

*James E. Anderson*

# Public Policymaking

T H I R D   E D I T I O N

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# PUBLIC POLICYMAKING

*An Introduction*

Third Edition

JAMES E. ANDERSON

Texas A&M University

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# PUBLIC POLICYMAKING

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# PREFACE

*Public Policymaking: An Introduction*, Third Edition, presents an overview of the policymaking process as a sequence of functional activities, beginning with problem identification and agenda-setting and concluding with the evaluation and revision or termination of policy. This approach still constitutes a reasonable and workable approach to the study and analysis of public policymaking. The text also surveys a number of other major approaches to the study of policy formation, describes and analyzes the political environment of policymaking in the United States, includes quite a bit of information about the content of public policies, and treats some of the practical aspects of policymaking, such as political feasibility and cost-benefit analysis.

Although the book is comprehensive in that it covers all of the stages or phases of the policymaking process, by no means does it yield “everything anyone really needs to know” about public policymaking. As the word “introduction” in its title indicates, it serves as a starting point for the study of public policy. Once again, I have updated and expanded the annotated bibliography to assist readers desiring to explore the policy process more fully.

In this new edition I have made changes reflecting new developments in the policymaking process (especially at the national level in the United States), recent additions to political science literature and learning on policymaking, and my continuing professional development. I note some of these changes here. New case studies on airline deregulation and the Family and Medical Leave Act have been included. The discussion of budgeting has been expanded and the story about the budget deficit struggle has been updated. Material has been added on such topics as problem definition, agenda-setting, policy evaluation, interest groups, administrative agencies, and multiple advocacy. The discussion of problems in policy research has been shifted from the epilogue (now Chapter 8) to Chapter 1, where it fits in better.

I have included some references to changes in government and the policy process that resulted from the Republican takeover in 1994 of both houses of Congress. Some readers, I suppose, will be disappointed that the coverage of this topic is not more extensive. However, writing in the fall of 1996, it seems clear to me that, while important changes did occur, as in the House subcommittee system and the rejection of seniority in the choice of some House committee chairs, overall there was no “revolution” in governmental structure

or policymaking practices. The American system once again demonstrated its resilience and capacity to temper change, and the general outlines of the policymaking process remains as before.

I have tried to be evenhanded and impartial in my treatment of the many topics covered in the book, even though such matters as abortion rights, budget deficits, the performance of Congress, and cost-benefit analysis have produced sharp controversies in society. Many rational-choice theories have also generated controversy among political scientists. Although I am fully equipped with values, preferences, and biases, I have been guided, and I think with considerable success, by the principle of "intended neutrality." Analysis rather than advocacy and teaching rather than preaching have been my goals.

In my treatment of the policymaking process, I have undoubtedly included information that could be regarded as ordinary knowledge, as knowledge not requiring the skills of political or social scientists to develop and report. It is difficult, however, at least for me, to draw a neat line between ordinary knowledge and scientific knowledge. Indeed, knowledge produced by scientific research may with time become ordinary, as in the instances of the germ theory of disease, the view of administration as a political process, and rejection of the quaint belief that judges merely find or discover law. Consequently, I have not hesitated to include information that may seem obvious or commonplace, especially to experts, when it adds meaning and clarity to the discussion of public policymaking.

I wish to express my appreciation for the assistance given by several people in the preparation of this edition. A number of persons provided suggestions for revision or reviewed a draft of the revised manuscript. They include: Stephen C. Brooks, University of Akron; James A. Dunn, Rutgers the State University of New Jersey-Camden; Gary Gregg, Clarion University; George A. Krause, University of South Carolina; Keith Mueller, University of Nebraska; Glenn McNitt, State University of New York-New Paltz; Max Neiman, University of California-Riverside; Michael J. Scicchitano, University of Florida; Richard D. Sylves, University of Delaware; Mark E. Tompkins, University of South Carolina. These reviewers provided a multitude of useful, challenging, and positive comments and recommendations. Though sometimes I did not agree with their advice, and at other times I was unable to act on it, collectively they did much to help make this a better book.

