

# Public Policy Agenda

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Boy, this sounded like music in my ears. What a wonderful effort! The writing style was excellent. The content was excellent. You took your time going through all the major issues and followed my instructions. You've set a standard here. I now expect it from you.

20+7

The basic definition of public policy is what a government decides to do or not to do. In order to create a public policy there must be an issue that is pressing to a society. If it is cheaper for public problems to be solved by the private sector an issue will never become a public policy. In order to receive legislative review politicians must see value in pursuing a solution. The problem must present enough importance to politicians<sup>s</sup> in order for them to mobilize towards finding a solution. To gain mobilization the issue must have the proper support, go through the proper processes, and offer politicians a way of increasing their voter support and political prowess.

excellent.  
bold!

Public Policies are created in order to solve major crises in a community. Within any given time period a community has thousands of problems varying in severity. Examples of these problems could be ~~a~~ lack of jobs, increases in bankruptcy, increases in foreclosure, and can even be increases in childhood obesity. It is the job of the government to set apart problems that are private from problems that are public, and only take their time to fix the problems that are shared throughout the community. It is not the government's job to deal with issues that only affect small proportions of a population. An example of a private problem would be a case where only two or three people in a community lose their homes to foreclosure. It is a major problem for the three individuals, but does not pose to create a detrimental impact on the society as a whole.

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On the other hand a public problem is a problem that affects a major percentage of a populace. Using the same foreclosure example if over thirty percent of residents in a community file for foreclosure it poses a major problem for the whole community. With such a large number of foreclosures homes that are in good standing will see a drop in value, and will lead to even more default loans. To prevent such a problem it is the government's job to step in and create some sort of public policy agenda in order to reverse the problem. Whether the solution to the problem is to offer bailouts to individuals with bad loans or allow individuals to restructure their loans to create affordable payments it is the government's job to create and find the proper solution to the problem. The foremost difficulty public problems have in receiving proper solutions is the lack of attention many issues are given from government officials.

Many public problems are not brought to the attention of government because of personal interests. The majority of elected officials will only put time into issues that will create the most political mileage for their career portfolio. The majority of policy making officials only seek to solve problems that affect major sections of the voting public in order to increase their amount of voter support. This type of behavior is known as bounded rationality, which connotes opting to only take action that benefits oneself. These acts of self interest are the primary reason many problems that effect individuals who are not consistent voters are viewed as less significant. An example

would be any issues or problems that affect the elderly or veterans. These two cross sections of the public have shown throughout history to be dedicated voters. If a politician can help either of these two groups they will help themselves in future elections. Therefore much of a public official's time in office will be spent solving issues regarding veterans and the elderly.

On the other hand problems that effect sections of the populace who are not reliable voters are not given much attention because it serves no value for politicians to apply their resources in solving such problems. An example would be individuals who desire increases in welfare distribution. Welfare issues are not valued problems to elected officials because individuals on welfare rarely show up to vote. President Barak Obama is the only true counterexample to the situation. Obama spent a large amount of his campaign appealing to problems that effect the youth in our country. In the past young voters in America were very unreliable. The president appealed to problems that affect younger voters and was able to make an unreliable voting source the backbone of his victory with these appeals. Public Policy Agendas can be broken up into two separate categories. These two separate categories are known as public agendas, and institutional agendas.

Public agendas can be considered the lowest level of agendas. A public agenda is the sum total of all arguments in a community. For action to be taken to solve a

public argument a public agenda must become an institutional agenda. Once a public agenda becomes an institutional agenda it becomes the job of the government to solve the dispute. It can be a very difficult and political process for a public agenda to be viewed worthy enough to become an institutional agenda. Many issues politicians will not touch because they are considered to be hot and provide no middle ground solution. Examples of controversial public policy items that have not become institutional problems are gay marriage, and abortion. There are two main reasons a public policy will become an institutional agenda.

The first and most clear reason would be in the event of a major crisis. If an earthquake were to strike California the government would take swift action in order to help the state recover from the tragedy. In this instance the public agenda of individuals living in an earthquake prone territory becomes an institutional agenda because of the dire needs of the individuals affected by the crisis.

The other major factor in determining if a public agenda becomes an institutional agenda is politician self interest. A prime example of political self interest fueling an institutional agenda is breast cancer research. President Bill Clinton's mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. The issue of breast cancer prior to Clinton's presidency had not been given much political attention. Once he was elected into office he dispersed large amounts of resources into breast cancer research and cure development.

Due to his personal interest in the issue he made breast cancer an institutional agenda out of a public agenda. Publicity is one of the strongest tools interest groups can use to gain support. To create publicity for an issue there are several tools these groups will use.

To entice politicians to create new public policy interest groups must use some form of mobilization to gain the needed publicity for an issue. One of the main tools lobbyists use to gain mobilization is to appeal to American pride by using national symbols. By using national symbols supporters of a cause can create a link between their issue and how the issue is patriotic. An example would be Martin Luther King's speech in front of the Lincoln memorial. By giving his speech on equal rights in front of the memorial he created a message that equal rights for all is American. Another popular mobilization tool commonly used is to define a cause broadly in order to try and gain the support of other interest groups. Even today individuals that want gay and lesbians rights try to relate their struggles to struggles that other minority groups have faced. By creating a link between their struggles they hope that other minority groups such as the NAACP will back their pursuit of equal rights.

