The Federal Bureaucracy

 Learning Objectives

Describe the federal bureaucrats and the ways in which they obtain their jobs.

**L.O.1**

**Differentiate the four types of agencies into which the federal bureaucracy is organized.**

**L.O.2**

**Identify the factors that influence the effectiveness of bureaucratic implementation of public policy.**

**L.O.3**

**Describe how bureaucracies regulate and assess deregulation and alternative approaches to regulation.**

**L.O.4**

**Identify the means of controlling the bureaucracy and assess the role of iron triangles.**

**L.O.5**

**Assess the role of unelected bureaucrats in American democracy and the impact of the bureaucracy on the scope of government.**

**L.O.6**

 Chapter Overview

Bureaucracies are probably the most misunderstood system of the American government. Most of the public views bureaucracies in negative terms, yet the work of the bureaucracy is essential to meeting all of the needs and requirements demanded by the American public. In this chapter, we examine the role and functions of the federal bureaucracy and consider the growth and evolution of the bureaucracy over time. Next, we evaluate the role of the bureaucracy in public policymaking. We conclude by exploring contending approaches for overseeing and reforming the federal bureaucracy. By the end of the chapter, students should have a solid understanding of the historical and contemporary nature and debates surrounding the federal bureaucracy.

Describe the federal bureaucrats and the ways in which they obtain their jobs.

**L.O.1**

**1.1:** Contrast the spoils and merit systems.

* The spoils system: historically, government employment was allocated by the spoils system; that is, selecting employees on the basis of party loyalty, electoral support, and political influence.
* During the administration of Andrew Jackson, the spoils system was perhaps more overt than at any other time in the history of the U.S. federal government. Jackson claimed he was trying to involve more of the “common folk” in the government, but his selection of advisers on the basis of personal friendship rather than qualifications sometimes caused him difficulties.
* The merit system: the merit system (government employment based on competence, neutrality, and protection from partisanship) was introduced in the Pendleton Act of 1883.

**1.2:** During the Progressive Era, the federal bureaucracy was again reformed. In 1939, Congress passed the Hatch Act, which prohibited federal employees from engaging in partisan political activity, including running for public office, soliciting campaign funds, or campaigning for or against a party or candidate. However, the Hatch Act created other challenges.

* The problem of responsiveness: the federal bureaucracy is a large and complex institution, and getting it to change direction can be difficult. Presidents who are elected on campaign promises of reform often find their agenda stymied by bureaucratic inertia and resistance.
* The problem of productivity: even more troubling can be the problem of productivity, notably the inability to improve job performance because of the difficulties in rewarding or punishing civil servants. Before firing a federal employee, for example, the following steps must be taken:
  + The employee must receive written notice at least 30 days before a hearing to determine incompetence or misconduct.
  + A statement of cause—indicating the specific dates, places, and actions cited as incompetent or improper—must be provided.
  + The employee has the right to a hearing and decision by an impartial officer. The burden of proof falls on the agency seeking to dismiss the employee.
  + The employee has a right to an attorney and to present witnesses in his or her defense at the hearing.
  + The employee has the right to appeal any decision to the Merit Systems Protection Board.
  + If dissatisfied with the decision of the board, the employee has the right to appeal the decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals.
  + Until the final decision is made and all appeals are exhausted, the employee has the right to remain on the job and continue to draw pay.
* The problem of representiveness (is that a real word???): the federal bureaucracy is unrepresentative of the general population in its top executive positions. About 17 percent of the total federal civilian workforce is African American, and 7.5 percent is Hispanic. However, a close look at top bureaucratic positions reveals far less diversity. Only 6.4 percent of federal “executive” positions (levels GS 16–18) are filled by African Americans and only 3.7 percent by Hispanics.

