

# Politics, Analysis, and Policy Choice

# Public Policies and Impact

- Conflicts and incremental decision making
- conflict arises over appropriate role of government
- difficult to forge consensus
- policies are a result of compromise (partly effective-debate continues)
- Example: agricultural subsidies-removed-free market didn't work well-subsidies put back

- Incremental policymaking-dominant style in USA
  - provides short-term stability by minimizing conflict
  - helps to forge compromise
  - helps to build legitimacy

# Policy Strategies in Uncertainty

- Critics say incremental policymaking least appropriate when gov't faced w/ new problems w/ high uncertainty; supporters say it's needed then more than ever-no radical changes from statusquo
- Issue of global climate change-flexibility required
- “Precautionary Principle”--when serious threats of harm to health and environment, precautionary measures should be taken, even if scientists do not fully understand

- “Sustainable Development”--integrate economic development, environmental protection, and social well-being. Portland, Oregon land use plan example.
- Policymakers often too concerned with the short term because of electoral pressures; corporations focus on short-term profits, rather than long-term goals.
- Public policy deals with moving targets
- changes in politics, technology, culture--new concerns must be considered

# Policy Analysis and Choices

- Policy analysis can help bring clarity to problems and solutions
- Potential for greater use at state and local levels because of a relative lack of expertise

# Evaluating Public Policy

- Discussed a number of criteria
- Effectiveness
  - difficult to address prior to its implementation
  - often based on assumptions
  - must ask if policy produced desired results--lived up to expectations?
- Efficiency
  - common criterion-taxes
  - concern over cost and government budgets--cost/benefit analysis.
- Equity
  - addressed less frequently
  - differences in definition

# Improving Policy Capacity

- What can policy analysis do to help improve capacity?
- Objective evidence does not confirm government failure, despite perception
- analyze institutional reforms (e.g., campaign finance, electoral term limits)
- provide better evaluation of agencies charged with implementation
- better inform citizens on problems and solutions

# Citizen Participation

- Citizen capacity and policy engagement
  - evidence is mixed regarding public participation in policy
  - need to make a better connection to how citizens are affected by decisions; e.g., Enron
  - improve access to government information
- New forms of participation
  - increase in technology can facilitate participation-web sites-YouTube-blogs
  - identify goals for participation
  - different models of citizen involvement:
    - commentary, social learning, joint planning, and consent and consensus