

CHAPTER 15

The Federal Bureaucracy



CHAPTER OUTLINE

- I. Politics in Action: Regulating Food (pp. 471–472)
 - A. Bureaucracies are central to our lives.
 - B. Max Weber's conception of **bureaucracy**
 1. Bureaucracies have a hierarchical authority structure.
 2. Bureaucracies use task specialization.
 3. Bureaucracies develop extensive rules.
 4. Bureaucracies operate on the merit principle.
 5. Bureaucracies behave with impersonality.
- II. The Bureaucrats (pp. 472–479)
 - A. Some Bureaucratic Myths and Realities
 1. Americans dislike bureaucrats.
 2. Bureaucracies are growing bigger each year.
 3. Most federal bureaucrats work in Washington, DC.
 4. Bureaucracies are ineffective, inefficient, and always mired in red tape.
 - B. Who They Are and How They Got There
 1. Civil Service: From Patronage to Protection
 - a. **Patronage** is a hiring and promotion system based on knowing the right people.
 - b. The **Pendleton Civil Service Act** created the federal civil service.
 - c. All **civil service** systems are based on merit and the desire to create a nonpartisan government service.
 - d. The **merit principle** uses entrance exams and promotion ratings to reward qualified individuals.
 - e. The **Hatch Act** prohibits civil service employees from active participation in partisan politics while on duty.
 - f. The **Office of Personnel Management (OPM)** is in charge of hiring for most federal agencies.
 - g. Each civil service job is assigned a **GS (General Schedule) rating**.
 - h. The very top of the civil service system is the **Senior Executive Service**.
 - C. The Other Route to Federal Jobs: Recruiting from the Plum Book
 1. The plum book lists top federal jobs available for direct presidential appointment.
 2. The most important trait of presidential appointees is their transience.

- III. How Bureaucracies Are Organized (pp. 479–483)
 - A. Cabinet Departments
 - B. Independent Regulatory Commissions
 - 1. Each **independent regulatory commission** has responsibility for some sector of the economy.
 - 2. Interest groups are closely involved with independent regulatory commissions.
 - C. **Government Corporations**
 - 1. These organizations provide services that could be provided by the private sector.
 - 2. They and charge for their service, though usually at a reduced rate.
 - D. The **independent executive agencies** are essentially all the rest of the government.
- IV. Bureaucracies as Implementors (pp. 483–492)
 - A. What Implementation Means
 - 1. **Policy implementation** is the stage of policymaking between the establishment of a policy and its consequences.
 - 2. Implementation is the continuation of policymaking by other means.
 - B. Why the Best-Laid Plans Sometimes Flunk the Implementation Test
 - 1. Program Design
 - 2. Lack of Clarity
 - 3. Lack of Resources
 - 4. Administrative Routine
 - a. **Standard operating procedures** (SOPs) help bureaucrats make everyday decisions.
 - b. SOPs may become "red tape" and obstacles to action.
 - 5. Administrators' Dispositions
 - a. **Administrative discretion** is the authority of administrative actors to select among various responses to a given problem.
 - b. **Street-level bureaucrats** are in constant contact with the public and have considerable discretion.
 - 6. Fragmentation
 - C. A Case Study: The Voting Rights Act of 1965
- V. Privatization (p. 492)
 - A. Private contractors have become a virtual fourth branch of government.
 - B. The theory behind contracting for services is that competition in the private sector will result in better service at lower costs, although there is no evidence to prove this.
 - C. Contracting also leads to less public scrutiny.
- VI. Bureaucracies As Regulators (pp. 492–496)
 - A. Regulation in the Economy and in Everyday Life
 - 1. Government **regulation** is the use of governmental authority to control or change some practice in the private sector.
 - 2. A Full Day of Regulation

- B. Regulation: How It Grew, How It Works
 - 1. In the **command-and-control policy**, the government tells business how to reach certain goals, checks that these commands are followed, and punishes offenders.
 - 2. An **incentive system** uses taxes and rewards to promote certain behavior.
- C. Toward **Deregulation**
 - 1. Regulation raises prices.
 - 2. Regulation hurts America's competitive position abroad.
 - 3. Regulation does not always work well.