Various colleagues in the Texas A&M Department of Political Science supplied needed information, though perhaps they were not always aware of the purpose of my questions and requests. Avis Munson and Laura Nelson ably handled the technical and typing aspects of manuscript preparation. At Houghton Mifflin, Jean Woy, Paul Smith, and Helen Bronk steered the project to completion. Finally, Alberta (Mrs. Anderson) dutifully listened to my gripes and complaints, evaluated some of my ideas, and provided advice and encouragement. Without her the task of revision would have been more difficult, as would my life.

J.A.

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# CONTENTS

*Preface* ix

## 1 ■ THE STUDY OF PUBLIC POLICY 1

- Why Study Public Policy? 5
- What Is Public Policy? 8
- Categories of Public Policies 12
- Approaches to Policy Study 25
- Methodological Difficulties in Studying  
Public Policy 36
- The Plan of This Book 38

## 2 ■ THE POLICY-MAKERS AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT 47

- The Policy Environment 51
- The Official Policy-Makers 59
- Unofficial Participants 70
- Levels of Politics 79

## 3 ■ POLICY FORMATION: PROBLEMS, AGENDAS, AND FORMULATION 91

- Policy Problems 93
- The Policy Agenda 98
- The Agenda-Setting Process 101
- Nondecisions 106

The Loss of Agenda Status	107
Two Cases in Agenda Setting	109
The Formulation of Policy Proposals	113
Policy Formulation as a Technical Process	118
Formulating Policy: The Economic Recovery Tax Act	120
Formulating Policy: The Family and Medical Leave Act	124
A Concluding Comment	128

## 4 ■ Policy Adoption 133

Theories of Decision-Making	135
Decision Criteria	140
The Public Interest	150
Styles of Decision-Making	152
Presidential Decision-Making	160
The Dynamics of Policy Formulation: The Case of Airline Deregulation	165

## 5 ■ Budgeting and Public Policy 177

The Budget and Public Policy	180
The National Budgetary Process	184
Fighting Budget Deficits	199
Concluding Remarks	209

## 6 ■ Policy Implementation 213

Who Implements Policy?	216
Administrative Organization	223
Administrative Politics	229
Administrative Policymaking	235



Techniques of Control	245
Compliance	256

## 7 ■ Policy Impact, Evaluation, and Change 271

Policy Impact	275
Policy Evaluation Processes	280
Problems in Policy Evaluation	287
Policy Evaluation: The Use and Misuse of Cost-Benefit Analysis	292
The Politics of Evaluation: The Case of Head Start	297
The Response to Policy	301
Policy Termination	307

## 8 ■ Concluding Comments 315

<i>Glossary</i>	325
-----------------	-----

<i>Annotated Bibliography</i>	332
-------------------------------	-----

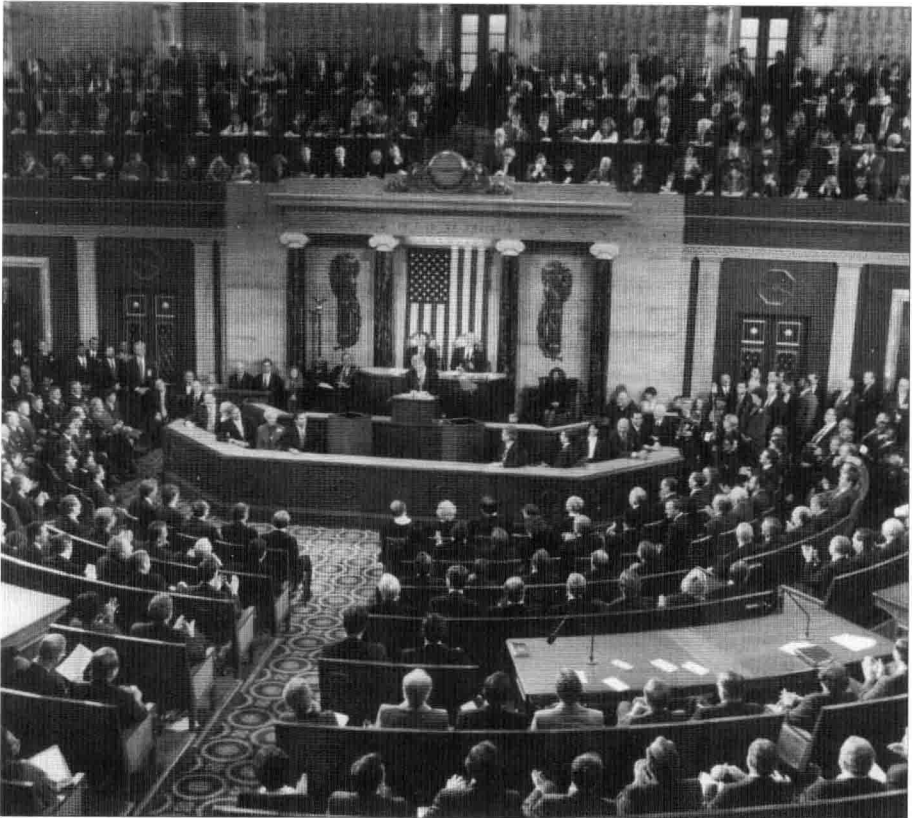
<i>Index</i>	343
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# 1

