

# Official Actors in the Policy Process

## Theories of Interaction

### POSC 315: Week 3-2

## Theoretical Approaches

Three main frameworks for understanding policy actors:

1. Institutionalism
2. Behavioralism
3. Neo-Institutionalism

## Institutionalism

- Studies politics and policy through formal institutional interactions
- Focuses on formal rules and procedures
- Emphasizes relationships between institutions

## Behavioralism

- Focuses on individual political motivation and behavior
- Analyzes incentives and disincentives
- Examines relationships between individuals and groups

## Neo-Institutionalism

- Synthesizes institutional and behavioral approaches
- Examines sociological aspects of institutions
- Studies how institutions shape behavior
- Applies rational choice theory to institutional analysis

## Key Concepts

### Law of Inertia

Objects in motion tend to stay in motion

### Institutional Inertia

The tendency of formal institutions to resist change

## Institutional Concepts

- **Path Dependency:** Historical decisions shape current options
- **Incrementalism:** Change occurs in small steps
- **Punctuated Equilibrium:** Long periods of stability interrupted by rapid change

## Types of Policy Actors

### Official Actors

Formally recognized participants in the policy process

- Legislators
- Executive
- Bureaucrats

- Judges

## Legislators

### Core Functions and Responsibilities

- Primary lawmaking body in democratic systems
- Constitutional authority to create, amend, and repeal laws
- Oversight of executive branch activities
- Budget and appropriations authority

## Legislative Dynamics

### Key Motivations

- Re-election goals drive many decisions
- Constituent service and representation
- Policy achievement in priority areas
- Institutional power and influence

## Legislative Constraints

- Procedural Requirements:
  - Committee system
  - Parliamentary rules
  - Voting procedures
  - Bicameral negotiations

## Political Constraints

- Party leadership directives
- Coalition management
- Interest group pressure
- Electoral consequences

## Legislative Activities

- Bill Introduction and Sponsorship:
  - Research and drafting
  - Coalition building
  - Stakeholder engagement

## Committee Work

- Hearings and investigations
- Expert testimony
- Mark-up sessions

## Constituent Services

- Casework management
- District outreach
- Community engagement

## Executive Branch

### Core Functions and Powers

- Law Execution and Administration
- Policy Leadership: Function ————— - Agenda setting Policy proposals Crisis management International relations

## Executive Policy Tools

### Direct Policy Instruments

- Executive Orders
- Executive Memoranda
- Proclamations
- Signing Statements
- Veto Power

## Executive Influence

- Agenda Setting Power:
  - Public attention direction
  - Media relations
  - Crisis framing
- Bureaucratic Oversight:
  - Agency direction
  - Personnel appointments
  - Budget proposals

## Bureaucracy

### Implementation Role

- Policy Implementation
- Regulation Development
- Program Administration
- Service Delivery

## Bureaucratic Structure

- Hierarchical Organization:
  - Clear chain of command
  - Specialized divisions
  - Standard operating procedures
- Personnel Systems:
  - Merit-based hiring
  - Civil service protections
  - Professional development

## Street-Level Bureaucrats

### Key Characteristics

- Direct public interaction
- Discretionary authority
- Resource constraints
- Complex decision-making

## Bureaucratic Power

- Technical Expertise:
  - Specialized knowledge
  - Program experience
  - Policy implementation insights
- Administrative Authority:
  - Rulemaking power
  - Enforcement discretion
  - Program management

## Judiciary

### Constitutional Role

- Constitutional Interpretation
- Legal Dispute Resolution
- Rights Protection
- Government Oversight

## Judicial Powers

### Key Authorities

- Judicial Review:
  - Constitutional analysis
  - Statutory interpretation
  - Administrative review
- Jurisdictional Authority:
  - Original jurisdiction
  - Appellate jurisdiction

## Policy Impact

- Direct Policy Effects:
  - Constitutional rulings
  - Statutory interpretation
  - Administrative oversight
- Indirect Influence:
  - Agenda setting
  - Policy framing
  - Behavioral incentives

## Judicial Constraints

- Institutional Limitations:
  - Case or controversy requirement
  - Standing doctrine
  - Precedent considerations
- External Constraints:
  - Implementation dependence
  - Political context
  - Public legitimacy

## Policy Process Integration

### Actor Interactions

- Checks and balances system
- Institutional interdependence
- Policy feedback loops
- Conflict resolution mechanisms

## Looking Ahead

Next Session: Unofficial Actors in the Policy Process

- Interest Groups
- Media
- Think Tanks
- Advocacy Organizations