**1.3:** People are often familiar with the idea of bureaucracy as “red tape,” we are typically less familiar with Max Weber’s idea as a rational system of organizing government, which represented a dramatic improvement from the system that preceded it. Weber’s understanding of bureaucracy, was based on the following characteristics:

* A hierarchical organization with clearly delineated lines of authority dealing with a fixed area of activity. Structure was important to Weber. He believed that a professional bureaucracy had to be divided into distinctive areas, each with its own charge. A separate institution, for example, to deal with national defense apart from the Treasury. Within each, clear lines of authority should demark who is responsible for what.
* Decision making based on written rules and procedures. Weber argued that one of the most important achievements of modern bureaucracy was that it operated on an impersonal basis. Decisions were thus uniform; there were not different standards for different groups of people. Further, the criteria on which decisions were made were recorded and available, providing greater transparency to the decision-making process.
* Professional and neutral staff who achieve career advancement based on technical prowess or expertise rather than connections. Remember, Weber’s conception of bureaucracy was a rejection of the spoils system that defined bureaucracies historically. Weber thought that bureaucrats should be experts in their fields, who achieve their position due to knowledge and skill rather than who they knew.

**1.4:** Political conflict does not end after a law has been passed by Congress and signed by the president. The arena for conflict merely shifts from Capitol Hill and the White House to the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy fulfills technical functions and plays a political role in American politics.

* The federal bureaucracy consists of myriad departments, agencies, and bureaus of the federal executive branch responsible for implementing the law.
* Despite the popular impression that policy is decided by the president and Congress and merely implemented by the federal bureaucracy, in fact, policy is also made by the bureaucracy. Policy decisions regarding implementation usually involve establishing how policy will be implemented. These are referred to as guidelines. Indeed, legislation usually establishes general goals that leave the bureaucracies with considerable latitude in determining how those goals will be achieved.
* Bureaucracies also frequently possess quasi-judicial powers to resolve some disputes and hear some appeals over policy. These decisions usually have the force of law unless overturned on appeal by a federal court. An example is the National Labor Relations Board, which has the authority to adjudicate disputes between labor and management in the area of federal labor law.
* The Washington bureaucracy is a major base of power in the American system of government—independent of Congress, the president, the courts, and the people.

**Differentiate the four types of agencies into which the federal bureaucracy is organized.**

**L.O.2**

**2.1:** The federal bureaucracy—officially part of the executive branch of the U.S. government—consists of about 2.8 million civilian employees (plus 1.4 million persons in the armed forces) organized into 15 cabinet departments, more than 60 independent agencies, and a large Executive Office of the President. The key types of bureaucratic institutions in the U.S. system are:

* **Departments** are familiar to the general public, since they are led by the president’s cabinet-level secretaries. Each department can have numerous agencies and bureaus associated with it. Some agencies are tightly controlled, but some have almost complete autonomy. Cabinet departments employ about 60 percent of all federal workers.

The functions of the 15 cabinet-level departments of the executive branch cover an enormous range (everything from providing mortgage insurance to overseeing the armed forces of the United States). Examples include the Department of Defense and the Department of Health and Human Services.

* **Independent regulatory agencies** are designed to protect the general public. These commissions are empowered by Congress both to make and to enforce rules, and they thus function in a legislative and judicial fashion. However, they generally operate outside the president’s cabinet. Examples include the Central Intelligence Agency and NASA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.
* **Independent executive agencies** report directly to the president, but the president’s control is limited only to appointing the head of the agency. Like cabinet departments, these agencies are hierarchically organized with a single head (usually called an “administrator”) who is appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. Such agencies generally deal with a specific set of issues, such as telecommunications (the Federal Communications Commission), or the stock market (the Securities and Exchange Commission).
* **Government corporations** are supposed to be run in a manner similar to private companies. They have a great deal of autonomy and independence and are designed to pay for themselves. Examples include the U.S. Postal Service and Amtrak, the National Railroad Passenger Corporation.
* **Quasi-governmental organizations** are both public and private. The Federal Reserve Board is probably the best known of these agencies.
* **Foundations** are designed to be separate from government, in order to protect from the political aspects of government. The National Science Foundation is one, as are the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

**2.2:** Explain how the federal bureaucracy grew to its present size in response to the evolving demands for government action in various policy areas.

* Identify the types of federal bureaucratic organizations (departments, independent agencies, independent regulatory commissions, and government corporations) and explain the differences among them.
* Discuss the negative image most Americans hold of the bureaucracy and the reasons behind these perceptions.
* Outline the advantages of a bureaucratic system and the problems that can result from inefficiency and lack of accountability.
* Examine possible reforms such as decentralization and privatization.
* Look at the ways in which various actors can impact policymaking by influencing the making and implementation of bureaucratic regulations.

