

Study Outline

Chapter 21: Environmental Policy

- I. Introduction
 - A. Why is environmental policy so controversial?
 - 1. Creates both winners and losers
 - a. Losers may be interest groups or average citizens
 - b. Losers may not want to pay costs
 - Example: auto exhaust control
 - 2. Shrouded in scientific uncertainty
 - Example: greenhouse effect
 - 3. Takes the form of entrepreneurial politics
 - a. Encourages emotional appeals: "good guys" versus "bad guys"
 - b. May lead to distorted priorities
 - Example: cancer versus water pollution
- II. The American context
 - A. Environmental policy is shaped by unique features of American politics
 - 1. More adversarial than in Europe
 - a. Rules are often uniform nationally (auto emissions)
 - b. But require many regulators and rules, strict deadlines, and expensive technologies
 - c. Often government (pro-) versus business (anti-)
 - d. Example: Clean Air Act, which took thirteen years to revise in Congress
 - e. In England, rules are flexible and regional
 - (1). Compliance is voluntary
 - (2). Government and business cooperate
 - (3). Policies are effective
 - 2. Depends heavily on states
 - a. Standards are left to states, subject to federal control
 - b. Local politics decides allocations
 - c. Federalism reinforces adversarial politics; separation of powers provides multiple points of access
 - B. Types of politics
 - 1. Entrepreneurial politics
 - a. Most people benefit, few companies pay costs
 - b. Example: factories and other stationary sources
 - 2. Majoritarian
 - a. Most people benefit, most people pay
 - b. Example: air pollution from automobiles
 - 3. Interest group
 - a. Some groups benefit, other groups pay
 - b. Example: acid rain controversy
 - 4. Client
 - a. Most people pay, some groups benefit
 - b. Example: pesticide control
- III. Entrepreneurial politics: global warming
 - A. Entrepreneurial politics gave rise to environmental movement
 - 1. Santa Barbara oil spill, Earth Day
 - 2. Led to the formation of EPA and passage of the Water Quality Improvement Act and tougher Clean Air Act in 1970
 - 3. Two years later Congress passed laws designed to clean up water
 - 4. Three years later Congress adopted the Endangered Species Act
 - 5. New laws passed into the 1990s
 - 6. Existing environmental organizations grew in size and new ones formed
 - 7. Public opinion rallied behind environmental slogans
 - B. Global warming
 - 1. Earth's temperature rises from trapped gases in the atmosphere
 - 2. Predicted result: floods on coastal areas as the polar ice caps melt; wilder weather as more storms are created; and tropical diseases spread to North America

- 3. Activist scientists versus skeptics scientists
 - a. Activists agree with predicted results and say we should act now, despite scientific doubts
 - b. Skeptics say we should learn more before doing anything
 - c. Survey indicates skeptics outnumber activists
- 4. Activists have greatest influence
- 5. U.S. signed Kyoto Protocol in 1997
- C. Endangered species
 - 1. Endangered Species Act of 1973 prohibits buying or selling plants or animals on "endangered" species list
 - 2. Over six hundred species on list with about half plants
 - 3. Firms and government agencies seeking to build in areas with endangered species must comply with federal regulations
 - 4. Complaints outweigh public support for law
- IV. Majoritarian politics: pollution from automobiles
 - A. Clean Air Act imposed tough restrictions
 - 1. Public demanded improvements
 - 2. 1975: 90 percent reduction of hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide
 - 3. 1976: 90 percent reduction in nitrous oxides
 - 4. Required catalytic converters
 - B. Emergence of majoritarian politics in auto pollution
 - 1. States were required to restrict public use of cars
 - a. If auto emissions controls were insufficient--Los Angeles, Denver, New York-- parking bans required, implementation of car pools, gas rationing
 - b. Efforts failed: opposition too great
 - c. Congress and the EPA backed down, postponed deadlines
 - 2. Consumers, auto industry, and unions objected
 - a. Loss of horsepower
 - b. Loss of competitiveness
 - c. Loss of jobs
 - 3. The Clean Air Act was weakened in 1977 but revived in 1990 with tougher standards
 - C. Public will support tough laws
 - 1. If costs are hidden (catalytic converters)
 - 2. But not if they have to change habits (car pools)
 - D. Majoritarian politics when people believe the costs are low: National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)
 - 1. Requires environmental impact statement (EIS)
 - 2. Does not require specific action
 - 3. Passed Congress with overwhelming support
 - 4. But encouraged numerous lawsuits that block or delay projects
 - 5. Popular support remains strong: costs appear low, benefits high
 - E. Majoritarian politics when people believe the costs are high
 - 1. Increased gasoline taxes
 - a. Would discourage driving, save fuel, and reduce smog
 - b. Most would pay, most would benefit
 - c. But costs come long before benefits
 - d. And benefits may not be obvious
 - 2. Easier to raise gas tax if benefits are concrete, for example, highways, bridges, and so forth
- V. Interest group politics: acid rain
 - A. Source of acid rain
 - 1. Burning of high-sulfur coal in midwestern factories
 - 2. Winds carry sulfuric acid eastward
 - 3. Rains bring acid to earth
 - B. Effects of acid rain
 - 1. Acidification of lakes
 - 2. Destruction of forests
 - 3. Long-term and some short-term effects are unclear
 - C. Regional battle
 - 1. East versus Midwest, Canada versus United States
 - 2. Midwestern businesses deny blame and costs