VII. Understanding Bureaucracies (pp. 497–503)

- A. Bureaucracy and Democracy
 - 1. Presidents Try to Control the Bureaucracy
 - a. They appoint the right people to head the agency.
 - b. They issue **executive orders**.
 - c. They alter an agency's budget.
 - d. They reorganize an agency.
 - 2. Congress Tries to Control the Bureaucracy
 - a. They influence the appointment of agency heads.
 - b. They alter an agency's budget.
 - c. They hold hearings.
 - d. They rewrite the legislation or make it more detailed.
 - 3. Iron Triangles and Issue Networks
 - a. When agencies, groups, and committees all depend on one another and are in close, frequent contact, they form what are sometimes called **iron triangles**, or subgovernments.
 - b. The system of subgovernments is now overlaid with an amorphous system of *issue networks*.
- B. Bureaucracy and the Scope of Government

VIII. Summary (p. 503)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying Chapter 15, you should be able to:

- 1. Describe the bureaucrats—who they are, how they got there, and what they do.
- 2. Discuss how the federal bureaucracy is organized.
- 3. Explain how bureaucracies function as implementors of public policy and how privatization has impacted their role.
- 4. Explain how bureaucracies function as regulators.
- 5. Evaluate the problem of controlling bureaucracies in a democratic government and the ways bureaucracies affect the scope of government.

The following exercises will help you meet these objectives:

Objective 1: Describe the bureaucrats—who they are, how they got there, and what they do.

List five elements of the Weberian model of bureaucracy.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

2. List four prevalent myths about bureaucracy.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

3. What is the difference between patronage and the merit principle?

4. What is the purpose of the Hatch Act?

5. What are some of the common characteristics of plum book appointees?

Objective 2: Discuss how the federal bureaucracy is organized.

1. What are the four basic types of agencies in the federal executive branch?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

2. Explain the relationship between interest groups and independent regulatory commissions.
3. In what two ways are government corporations like private corporations and different from other parts of the government?
 - 1.
 - 2.
4. What are the three biggest independent executive agencies?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

Objective 3: Explain how bureaucracies function as implementors of public policy and how privatization has impacted their role.

1. What are the three minimum elements of implementation?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
2. List six reasons why policy implementation might fail.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
3. What are three advantages of using standard operating procedures?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
4. What is administrative discretion? Give an example.
5. Give an example of bureaucratic fragmentation.
6. Explain two criticisms of government use of private contractors for services.
 - 1.
 - 2.

Objective 4: Explain how bureaucracies function as regulators.

1. What was the significance of *Munn v. Illinois* (1877)?

2. List three elements common to all regulation.

1.

2.

3.

3. What is the difference between command-and-control policy and incentive system?

Command-and-Control:

Incentive:

4. List three criticisms of regulation.

1.

2.

3.

Objective 5: Evaluate the problem of controlling bureaucracies in a democratic government and the ways bureaucracies affect the scope of government.

1. List four methods in which the president can control the bureaucracy.

1.

2.

3.

4.

2. List four methods in which Congress can control the bureaucracy.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
3. Explain the difference between an iron triangle and an issue network.

Iron Triangle:

Issue Network:
4. What effect does bureaucracy have on the scope of government?