**Identify the factors that influence the effectiveness of bureaucratic implementation of public policy.**

**L.O.3**

**3.1:** Using the example of energy policy, discuss the complexity of federal bureaucratic politics.

* In 1977, Congress consolidated all energy programs under the jurisdiction of the Department of Energy. Its chief mission was defined as reducing the demand for oil and gas, while encouraging greater production of energy.
* Very quickly the administration found itself in a tug-of-war on three fronts that involved agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency, the national government versus state governments, and one state or region versus another. Questions arose, such as the following:
* Which is more important, cleaner air or full employment?
  + Is our first priority to reduce air pollution caused by automobiles, or is it to create cars with higher gas mileage?
  + Should Montana low-sulfur coal be mined, without regard for the scarred landscape?
  + What is the respective authority of the national and state governments over drilling off the East Coast?
  + Should we ration gasoline, restrict oil imports, or let the price soar?
  + Do we really need a national speed limit? Why?
  + What should be done about acid rain? The new Energy Department found itself in the eye of this energy crisis.
  + When the goals of agencies conflict, which has priority?
  + Why is it impossible for Congress to legislate energy policy in detail?
  + Are the courts technically qualified to decide cases of this nature? Are they more apt to provide justice and equity than regulatory agencies?
  + How can we protect the democratic process in policy questions such as these?
* On several occasions, the very existence of the Department of Energy has come into question.
* Particularly interesting to note is that since the creation of this department, our dependence on oil has increased—the very thing the department was originally designed to prevent.
* President Reagan proposed eliminating it, and it was only heated protests from Congress that saved it then. Again in the last decade, there have been calls for its elimination (along with other agencies such as Housing and Urban Development and Education) as a budget-cutting measure.
* Part of the lecture can review the reasons for cabinet agencies being established and being abolished. Basically it is a question of who is allowed seats at the policymaking table and the relative political strength of opponents and proponents.

**3.2:** Examine some “laws” governing bureaucracies as organizations.

* Parkinson’s law: this law states that work expands to fill the time allotted to complete it. This law can be brought home to students by asking how many times they have turned in a research paper early.
* Peter principle: this principle states that in any organization people get promoted until they reach their level of incompetence. Taken to its logical conclusion it means that eventually, in any organization, people will be performing tasks that they are least capable of performing.

It works like this: a person just starting work at an organization gets a lower-level job. If the person does a good job, he or she will get a promotion when there is a vacancy above him or her. This situation keeps repeating itself until the person is finally promoted into a position where he or she does not perform well. Not having performed well at this position, the person is passed over for future promotions.

* In a more serious vein, Anthony Downs has presented the set of propositions that follow about bureaucratic behavior.
* Law of increasing conservatism: “All organizations tend to become more conservative as they become older, unless they experience periods of very rapid growth or internal turnover.” This could be called the law of inertia. “In every bureau, there is an inherent pressure upon the vast majority of officials to become conservers in the long run.”
* Law of imperfect control: “No one can fully control the behavior of a large organization,” and, “The larger any organization becomes, the weaker is the control over its actions exercised by those at the top.”
* Law of countercontrol: “The greater the effort made by a top-level official or sovereign to control the behavior of subordinate officials, the greater the efforts made by those subordinates to evade or counteract such control.”
* Law of control duplication: “Any attempt to control one large organization tends to generate another organization.” [Note: This law could explain the duplication of the bureaucracy found in the White House Office and Congress. Even though there is a State Department and a Defense Department, the president has a National Security Council. Furthermore, even though there is a Treasury Department and a Commerce Department, Congress has a Budget Office and the president has the Office of Management and Budget.]

**3.3:** Examine the relationship between Max Weber’s understandings of bureaucracy and his theory of legal-rational authority.