- D. Solutions and compromise
 - 1. Burn low-sulfur coal one alternative
 - a. Effective but expensive
 - b. Low-sulfur coal comes from West, high-sulfur coal is local
 - 2. Install smokestack scrubbers a second alternative
 - a. Costly, not always effective, and leave sludge
 - b. But allow use of inexpensive high-sulfur coal
 - 3. Congress voted for scrubbers for all new plants
 - a. Including those that burned low-sulfur coal
 - b. Even if plant was next to low-sulfur coal mine
 - 4. Political advantages
 - a. Protected jobs of high-sulfur coal miners; powerful allies in Congress
 - b. Environmentalists preferred scrubbers; "definitive" solution to problem
 - c. Scrubber manufacturers preferred scrubbers
 - d. Eastern governors preferred scrubbers; made their plants more competitive
 - 5. Practical disadvantages
 - a. Failed to allow for plants that burn low-sulfur coal; why spend money on scrubbers?
 - b. Scrubbers didn't work well
 - c. Failed to address problem of existing plants
 - 6. Stalemate for thirteen years
 - 7. Two-step regulation proposed by Bush
 - a. Before 1995: some plants could choose their approach; fixed reduction but plants decide how to do
 - b. After 1995: sharper reductions for many more plants, requiring some use of scrubbers
 - c. Sulfur dioxide allowances could be bought and sold
 - d. Financial compensation for coal miners who lose jobs
 - 8. Became part of Clean Air Act of 1990
 - E. Another example of interest group politics: zoning regulations, residents versus developers
 - F. New interest groups
 - 1. More fervent and committed than before
 - 2. Able to block change in policies
 - 3. Examples
 - a. Environmental protection industry
 - b. Environmental Defense Fund
 - c. Labor unions
 - 4. Momentum remains with policy makers
- VI. Client politics: agricultural pesticides
- A. Issue: control of use and runoff of pesticides; farmers have mostly resisted policy entrepreneurs, with DDT an exception
 - B. EPA efforts to evaluate safety of all pesticides
 - 1. Given mandate by Congress in 1972
 - 2. Program has not succeeded
 - a. Too many pesticides to evaluate
 - (1). Many have only long-term effects needing extended study
 - (2). Expensive and time-consuming to evaluate
 - b. Benefits of pesticide may outweigh harm
 - 3. Political complications
 - a. Farmers are well-represented in Congress
 - b. Subsidies encourage overproduction, which encourages overuse of pesticides
 - c. Damage is hard to see and dramatize
 - 4. The EPA budget is small
 - 5. Few pesticides have been removed from the market; only those receiving heavy media coverage such as DDT in 1972
 - 6. Client politics has won out
 - C. Environmentalists versus loggers
 - 1. Issue: clear-cutting of forests
 - 2. Congress has supported loggers

- a. Forest Service forced to sell lumber at below-market prices
 - b. Subsidizes industry
 - 3. Spotted owl: getting the media involved--entrepreneurial politics
- VII. The environmental uncertainties
- A. Why is it so difficult to have a sane environmental policy?
 - 1. Many environmental problems are not clear cut
 - 2. Goals are often unclear; public opinion can shift
 - 3. Means of achieving goals (command-and-control strategy) are complicated by
 - a. Local circumstances
 - b. Technological problems
 - c. Economic costs
 - B. Examples of EPA and politics
 - 1. What is the problem?
 - a. The EPA not left alone to define problem
 - b. Scandals and congressional demands can shift priorities
 - 2. What are our goals?
 - a. Many are completely unrealistic
 - b. The EPA forced to ask for extensions and revisions
 - 3. How do we achieve our goals?
 - a. Rules have been replaced by incentives
 - (1). Offsets
 - (2). Bubble standards
 - (3). Pollution allowances
 - b. Complaints about command-and-control strategy are now coming from environmental groups and government
 - (1). Clinton administration is reexamining old approaches
 - (2). People are learning from experience
- VIII. The results: the environment has improved since 1970 in some aspects
- A. Less air pollution
 - B. Maybe less water pollution but harder to judge
 - C. Hazardous wastes remain a problem