Politics and Media

M6920
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Goals

- Explore the relationship between policy and politics
- Describe the role of media in US political life
- Use health reform as a case study of these issues

Politics

- About the distribution and use of power
- Can occur in any setting, but generally associated with the allocations of power and resources in public system
Sources of power

- Heredity
- Economics
- Information
- Charisma
- Assembled

Power is experienced as

- Ability to reward or punish
- Ability to determine what is done with knowledge
- Ability to distribute resources
- Ability to exercise referral power

Electoral politics

- Who gets chosen
- Nominations
- Financing
- Communications
Executive/legislative politics

- What is on the agenda
- Who sets/controls the agenda
- What solutions are considered
- What solutions are chosen

Balancing and Competing Interests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Burden</th>
<th>Specific Benefit</th>
<th>General Benefit</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Depends on weight of parties</td>
<td>Likely to Fail</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Burden</td>
<td>Likely to Pass</td>
<td>Depends on interest groups aroused</td>
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Interest groups

- National/local
- As forums for discussion
- As lobbying/pressure groups
Professional association as an interest group

- advocating for its members
- advocating for its ‘clients’
- advocating for its supporters or suppliers

The Internet

- Almost all candidates and elected officials have websites
- Rapid distribution has unquantified impact
- Fund-raising potential huge
- Equity in access is important

At the intersection of

- Problems
- Alternatives
- Politics
  - Actions and policies
Responses as issues emerge

- National actors later rather than earlier
- State/local officials are front line
- Politicians engage when not reacting has more negatives than reacting
- Trying to avoid blame


Responses, cont.

- Interest groups/constituents
  - Established and directly involved—representing victims
  - Newly established by the emergence of new victims
  - Opportunistic

- Press
  - Fire alarms
  - Breakthroughs
  - Controversies
  - Human interest

As experienced in “drive through delivery” debate

- Agenda building (Kingdon model)
  - problem recognition
  - formation of proposals (often by policy entrepreneurs)
  - political mood of the time
Was shorter stay...

- testimony to the system sensitivity to mother's wishes to home sooner?
- reflection of the ability of technology to shorten unnecessary stays?
- economic decision imposed on mothers and doctors by greedy insurers?

Apparent solution was simple:

- an extra day in hospital fixes all
- almost no discussion of alternative models of discharge/home care
- personal experiences of legislators were critical

In the debates

- hospital-based doctors and nurses very positive
- those more committed to home care negative
- ACNM apparently silent
The politics

- in 15 of 23 states adopting law, the single sponsor of the bill was female
- reasons for sponsoring:
  - shift control to women
  - avoid negative consequences
  - fear that insurers wouldn’t act on their own

End result

- largely symbolic and nonpartisan
- no governmental resources invested
- an exception to ERISA was inserted

How a bill becomes law

- A civics lesson in pictures...
As Senate amended it

As passed into law

As agency understood it
What budget allowed

What the taxpayer wanted

Politics of health reform

- Conflicting goals:
  - Health
  - Insurance
  - Reimbursement

- Conflicting ideas:
  - Government provides
  - Incentives to induce
  - Punishments to enforce

- Poor management of the debate
  - Failure to keep an eye on the big picture
  - Skewed media presentations
  - Overlapping political agendas
Media

- National
- Professional
- State/local

Politics and Media

- Power distributions and agendas influenced by what is said
- Communications mechanisms of media are used by wise politicians
- Role of media in free society often cited as critical

Anticipating the Bush presidency

- Medicare?
- Children?
- Research and academic health centers?