* Weber argued that three sources of authority could be found in societies around the world:
  + Charismatic authority, based on the personal qualities of the individual. This type of authority was frequently exercised under cults of personality. Notable examples might include Adolph Hitler or Mahatmas Gandhi.
  + Traditional authority, in which legitimacy is established by belief in the sanctimony of immemorial traditions. Most monarchs claim traditional authority, as does the pope of the Roman Catholic Church.
  + Legal-rational authority, which is based on the consistent performance of impersonal rules through institutions. Most contemporary democracies, and indeed the very notion of the rule of law, are rooted in legal-rational authority.
* Weber’s understanding of (and advocacy for) bureaucracy was deeply rooted in his preference for legal-rational authority, a system that, like professional bureaucracies, draws on formal and impersonal rules to be applied equally across society.

**3.4:** Bureaucratic power has grown with advances in technology and increases in the size and complexity of society. What are the sources of bureaucratic power?

* Implementation: implementation is the development of procedures and activities to carry out policies legislated by Congress.
* Regulation: regulation involves the development of formal rules for implementing legislation.
* Adjudication: adjudication involves decision making by the federal bureaucracy as to whether or not a person or organization has complied with or violated government laws and/or regulations.
* Administrative discretion: discretion is greatest when cases do not exactly fit established rules or when more than one rule might be applied to the same case, resulting in different outcomes.
* Bureaucratic power and budget maximization: budget maximization—expanding the agency’s budget, staff, and authority as much as possible—becomes a driving force in government bureaucracies. This is especially true of discretionary funds, which are those that bureaucrats have flexibility in deciding how to spend, rather than money committed by law to specific purposes.

**3.5:** Part of the problem is that bureaucracies are often mired in red tape. The following are some points to elaborate on concerning red tape.

* Why is it called red tape?
  + According to William Safire (*Safire’s Political Dictionary*), Charles Dickens supposedly first used the phrase. “Official documents in England were tied with a string or tape of a reddish color, and many lawyers followed the practice in packaging their briefs.”
  + In his *Dictionary of American Politics*, Eugene McCarthy explains the pejorative connotation of the phrase this way: “The expression arose from dissatisfaction with the time taken to tie and untie the red tape used to bind official documents.”
* Is red tape bad?
  + Strictly by definition, one would have to say yes. The phrase suggests excessive paperwork and the like. Yet, as pointed out by the authors of the text, “One person’s red tape may be another’s treasured procedural safeguard.” This is a 1977 quote of Herbert Kaufman’s about the liberal think tank, the Brookings Institution. Kaufman goes on, “We are ambivalent about the appropriate trade-offs between discretion and constraint, each of us demanding the former for ourselves and the latter for our neighbors” (*Safire’s Political Dictionary*).
  + According to Kaufman, If we own a construction company that is about to get a million-dollar contract to construct a dam, when we learn that the project has been halted due to our failure to file an environmental impact statement, we throw up our hands at such outrageous red tape! However, those people whose farms (which have been in the family for eight generations) would be submerged due to the damming of the river and who wrote letters to their congressmen in an effort to halt the project would applaud the government for finally getting something right.
  + In other words, those who see government regulations as getting in their way (usually meaning keeping them from getting what they want) see those regulations in a negative light (red tape). Those who view government regulations as advantageous would not call them red tape.
* What is red tape supposed to do?

Few people, if any, make a case for excessive government regulations. What is the purpose of red tape? Ironically, the purpose of red tape is to protect citizens, but it ends up causing many inefficiencies in government.

* How does red tape protect citizens?
  + If people buy and consume in great quantities a popular drink that contains saccharin, only to learn, ten years later, that they have developed a certain type of cancer, their first reaction might be, “How did the government let this happen?” There was a time when the prevailing marketplace philosophy was caveat emptor: let the buyer beware.
  + Today, however, we expect the government to protect us from such things before it is too late. In fact, we don’t just want to be warned about possible side effects of chemicals placed in food or food products. To help us with our diets, we demand to know things such as fat content and the amount of calories. The government’s position could be that if some manufacturer causes us injury, our only recourse would be to use the courts to seek restitution. But we want the government to protect us before we are injured.
  + These demands mean that the government must collect data and perform inspections. This means that people must be hired and forms must be filled out concerning the production, storage, transportation, packaging, and selling of goods. Guess what some call this? Red tape!
  + Getting back to the drink with saccharin mentioned earlier, the government is placed in a no-win situation. If there are no regulations of such drinks or if the government does not make the manufacturer issue warnings, when people get sick they see the government as not doing its job. Yet if the government issues regulations in an attempt to prevent such things, it is criticized for being mired in red tape.
* What does red tape have to do with efficiency?
  + Suppose the government created a program for aid (perhaps financial assistance) for those that were blind. This type of program would seem to be one that a lot of people would see as legitimate.
  + To make sure only those who are truly disabled with blindness get the aid, the government might come up with lengthy definitions as to what constitutes blindness. Furthermore, it might require that those applying for the aid have their blindness certified by several specialists. Those seeking the aid would probably call all of this paperwork red tape.

