association of University Women, and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights argued against it. Proposition 209 was passed by referendum in California in 1996.