KEY TERMS

Identify and describe:

bureaucracy

patronage

Pendleton Civil Service Act

civil service

merit principle

Hatch Act

Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

GS (General Schedule) rating

Senior Executive Service

independent regulatory commission

government corporations

independent executive agencies

policy implementation

standard operating procedures

administrative discretion

street-level bureaucrats

regulation

deregulation

command-and-control policy

incentive system

executive orders

iron triangles

Compare and contrast:

patronage and merit principle

Pendleton Civil Service Act and civil service

civil service and merit principle

GS (General Schedule) rating and Senior Executive Service

independent regulatory commissions, government corporations, and independent executive agencies

standard operating procedures and administrative discretion

administrative discretion and street-level bureaucrats

regulation and deregulation

command-and-control policy and incentive system

Name that term:

1. This law created the federal civil service.

2. This law limits the political activity of government employees.

3. This agency is in charge of hiring for most federal agencies.

4. The Federal Trade Commission is an example of this.

5. The U.S. Postal Service is an example of this.

6. This is needed because most policies are not self-executing.

7. Examples of these might include a police officer or a welfare worker.

8. Presidents sometime use these to control the bureaucracy.

9. These are also known as subgovernments.

USING YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. The organization of the federal government is very complex; policy responsibilities are delegated among many different agencies and offices. Take a look at the simplified organization chart of the bureaucracy. (See for example, Figure 15.3, p. 480.) Based on what you know about the particular responsibilities of these many offices, try to categorize them according to different policy arenas such as the economy, social welfare, equality issues, environment, technology, or national security. Keep in mind that these policy arenas encompass many different types of policies. Take note of any agencies that fall within one or more of the policy groups. Briefly describe what you found in terms of the relative organizational emphasis on each of the policy arenas.
2. Regulations affect many different aspects of our everyday lives. (See the section, "A Full Day of Regulation," p. 493.) Keep a record of your regulated day from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed, recording which aspects of your life are regulated and what federal agency is doing the regulation. After your record is complete, make an overall assessment of the degree to which federal regulation affects you. Based on your assessment, consider whether or not the costs of regulation exceed the benefits it provides you. Also consider whether or not any of the regulations you recorded are unnecessary or could be handled to your satisfaction by some other method or by a private, rather than governmental, means.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Circle the correct answer:

1. Which of the following is TRUE about the federal bureaucracy?
 - a. Most federal bureaucrats work in Washington, D.C.
 - b. The state and local governments have far more employees than the federal bureaucracy.
 - c. The size of the federal bureaucracy has grown dramatically over the past twenty years.
 - d. Most Americans are dissatisfied with their encounters with bureaucrats.
 - e. all of the above

2. The classic conception of a bureaucracy was advanced by _____, who argued that the bureaucracy was a "rational" way for a modern society to conduct its business.
 - a. Max Weber
 - b. Thomas Jefferson
 - c. John Locke
 - d. Charles L. Schultze
 - e. James Madison
3. There are roughly _____ civilian federal government employees.
 - a. 500,000
 - b. 1 million
 - c. 2.7 million
 - d. 19.6 million
 - e. 40 million
4. _____ is a hiring and promotion system based on knowing the right people, working in an election campaign, making large political donations, and/or having the right connections to win jobs with the government.
 - a. The patronage system
 - b. The federal civil service
 - c. The bureaucracy
 - d. The golden gate
 - e. Administrative discretion
5. The Pendleton Act established the
 - a. patronage system.
 - b. federal civil service.
 - c. Office of Management and Budget.
 - d. plum book.
 - e. Interstate Commerce Commission.
6. Once hired into the federal bureaucracy, a person is assigned a _____ rating, which determines one's salary range.
 - a. Federal Register
 - b. Weber
 - c. General Schedule
 - d. step ladder
 - e. plum book
7. The rationale for the civil service rests on the
 - a. goal of centralizing government employment at the federal level.
 - b. desire to create a nonpartisan government service and promotion on the basis of merit.
 - c. General Schedule rating system for patronage appointees.
 - d. need to separate military institutions from civilian institutions to prevent undue military influence.
 - e. need for job replacements when a new party comes to power.