Yet if the government did not follow such procedures and it was discovered (probably reported on *60 Minutes*) that people who were not truly blind were getting taxpayer money, the general public would be upset. Again, the government is placed in a no-win situation. If it has rules and regulations it is accused of creating red tape, and if it does not, then it is accused of inefficiency or incompetence.

* Why is there so much red tape?

Because everyone wants it. Of course, few people want all of it. They merely want the part that protects them.

**Describe how bureaucracies regulate and assess deregulation and alternative approaches to regulation.**

**L.O.4**

**4.1:** Within the boundaries established by congressional legislation, agency-made regulations fill in the details for implementing policy. Interest groups often lobby the agencies to adopt regulations that favor their interests. Presidents also influence bureaucratic regulations through their appointments and influence over bureaucrats.

**4.2:** Agencies hold hearings to examine information and issue decisions that interpret statutes and regulations. These adjudicative processes may be used to determine whether laws or regulations have been violated or whether citizens have received their due benefits. They may also adjudicate disputes between parties over compliance with regulations.

**4.3:** Conservatives have long argued that governments should turn over many of their functions to the private sector.

* Experience has demonstrated that this makes sense in some circumstances, but by the same token, business is not always superior to government. Business tends to be better at performing economic tasks, innovating, and performing complex or technical tasks.
* When privatization succeeds, it is because of the incentives that drive those within the system. Are they motivated to excel? Are they accountable for their results? Are they free from overly restrictive rules?
* Often when governments privatize an activity such as garbage collection or running a prison, they wind up turning it over to a private monopoly, and both the cost and the inefficiency grow worse. It does make sense to privatize services if they can be made more cost efficient. But people need to remember that privatization means shifting the deliverer of services, not the responsibility for services. For instance, if a county contracts with a private company to run a county jail, ultimate responsibility for the health and safety of the jail inmates still remains with the county.

**4.4:** Entrepreneurial governments seek to change the traditional system that focuses on inputs, not outcomes.

* For instance, welfare departments get funded based on the number of people that go onto the welfare rolls, not on how many people the welfare department got off of welfare. Schools get funded based on how many students enroll, not on how much those students learn once they are enrolled.
* Public entrepreneurs know that when institutions are funded according to inputs, they have little reason to strive for better performance.
* When they are funded according to outcomes, they become concerned with performance. But concepts such as accountability, performance, and results have begun to ring through the halls of government. Upper-level managers and elected officials everywhere are jumping onto the performance-measuring bandwagon.
* Performance measurement is gaining momentum around the country. Many jurisdictions are struggling with basic questions such as developing the correct performance measures and deciding how the resulting information will be used.
* One controversy is that some areas of government, such as human services, claim that performance measurement is especially hard to do.
* One area some jurisdictions are moving into is performance-based budgeting; that is, using the performance measurement process to bring some reason and science to the messy business of governmental budgeting. This is highly controversial, given that governmental budgets have traditionally been tied to political considerations.

**Identify the means of controlling the bureaucracy and assess the role of iron triangles.**

**L.O.5**

**5.1:** Although the president is the nominal head of the executive agencies, Congress can also exercise considerable influence over the federal bureaucracy. Through its power to create or eliminate and fund or fail to fund these agencies, Congress can exert its full share of control.