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## THE STUDY OF PUBLIC POLICY



*The State of the Union message provides the president with an opportunity to outline his programs and help set the Congressional agenda.*

Unemployment was not identified as a significant social problem until late in the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Even then, and until the Great Depression of the 1930s, unemployment was viewed in the United States as basically a personal problem, as something that was unfortunate for those affected, perhaps, but not a matter warranting redress by the government. Millions of American workers (no one knew precisely how many) were thrown out of work after World War I by the conversion from a wartime to a peacetime economy. At a conference on unemployment sponsored by the national government to consider what might be done about this situation, President Warren G. Harding expressed the government's position in his opening remarks: "There has been vast unemployment before and there will be again. There will be depression and inflation just as surely as the tides ebb and flow. I would have little enthusiasm for any proposed remedy which seeks palliation or tonic from the Public Treasury."<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly, no action on unemployment occurred.

The Depression, which for a decade caused continuing high rates of unemployment (one-fourth of the labor force was out of work in the winter of 1932–1933), helped to change such attitudes. Unemployment came to be regarded as a public problem that government was properly expected to prevent or ameliorate. New Deal responses to the unemployment problem included the unemployment insurance program, aid in finding jobs, and extensive public works and other programs to create jobs. The latter included the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which was criticized by conservatives as a "leaf-raking" program and a "boondoggle." Since the 1930s, the U.S. government has been committed to combating unemployment through a variety of policies and programs.

A major addition to the arsenal of government unemployment programs in the 1960s was job (or work) training. Initially intended to protect workers against the adverse effects of automation, in time the emphasis shifted to assisting those who found it difficult to compete effectively for available jobs—low-skilled workers, unemployed youth, and minority group members.<sup>3</sup> Among the work-training programs created were skill training, on-the-job training, adult basic education, and work experience. Subsequently, a program was authorized providing funding for temporary, full-time public service jobs for the unemployed with state and local agencies. In 1973 most of these job-training and public-employment measures were consolidated under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). Although much of the financing for them was provided by the national government, responsibility for the program administration was assigned to state and, particularly, local governments.<sup>4</sup>

For a decade CETA was the mainstay of government unemployment policy. Spending on CETA programs ran as high as \$10 billion annually in the late 1970s before being cut back by the Reagan administration. However,

CETA had begun to produce substantial controversy soon after its enactment. Complaints were common about the act's complexity and waste, inefficiency, and administrative incompetence in the conduct of its programs. Public-service employment was often derided as a "make-work, dead-end jobs" program. Politically, CETA suffered from a weak constituency (the disadvantaged) and a poor public image.

