The Federal Bureaucracy

I. Why Bureaucracy?
II. The Development of Bureaucracy in America
III. The Organization of the Bureaucracy
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Why Bureaucracy?

- “Bureaucrat” a pejorative term in US
- Yet want government to protect the environment, ensure auto safety, keep terrorist off our planes, etc.
- To do so need to form bureaucracies
  - Max Weber’s Principles of Bureaucracy...
  - Hierarchical, division of labor, impersonal, following defined/abstract rules, striving for specified goals
- As government expands, bureaucracy expands
- So American’s have a “love-hate” relationship with bureaucracy
Development of Bureaucracy in America

- **Spoils System**: winning party appointed supporters to government positions
  - Assassination of James Garfield (1881)
- **Pendleton Act (1883)**: Civil Service Reform (Merit System)
- **Hatch Act (1939)**: Prohibition on Political Activities
  - Revised in 1993; now more “no politics while on duty”
Figure 8-1 Changes in Federal Civilian Employment

Number of federal civilian employees (1,000s)

Organization of the Federal Bureaucracy

- Only about 15 percent in Washington area.
- More than 25 percent of the civilian employees work for military; another 30 percent work for the Postal Service.
- Less than 10 percent work for welfare agencies.
- Diverse group more demographically representative of the nation than politicians.
- Most are white-collar workers: secretaries, clerks, lawyers, inspectors, and... ENGINEERS!!!!
Organization of the Federal Bureaucracy

- **Cabinet Departments** (e.g., State, Commerce, Education)
- **Independent Agencies** (e.g., NASA, CIA, EPA)
- **Independent Regulatory Commissions** (e.g., Federal Reserve, SEC, FCC, FTC)
- **Government Corporations** (e.g., US Postal Service, Corporation for Public Broadcasting, TVA, FDIC)
Size of the Bureaucracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Personnel (thousands)</th>
<th>Budget (billion dollars)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>109.8</td>
<td>81.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>6.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defense</td>
<td>700.0</td>
<td>428.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>64.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>23.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health and Human Services</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>574.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homeland Security</td>
<td>183.0</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing and Urban Development</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>38.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interior</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>8.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>112.6</td>
<td>20.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>57.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>30.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>59.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treasury</td>
<td>115.9</td>
<td>403.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans Affairs</td>
<td>218.3</td>
<td>67.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who Controls the Bureaucracy?

- Congress
  - Budget
  - Oversight
- President
  - Budget (Office of Management and Budget)
  - Appointments (with Senate)
- Courts
  - Administrative law courts
Bureaucratic Autonomy

- Agency Control
  - Regulation and Administrative Discretion
- Agency Interests
  - Bureaucratic Culture and Bureaucratic Capture
- Political Alliances
  - Iron Triangles and Issue Networks

Bureaucrats are not just referees, but active players in the political game!
Bureaucracy and the Size of Government

Q: Can the size of the bureaucracy be controlled?

In many respects... **NO**!

- Shift to State and Local Government
- Federal Spending Largely Uncontrollable
- Federal Spending has Not Increased Much Relative to Overall Economy
“Iron Triangles”

Public and other interests largely blocked out...
Growth of State & Local Bureaucracy

**Figure 3-4** The Postwar Growth of Government Occurred at the Local Level

Number of public civilian employees (millions)

Discretionary and Non-Discretionary Federal Spending, 2008

Non-Defense Discretionary, 16%
Social Security, 21%
Security (Defense, Homeland, International Affairs), 24%
Medicare, 13%
Medicaid, 7%
Interest Payments on National Debt, 9%
Entitlements & Other Mandatory, 12.9%

OMB, Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2008
Federal Spending as a percentage of GDP

Source: Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States
American Government Exam #1

AVG = 57.0 (76.1%)  Median = 57.5 (76.7%)

### Grade Distribution

- **A (68-75)**: 4 students
- **B (60-67)**: 14 students
- **C (53-59)**: 18 students
- **D (45-52)**: 6 students
- **F (44 or less)**: 2 students