* Congress has the constitutional power to create or abolish executive departments and independent agencies, or to transfer their functions, as it wishes.
* Congress can, by law, expand or contract the discretionary authority of bureaucrats. It can grant broad authority to agencies in vaguely written language, thereby adding to the power of bureaucracies, which can then determine themselves how to define and implement their own authority.
* The U.S. Senate’s power to confirm presidential appointments gives it some added influence over the bureaucracy.
* Congressional appropriations: Congress has the power to grant or to withhold the budget requests of bureaucracies. This is perhaps Congress’ most potent weapon in controlling the bureaucracy.
* Congressional oversight and investigation: investigations perform a political function for Congress, assuring voters that the Congress is taking action against bureaucratic abuses. Congress also exercises oversight, justifying its oversight activities on the grounds that its lawmaking powers require it to determine whether the purposes of the laws it passed are being carried out.

**5.2:** Contrast the role of the president and the legislature with respect to the federal bureaucracy.

* Although the president has constitutional authority over the operation of the executive branch, Congress creates departments and agencies and appropriates their funds.
* Many high-ranking federal bureaucrats, including the heads of most federal agencies, report to and serve at the pleasure of the president. However, Senate approval is needed for presidential appointees to head departments. In recent years, the confirmation process has become more partisan and divisive, with the Senate conducting lengthy investigations and holding public hearings on presidential cabinet nominees.

**5.3:** Outline the ways in which all three branches of government exercise some control over the federal bureaucracy.

* The president wields power through political appointments.
* Congress engages in oversight through hearings about policy issues and bureaucratic actions by passing legislation to direct bureaucratic action and by control over the budget.
* The courts have a say when lawsuits involving agencies are brought before them and through appeals of administrative decisions to higher levels.

**5.4:** Examine the critiques of bureaucracy.

* The concept of iron triangles refers to the relationships among interest groups, congressional committees, and bureaucratic agencies that share interest in a policy area. The iron triangle model argues that bureaucratic agencies, seeking to expand their own power, will operate in ways that advance the interests of those they seek to regulate rather than operating in the best interest of the people. This can occur either because of corruption or, more frequently, because of regulatory capture.
* Regulatory capture occurs when regulatory agencies created to make decisions in the public interest instead advance the interests of those agencies they regulate.
* The iron triangles framework as an explanation of policy outcomes has been replaced by the idea of issue networks (or policy committees), reflecting a broader group of actors focused on an issue and the interactions that take place among them, including lobbying and other influence-making activities.
* Issue networks also include the “revolving door” experience that accompanies iron triangles. The “revolving door” refers to the movement of key personnel between private industry and the agencies that regulate those industries.

For example, Anne Veneman, who served as secretary of agriculture from 2001 to 2005, had previously served on the board of directors for Calgene, a subsidiary of the agricultural seed and chemical company Monsanto. And prior to joining Monsanto, she had been the secretary of food and agriculture for the State of California.

**5.5:** The Constitution places the president at the head of the executive branch of government, with the power to “appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, Judges of the Supreme Court, and all other Officers of the United States . . . which shall be established by Law.” If the bureaucracy is to be made accountable to the president, we would expect the president to directly appoint policymaking executive officers. But it is difficult to determine exactly how many positions are truly “policymaking”. There are limits on presidential control over the federal bureaucracy.

* The president retains direct control over about 3,000 federal jobs. Most of these positions are at the highest level of cabinet departments, which have become top-heavy with administrators over time. The same multiplication of layers of executive management has occurred in independent agencies as well.
* Significant limits are placed on the ability of the president or of high-level officers to dismiss federal bureaucrats. These limits were imposed to protect federal employees from facing dismissal for political reasons. Most federal employees, for example, are not replaced by successive Republican or Democratic administrations. Whatever political changes might occur in Congress or the presidency, the bureaucracy largely continues to function.
* Whistle-blowers are federal employees (or employees of a firm contracting with the government) who report government waste, mismanagement, or fraud to the media or to congressional committees or who “go public” with their policy disputes with their superiors. Rules also exist to protect whistle-blowers.
* Agency cultures: over time, every bureaucracy tends to develop its own “culture”; that is, beliefs about the values of the organization’s programs and goals and close associations with the agency’s client groups and political supporters. These cultures can impose real limits on the ability of a president or the Congress to accomplish their own goals.
* Presidents can create some new agencies by executive order. However, in recent years, the general mistrust of government and the growing belief that the federal bureaucracy is already too big have limited the desire of presidents to be seen creating new layers of bureaucracy. A notable exception was the creation of the Department of Homeland Security after September 11, 2001.