One of Ronald Reagan's first actions after becoming president in 1981 was to propose elimination of most job-training and public-employment programs. A staunch conservative, he viewed them as ineffective and beyond the proper province of government. The public-employment program, which was in trouble before Reagan took office, was quickly eliminated. Congress balked, however, at doing away with the job-training programs, of which the Democrats were especially supportive.

Within the year, though, in one of the shifts in policy position at which he was adept, President Reagan changed his stance on job training. His administration's restrictive economic policies, which brought down the high inflation that had been afflicting the country, also elevated the unemployment rate. In the fall of 1982 it exceeded 10 percent, the highest rate the nation had experienced since the Great Depression. The president now publicly endorsed job training, not from a change of heart but rather because political realities and the approaching 1982 congressional elections made it politic to call for action on unemployment.

Although the Republicans fared poorly in the 1982 elections, both parties became committed to formulating a new job-training policy. Much of the work in developing the new legislation was handled within a policy community consisting of those most interested in employment and job-training programs, notably the House and Senate labor committees; various labor, community, and client groups; and the Department of Labor. For the first time business groups also became deeply involved. The primary bill in the Senate was jointly sponsored by Senator Dan Quayle (R, Indiana) and Senator Ted Kennedy (D, Massachusetts), which was emblematic of the bipartisan support for job-training legislation.

Enacted into law early in 1983, the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) retained many of the CETA training programs. Some important changes were made, however, that reflected compromises between Democrats and Republicans in Congress and responded to recommendations by the Reagan administration. The states, rather than the local governments, as had been the case under CETA, were now accorded primary responsibility for overseeing job-training programs. Governors could divide their states into service-delivery areas (SDA) to receive federal funds and provide services. Within each SDA a Private Industry Council (PIC), dominated by representatives of the business community, would have responsibility for managing the local service and training programs. These programs were to be especially targeted at youths, welfare recipients, and high-school dropouts. The popular Job Corps program

for disadvantaged urban youths was continued, along with the summer youth employment program. Under JTPA, however, only limited payment of subsistence allowances to trainees was permitted and employment of trainees in public-service jobs was banned. In all, the administration got much of what it wanted and President Reagan signed JTPA into law, chiding the Democrats for not acting more quickly on the job-training problems.

In the early 1990s, federal expenditures supporting JTPA grew to more than \$4 billion annually and went to more than 600 local SDAs plus 56 state and territorial programs. More participants received on-the-job training and were placed in private-sector jobs, at lower cost, than had been the case under CETA programs.

All was not well with the JTPA program, however. Criticism and complaints about JTPA developed early and persisted. A General Accounting Office (GAO) report in 1989 asserted that school dropouts were underserved by the program and, moreover, often did not receive remedial education. Much of the training was for jobs with limited potential and, in a practice referred to as "creaming," resources were often focused on those most likely to be hired after participation in the program.<sup>5</sup> A subsequent GAO report indicated problems in the management of JTPA, including improper expenditure of funds, excessive job training for some enrollees, and inadequate monitoring of the program by state officials.<sup>6</sup> A member of Congress who supported JTPA stated that some program administrators converted federal funds into "pure subsidies to local businesses, paying half the wages for a constant stream of new employees who train on the job as car washers, dishwashers, or broom pushers for six months until the subsidy runs out, their training ends, and a new trainee replaces them."<sup>7</sup> This was obviously an abuse of the program.

Such problems and complaints gained JTPA a place on the congressional agenda. In 1992, following a four-year struggle, legislation was enacted making revisions in JTPA. While preserving the public-private partnership in job training, the new law provided for more control by the Department of Labor over use of federal funds, encouraged the states to provide literacy and lifelong learning programs, provided that at least half the youths in the program had to be school dropouts, and limited on-the-job training to a six-month period. JTPA is now the national government's primary job-training program. It is, however, a limited program in that its annual funding is sufficient to provide training for only a small portion of those who are eligible.

More emphasis was placed on job training in 1988, when Congress adopted the Family and Child Support Act reforming the welfare system (Aid to Families with Dependent Children). Its major goal is to shift people from the welfare rolls to productive employment. The states are directed to set up and administer Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) programs, which provide education, job training, and work experience for members of welfare families. The national government provides money to help fund the JOBS

program and the costs of child care necessary to enable welfare mothers to participate in the program. By the mid-1990s the JOBS program was fully operative, providing training to several hundred thousand enrollees. There is some cooperation between JTPA and JOBS.

