Addressing Public Policy

Domestic Policy
Defining Domestic Policy

• Policy is a specific course of action that government takes to address a problem

• Domestic Policy includes all government laws, planning and actions involving internal issues of national importance, including:
  • Health care
  • Poverty
  • Crime
  • Environment
  • Education
  • Immigration
Types of Public Policy

• Distributive Policy: Benefits all groups in society
  • Such as Social Security or Medicare, National Parks, national defense, education funds

• Redistributive Policy: Taking resources away from one group (usually in the form of taxes) to distribute to another group
  • Ex. Wealth redistribution programs such as Head start, welfare; redistribution of income
  • Zero-Sum Games: Rob peter to pay Paul; one loses resources equivalent to one who gains resources

• Counter Distributive Policy: Takes resources away from ALL groups to solve a common problem;
  • Ex. Place restriction on high pollution vehicles to improve air quality
  • Utilize a cost/benefit analysis to see if change makes sense
Citizens and Public Policy

• Public policy does not take place in a vacuum; political process engages citizens, interest groups, political parties, legislators, judges, and other government institutions

• Citizens are nervous about participating due to complexities; but there are ways
  • Voting
  • Joining interest groups/Contributing to a PAC
  • Writing letters/Sending e-mails
  • Confronting legislators about actions/voting records
  • Running for office

• Most successful when it involves clear ideas for alternative policies
Policy Issues: Health Care

• Rising Cost of Health Care
  • Advanced technology costly
  • Government provides 1 in 3 Americans with health care coverage
    • Millions still uninsured

• Medicare
  • Federal health insurance for elderly and disabled

• Medicaid
  • Health insurance for low-income families

• National Health Insurance
  • Goal of insuring uninsured
    • Affordable Care Act, 2012
Policy Issues: Poverty and Welfare

• Income transfers/Wealth Redistribution
  • Transfers of income from some individuals in the economy to other individuals
    • Generally done by way of the government using taxation

• Basic Welfare
  • Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)
  • Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

• Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

• Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

• Farm Subsidies

• Homelessness
Policy Issues: Social Security

• Social Security is social insurance, not a welfare program

• Participants pay into Social Security but then can begin drawing from it once they turn 66
  • Compulsory to pay into system
  • Aging population placing stress on Social Security program

• Allows for financial security late in life
Policy Issues: Immigration

• Continued immigration influx
  • More than a million people a year immigrate to this country.

• Minority groups will constitute the “majority” of the U.S. by 2060

• Positives of immigration
  • Offsets low birthrate, aging population
  • Provides workers in jobs Americans do not want
Policy Issues: Crime

• Crime in American History
  • Crime control model: controlling crime
  • Due process model: attaining justice
  • Continuous tug-of-war between two models

• Congress taking larger role in criminal justice policy
  • New issues: racial profiling, rendition, drugs, terrorism

• USA has highest incarceration rate per capita among major nations
Policy Issues: The Environment

• Environmentalism – Seeks to protect the natural environment by conserving and protecting the natural resources
  • The National Environmental Policy Act (1969) – Required government agencies to consider environmental implications
  • Clean Air Act (1990) – Improved on act of 1963, required stricter guidelines on emissions and urban areas
  • Clean Water Act (1972) – Regulated pollution discharge into water systems

• Still debate in government over effects of Climate Change
Policy Issues: Social Issues

• Question of government legalization of Abortion
  • Roe v. Wade – 1973
  • Allowed for access to abortions based on the principles of privacy as part of Due Process Clause of 14th Amendment
• Marriage Equality
  • Obergefell v. Hodges – 2015
    • Upheld equal rights of marriage as guaranteed by the 14th Amendment
• Third Gender
  • Directive by President Obama requiring schools to offer facilities for students identifying as third gender as part of Title IX