8. The plum book lists
 - a. all federal contracts available for bid.
 - b. top federal jobs available by presidential appointment.
 - c. all civil service jobs above GS 12.
 - d. job openings in the prestigious Office of Personnel Management.
 - e. appeals filed with the Merit Systems Protection Board.
9. Which of the following is a cabinet department?
 - a. Department of State
 - b. Department of Homeland Security
 - c. Department of Education
 - d. All of the above.
 - e. None of the above.
10. Government corporations
 - a. typically charge for their services at reduced rates.
 - b. are independent regulatory agencies.
 - c. provide services that cannot be provided by private businesses.
 - d. tend to be controlled by interest groups.
 - e. are always formed from “sick” industries.
11. Which of the following is NOT involved in implementation?
 - a. Creating new agencies or assigning new responsibilities to existing agencies.
 - b. Translating policy goals into operational rule and development of guidelines for programs.
 - c. Coordinating resources and personnel to achieve intended goals.
 - d. Passing legislation.
 - e. None of the above.
12. Standard operating procedures accomplish all of the following EXCEPT
 - a. bring uniformity to complex organizations.
 - b. save time.
 - c. make personnel interchangeable.
 - d. reduce red tape.
 - e. treat citizens equally, regardless of class or race.
13. What factor(s) work(s) against reorganizing the government to address the problems of fragmentation?
 - a. The decentralization of power
 - b. Hyperpluralism
 - c. Elite theory
 - d. All of the above.
 - e. Both a and b.

14. The Supreme Court case of *Munn v. Illinois* (1877)
- declared that regulation was not within the realm of state powers.
 - first established the right to own property as one of the rights of the Bill of Rights.
 - set the precedent for deregulation.
 - upheld the right of government to regulate the business operations of a firm.
 - upheld the constitutionality of the Interstate Commerce Commission.
15. Deregulation has resulted, at least in part, in each of the following EXCEPT
- environmental damage.
 - the proliferation of government agencies.
 - competitive airline fares.
 - an expensive bailout of the savings and loan industry.
 - less government oversight in some key areas.
16. The typical system of regulation in which government tells business how to reach certain goals, checks that these commands are followed, and punishes offenders is known as
- the incentive system.
 - command-and-control policy.
 - deregulation.
 - the merit system.
 - patronage.
17. As the oversight powers of Congress in regard to the bureaucracy have become more vigorous,
- Congress is increasingly the policy-implementation branch of government.
 - it has become easier to rein in the bureaucracy.
 - they have also become more fragmented.
 - "iron triangles" have weakened considerably.
 - the amount of government corruption has decreased dramatically.
18. A subcommittee on aging, senior citizens interest groups, and the Social Security Administration are likely to
- disagree on the need for more Social Security benefits.
 - agree on the need for more Social Security benefits.
 - agree on the need to eliminate Social Security benefits.
 - Dominate Social Security policymaking.
 - B and d.
19. Subgovernments promote
- centralization of authority.
 - strong executive branch control of policymaking.
 - the control of the bureaucracy by Congress.
 - decentralized and fragmented policymaking.
 - presidential control of bureaucratic discretion.

20. A group of participants in bureaucratic policymaking with technical policy expertise and intellectual and emotional commitment to the issue is called
- a government corporation.
 - an "iron triangle."
 - a subgovernment.
 - an issue network.
 - a vested cohort.

TRUE/FALSE QUESTIONS

Circle the correct answer:

- Each bureaucratic agency is created by Congress, which sets its budget and writes the basic policies it is to administer. T / F
- Scholars have demonstrated that government bureaucracies are more efficient and effective than private bureaucracies. T / F
- The merit principle determines entrance and promotion on the basis of "who you know." T / F
- The Pendleton Civil Service Act of 1883 created the federal civil service. T / F
- The Hatch Act of 1940 prohibits civil service employees from active participation in partisan politics. T / F
- The government established Amtrak as the government corporation providing passenger railroad service when the private passenger railroads became a sick industry some years ago. T / F
- Policy implementation is the stage of policymaking between the establishment of a policy and the consequences of the policy for the people it affects. T / F
- One of the staunchest supporters of deregulation was President Ronald Reagan. T / F
- Because the voters do not elect civil servants, bureaucracies cannot respond to or represent the public's interests. T / F
- Mutually dependent relationships between bureaucratic agencies, interest groups, and congressional committees are known as iron triangles. T / F