Job-training programs, for the most part, attract bipartisan support. Democrats like them because they provide assistance to people, help people become independent, and reduce poverty. Republicans see job-training programs as a means of reducing people's dependency on government and moving them off of the welfare rolls.

As this account of job-training policies illustrates, public policymaking is a complex and continuing process, involving many participants with differing roles and interests. Numerous questions about the policymaking process can be based on the job-training experience, including: Why does a condition or situation come to be viewed as a public problem? Why does the government decide to act on a problem? Why does it decide to adopt a given policy (or course of action) on a problem? How can we determine whether a policy is successful? This book is intended to assist you in developing responses to such questions and to better understand the nature and nuances of the policy process.

In the remainder of this chapter, several topics will be discussed. I will first respond to the question, "Why study public policy?" Attention will then turn to the nature of public policy, typologies of public policies, and some approaches to the study of public policymaking, including the one used in this book. The intent is to provide the reader with an understanding of the nature and scope of public policy and with a perspective on how, from the standpoint of political science, the policymaking process can be examined.

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## WHY STUDY PUBLIC POLICY?

Political scientists, in their teaching and research, have customarily been most interested in political institutions, such as legislatures or international organizations; in political processes, such as the electoral and judicial processes; and in elements of the political system, such as public opinion and interest groups. This is not to say, however, that political scientists have been totally indifferent to public policies. Foreign policy and policy on civil rights and liberties have traditionally been viewed as appropriate for their attention. So, too, has the subject that Professor Robert H. Salisbury calls "constitutional policy," or the "decisional rules by which subsequent policy actions are to be determined."<sup>8</sup> Among the procedural and structural "givens" that make up constitutional policy are legislative apportionment, the city-manager form of government, and federalism. These practices help shape decisions and

public policies. Some political scientists with a normative bent also think about what governments *should do*, with the identification of “correct” or “proper” public policies. Their value-oriented approach, however, places them outside the mainstream of political science, which as a “science” is supposed to be rigorous, objective, and value-neutral.

In the last few decades, however, political scientists have been giving more attention to the study of public policy and specifically to describing, analyzing, and explaining its causes and effects. Professor Thomas Dye summarizes the various objectives of policy study:

This focus involves a description of the content of public policy; an analysis of the impact of social, economic, and political forces on the content of public policy; an inquiry into the effect of various institutional arrangements and political processes on public policy; and an evaluation of the consequences of public policies on society, in terms of both expected and unexpected consequences.<sup>9</sup>

Students of public policy consequently seek answers to such questions as these: What effect do urbanization and industrialization have on welfare policies? How does the organization of Congress help shape agricultural or welfare policies? What role do interest groups have in forming environmental policy? What is the actual content of antitrust policy? Who benefits, and who does not, from current tax policies? What are the problems in implementing programs for disposal of hazardous waste? Although such questions are often difficult to answer, especially with precision, they direct our attention to the actual operation of the policy process and its societal consequences.

We now come to the question posed in the heading of this section: Why study public policy? One response is that it is important, that we are all affected in many ways by public policies, and thus we should know something about them, including why they are so difficult to enact, budget, and implement. We certainly should. A more systematic response is needed, however, which can be framed as the scientific, professional, and political reasons for studying public policies.<sup>10</sup> The same motivation does not drive all who engage in the study or analysis of public policy.

## *Scientific Reasons*

Public policies can be studied to gain greater understanding of their origins, the procedures by which they are developed and implemented, or their consequences for society. This, in turn, will increase our understanding of political processes and political behavior. Policy may be regarded as either a dependent or an independent variable for this sort of analysis. When we consider policy as a dependent variable, as the product of various political

forces, we focus on the environmental considerations and political actors contributing to its adoption and content. For instance, how is policy affected by the distribution of power among the national, state, and local levels of government? Were pressure groups or public opinion important in getting a policy adopted? If public policy is viewed as an independent variable, our focus shifts to the impact of policy on the structure and operation of the political system and its environment. One may then seek answers to such questions as these: How does policy affect the public's support for the political system? How does policy affect social well-being? Do policymaking processes vary depending upon the kind of policy involved? Do distributive (e.g., pork-barrel) policies help ensure the reelection of legislators?