**Assess the role of unelected bureaucrats in American democracy and the impact of the bureaucracy on the scope of government.**

**L.O.6**

***6.1:*** *Being a good “bureaucratic politician” involves cultivating a good base of support for requests among the public at large and among interests served by the agency; developing attention, enthusiasm, and support for one’s program among top political figures and congressional leaders; winning favorable coverage of agency activities in the media; and following strategies that exploit opportunities. Perhaps above all, it requires a solid understanding of the politics of the budgeting process.*

* *Contrast the three forms of budgeting used.*
* *Explain their implications for bureaucratic politics in the United States.*
* ***Incremental budgeting*** *focuses on requested increases in funding for existing programs, accepting as legitimate their previous year’s expenditures. Because of this, incremental budgeting tends to be relatively conservative and stable, distrusting dramatic shifts in funding allocations. Consequently, long-standing and well-established programs tend to favor incremental budgeting, as this method preserves their advantages.*
* ***Zero-based budgeting*** *demands justification for the entire budget request of an agency, not just its requested increase in funding.*
* ***Program budgeting*** *requires agencies to present budgetary requests in terms of the end products they will produce or at least to allocate each expense to a specific program.*

**6.2:** Americans often complain that the federal government has “gotten too big.” This is generally taken to mean that the federal bureaucracy has extended its scope too much, that Americans would prefer a smaller government dealing with fewer issues. But on what basis do Americans make these decisions? Comparing the national bureaucracy in the United States with that of some other developed countries provides an interesting way to think about these commonly held beliefs.

* How does the size of the public sector in the United States compare with the size of the public sector in other economically advanced, democratic countries?
* There is a great deal of variation in the size of government across countries.
  + Government spending accounts for nearly two-thirds of the total output in Sweden.
  + Government spending exceeds one-half of the total output of Denmark, Netherlands, Finland, Germany, Italy, Austria, Belgium, and France.
  + The sizes of the public sectors in Australia, Japan, and Switzerland are only slightly higher than that of the United States.
* The high level of government spending in these countries primarily reflects greater public sector involvement in the provision of housing, health care, retirement insurance, and aid to the unemployed.

 **Discussion Questions (choose 5 to write out!!)**

1. How does Congress exercise control over the federal bureaucracy?

2. How does the president exercise control over the federal bureaucracy?

3. Distinguish between independent agencies and independent regulatory commissions. Be sure to provide examples of each.

4. What is deregulation? Describe two arguments used by supporters of deregulation and two arguments used by its detractors.

5. Why do laws passed by Congress often lack clarity? How does this affect the way these laws are implemented by the bureaucracy?

6. Contemplate the advice you would give someone who wants to work in law enforcement for the National Park Service. Should the aspiring civil servant spend time honing law enforcement skills or schmoozing with important politicians? Justify your answer. Provide three specific pieces of advice for landing the desired job.

7. How did the Hatch Act reinforce reforms initiated under the Pendleton Act? When were these acts passed, and what events precipitated them?

8. Discuss the potential advantages and disadvantages of privatization.

9. Describe two tactics the president can use in an attempt to control the federal bureaucracy. Discuss a limitation on presidential control for both of these tactics.

10. What is administrative discretion? Suppose you are a police officer who believes that the recreational use of small amounts of marijuana does not pose a significant risk to the user or to the general public. How would this belief likely affect your use of administrative discretion when you encounter small-time recreational marijuana users?

11. Define discretion as it applies to federal bureaucracy. Why might Congress grant bureaucratic agencies broad discretion in the implementation of federal laws?

12. What are independent regulatory commissions, and why are they removed from presidential and congressional control?

13. Define and give an example of a government corporation. Why are some services provided by government corporations, whereas others are left to the private sector?

14. Evaluate the claim that the number of government bureaucrats has been growing every year for about the past fifty years.