The last and most important mobilization tool an interest group will use to gain needed support harsh or soft language. Individuals who are against giving Mexican immigrants receiving equal rights will refer to the migrants as illegal aliens. On the

other hand individuals who are fighting for Mexican immigrants to receive equal rights refer to the migrants as undocumented workers. By changing the name of the cause or of the individuals behind the cause interest groups are able to gain the support of the public. ✓

Choosing the <sup>wrong</sup> right agenda building model is detrimental to creating public policy. If the wrong model is chosen it could result in the complete loss of support for an issue. The three types of agenda building models are the outside initiative model, the inside initiative model, and the mobilization model. An outside initiative model involves the public presenting a problem that requires the government to create some type of institutional agenda. Outside initiative models are used on problems that have the support of the community, a large amount of publicity, and are not controversial.

✓ An inside initiative model involves creating a solution to a problem and implementing that solution all within the government. Example of legislation that utilized the inside initiative model is pay raises for members of congress, and the majority of military issues.

The last model is the mobilization model, which has many of the same characteristics of an inside initiative model. A mobilization model involves politicians inside the government introducing a solution to a problem that is not brought to them by the public, but is introduced by a member in the legislative body. Once the problem

is introduced the government creates legislation to resolve the inquiry. Once this legislation is passed the government relies on individuals throughout society to enforce the ruling. The fair public accommodation law is a perfect example of the mobilization model. The government created legislation that stating if there are vacancies at a motel it is illegal to deny American citizens accommodation. Although the government created the legislation it is impossible to enforce the law so it is up to the populace to truly follow and implement the law.

In order to have a public policy pushed through legislation the policy must have a well thought out agenda. Thus the agenda building segment of public policy can be considered most crucial. If insufficient time is spent on the agenda building segment of policy making the policy will be unable to gain sufficient support from politicians.

Many severe arguments are still left unsolved to this day due to poor agenda building.

Politicians will stray away from unclear agendas if they feel they are unable to reach a happy medium throughout a community. Public Policy's main purpose is to make the majority of individuals in a community feel at ease with a solution to a problem.

In conclusion the process of creating public policy is very political and in order to gain support for a policy one must create an agenda that appeals to the majority of society. A public policy must use the proper agenda building model, the proper mobilization tools, and most importantly demonstrate to politicians that the policy is in

their best political interest. Without creating a structured agenda that is in the best interest of the public and of elected officials a policy will not be instituted. Many problems we still have today will be left unsolved until the proper agenda settings are created.

### **Application: Stimulus Package**

In the past three years America has experienced a major decline in its overall market value. With this loss in market value has come a severe loss in jobs, and consumer confidence. In the past month newly elected President Barak Obama and his advisors have been able to create and pass legislation in order to try and jump start the struggling American economy. Without the proper agenda building the presidents stimulus package would have been unable to gain the required support of congress, because of the enormous eight hundred billion dollar price tag on the bill. ✓

With such a large amount of unemployment and foreclosures throughout the country a private problem has quickly become a public problem. The public agenda has currently become and institutional agenda and policy makers have been using all their resources to create some sort of legislation to resolve the problem. President Obama's cabinet created a stimulus package and utilized an inside initiative agenda in order to get the make the stimulus package actual legislation. The model was

successful and the package was passed into legislation "On Jan. 28, 2009, by the House of Representatives creating which will give \$819 billion to various entities by a vote of 244 to 188. The measure passed without a single Republican vote in favor." (Ralph) In most instances a congress must have the support of individuals from both political parties. With such a democratic majority this case is different from the norm because it was able to pass without any support from the opposing party. ✓

To approve the stimulus package the agenda also had to be run through the Senate which also has a democratic majority, but would need the support of three republican senators to be approved. "Intensive negotiations in the Senate led three moderate Republicans to lend their support to an \$838 billion version of the bill, getting Democrats over the 60-vote hurdle needed to prevent a filibuster. Final passage of the Senate occurred on Feb. 10 with a 61 to 37 vote." (Ralph) With the proper agenda setting the democrats were able to persuade the needed republican senators to vote in favor of the stimulus. If the agenda setting had not please the three republican senators it would have take several more months to approve the stimulus package.

One of Barak Obamas greatest tool for creating such an enormous mobilization of support and resources was his ability to link his stimulus plan to an American dream. The president spent a whole week giving speeches throughout the heartland of America in pursuit of needed support. In his last speech given before Congress voted

on the stimulus package he stated "This week, I spent some time with Americans across the country who are hurting because of our economic crisis. Families losing the homes that were their stake in the American Dream. Folks who have given up trying to get ahead, and given in to the stark reality of just trying to get by." They've been looking to those they sent to Washington for some hope at a time when they need it most" (Silva). With this final statement to the country the president put all the pressure on Congress to pass the bill by using a national symbolism.

President Barak Obama who is a very compassionate individual was able to use the power of speech to gain enough support for his public policy to become actual legislation. He was able to portray how grim the American economic situation is to the lawmakers in Washington, and was able to persuade government officials that the economic stimulus package was the best solution to the problem. I feel that the process was much more politically driven than it should have been, but feel that the stimulus package will offer a quick solution to a surmounting problem. In the future I believe the president should try and gain more support from the opposing party in order to create a much more bipartisan congress. If the president does not feel it is important to gain support from Republicans he can expect to see much more opposition in the future. For congress to be successful both parties need to feel that they both have an equal share in the law making process. The economic stimulus passed due to support

from a few Republican senators, but if there continues to be a lack of compromise between the two parties this support will surely diminish.

*need concluding section*

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