I use the term *policy studies* to designate the study of public policy undertaken to gain greater basic understanding of political behavior and the governmental process.

## *Professional Reasons*

Don K. Price distinguishes between the "scientific estate," which seeks only to discover knowledge, and the "professional estate," which strives to apply scientific knowledge to the solution of practical social problems.<sup>11</sup> Here, we encounter those practitioners of "policy analysis" whose numbers both inside and outside the government have multiplied greatly in recent years. Policy analysis has an applied orientation and is intended to determine the most efficient (or best) alternative (i.e., the one that will yield the largest net social benefit) for dealing with a current problem, such as reducing air pollution or collection and disposal of household garbage.<sup>12</sup> A variant of policy analysis is evaluation research, which assesses the societal effects of a particular public policy. The policy evaluator wants to know, for instance, whether a job-training program has increased the prospects for employment and the earnings of its enrollees, and, if so, by how much.

Policy analysis draws heavily from economic theory and statistical and mathematical techniques of analysis. Cost-benefit analysis, for example, is widely used in determining (perhaps "estimating" is a better word here) the efficiency (which is of course a value) of proposed alternatives or actual policies. In appraising the efficiency of government actions, the policy analyst focuses on their influence on society generally, on whether society as a whole gains or loses, rather than on their distributional consequences. Which groups receive the benefits and which pay the costs of, say, a consumer-protection policy are not of real interest to the analyst. In sum, professional policy analysis seeks to identify and promote adoption of good public policies, as measured by the efficiency criterion. Achieving a basic understanding of political and other human behavior is, at best, a secondary consideration. (Cost-benefit analysis is further discussed in Chapter 7.)



## *Political Reasons*

As we have seen, some political scientists do not believe that political scientists should strive to be neutral or impartial in studying public policy. (This view is shared by some members of other social-science disciplines.) Rather, they contend that the study of public policy should be directed toward helping ensure that governments adopt favored public policies to attain the “right” goals. They reject the notion that the study of public policy should be value-free, contending rather that political science should not be silent or impotent on how best to deal with current political and social problems. In short, they engage in policy advocacy and are undeterred by society’s substantial disagreement over what constitutes “correct” policies or the “right” goals of policy. Research engaged in by policy advocates is often skewed by the desire to develop “evidence” to support their cause. Policy study, in contrast, is motivated by the intent to be impartial.

In this book, I draw on the scientific policy studies approach to develop a basic understanding of the policymaking process, which is here viewed as an inherently political process involving conflict and struggle among people (public officials and private citizens) with conflicting interests, values, and desires on policy issues. In describing and analyzing the policymaking process, the scientific policy studies approach has three basic aims.<sup>13</sup> First, its primary goal is to explain the adoption of a policy rather than to identify or prescribe “good” or proper policy. Analysis, rather than advocacy, is its style. Second, it rigorously searches for the causes and consequences of public policies by applying social-scientific methodology, which is not restricted to the use of quantitative data and methodology. At a minimum, it does require that one should strive to be rational, empirical, and objective. Third, this approach aims to develop reliable theories about public policies and their politics. Thus policy studies can be both theoretical and somewhat relevant to the more practical aspects of policymaking. It has been said that nothing is as practical as a good theory.

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## WHAT IS PUBLIC POLICY?

In general usage, the term *policy* designates the behavior of some actor or set of actors, such as an official, a governmental agency, or a legislature, in an area of activity such as public transportation or consumer protection. Public policy also may be viewed as whatever governments choose to do or not to do. Such definitions may be adequate for ordinary discourse, but because we set out in this book to do a systematic analysis of public policy, a more precise