



American Government & Politics Today, 2010-2011 Brief 6e

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Feature to Show:

The Politics of Boom and Bust

This feature is completely timely and relevant in any American Government course – the discussion of the current economic crisis and its effects on the American government and psyche.



Pages : 14, 106, 126, 223, 240, 262, 303

Feature to Show:

At Issue...

This important feature introduces a hot topic in American politics and culture and then provides information and opinions from both sides of the issue. This allows the students to decide for themselves which side to favor while understanding the opposing argument.

atIssue: Did the Stimulus Legislation Contain Too Much Pork?

In February 2009, President Obama signed an economic stimulus package nominally valued at \$787 billion. Of that sum, \$284 billion consisted of tax breaks. A huge share of the actual spending was distributed to state and local governments in response to grant requests. The stimulus bill soon became a centerpiece in the Republican campaign against the Obama administration, a campaign based largely on the accusation that the Democrats were spending dangerously excessive sums.

Pork, Anyone?

Due to the way the bill was written, members of Congress had little scope for inserting pork, that is, specific requests for their constituents. With such a large part of the bill spent in response to state and local requests, however, much of the spending did resemble traditional pork. The Republicans also denounced specific items that were spelled out in the bill, such as:

- \$8 billion for high-speed rail, possibly including a line between Disneyland and Las Vegas.
- \$2 billion for the domestic lithium ion battery industry.
- \$200 million for Filipino veterans, most of whom live abroad, for service in World War II.
- \$100 million for small shipyards in places such as Ketchikan, Alaska, and Bayou La Batre, Alabama.
- \$2 billion for the RutenGen Alliance project, a demonstration clean-coal plant in Illinois.
- \$600 million for new fuel-efficient cars for government employees.

Republicans claimed that in the end, the stimulus package was little more than a collection of items from longtime Democratic wish lists.

The Stimulus Defended

What, defenders responded, is wrong with wish lists? If you come into a small inheritance and decide to spend it all, will you spend it on things you long wanted but couldn't afford—or on things you'd never thought of before? Of course, you'll consult your wish list.

A more sweeping defense of the stimulus depends on an explanation of why spending is helpful. The famous British economist John Maynard Keynes sought

Keynes argued that at such times, the government should step in to borrow—running up the deficit—and spend on projects that would rehire the unemployed and put idle resources back to work. Ideally, the government should spend the borrowed sums on useful projects, but the economy would be stimulated even if the projects were pointless. Keynes gave as an example hiring one huge team of workers to dig holes in the ground and a second huge team to fill them up.

This line of thought may sound absurd. Yet according to the traditional narrative (hotly disputed by some economists), it was World War II that ended the Depression. From the Keynesian point of view, President Roosevelt's rather modest New Deal budget deficits just weren't large enough. Rather, the tremendous deficits incurred to finance World War II did the trick. From a purely economic standpoint, of course, the war was worse than pointless. It was a vast exercise in destruction. Tens of millions of people died. Much of Japan and continental Europe burned to the ground.

Indeed, in 2009 some economists thought that as large as Obama's stimulus package was, it needed to be much larger to fix the economy. These economists didn't see the bill as pork—they saw it as too small.

But Was Keynes Even Right?

Certain other economists believe that deficit-based spending and temporary tax reductions cannot actually stimulate the economy, even in the middle of a serious recession with much unemployment and idle resources. These economists believe that Keynes was wrong and that government spending can only move resources from one part of the economy to another. Such theories have significant support in university economics departments but are perhaps a minority view in the broader economic policy community. Still, they have gained considerable traction among Republicans in Congress and the conservative movement in general. After all, they appear to confirm what conservatives have long suspected. Naturally, if these theories are correct, much of the stimulus bill could be called pork.

Pages: 34, 52, 73, 147, 255, 324, 345

Feature to Show:

Making a Difference

The theme of this text is political participation and engagement in American politics. At the end of each chapter the authors suggest ways that citizens (focused on students) can actually get involved and make a difference in the realm of American politics. Active involvement is stressed throughout the text and these 'Making a Difference' sections provide real actions that students can take to influence government at every level.

224 PART THREE • INSTITUTIONS OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

making a difference

LEARNING ABOUT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

Do you know the names of your senators and your representative in Congress? A surprising number of Americans do not. Even if you know the names and parties of your elected delegates, there is still much more you could learn about them that would be useful.

Why Should You Care? The legislation that Congress passes can directly affect your life. Consider, for example, the Medicare prescription drug benefit passed in November 2003. Some might think that such a benefit, which helps only persons over the age of sixty-five, would be of no interest to college students. Actually, legislation such as this could affect you long before you reach retirement age. Funding the benefit may mean that you will have to pay higher taxes when you join the workforce. Also, some students may be affected even sooner than that. Most students are part of a family, and family finances are often important in determining whether the family will help pay for the student's tuition. For some families, the cost of medicine for the oldest members is a substantial burden.

You can make a difference in our democracy simply by going to the polls on Election Day and voting for the candidates you would like to represent you in Congress. It goes without saying, though, that to cast an informed vote, you need to know how your congressional representatives stand on the issues and, if they are incumbents, how they have voted on bills that are important to you.

What Can You Do? To contact a member of Congress, start by going to the Web sites of the U.S. House of Representatives (at www.house.gov) and the U.S. Senate (at www.senate.gov).

Although you can communicate easily with your representatives by e-mail, using e-mail has some drawbacks. Representatives and senators are now receiving large volumes of e-mail from constituents, and they rarely read it themselves. They have staff members who read and respond to e-mail instead. Many interest groups argue that U.S. mail, or even express mail or a phone call, is more likely to capture the attention of the representative than e-mail. You can contact your representatives using one of the following addresses or phone numbers:

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-3121

Performance Evaluations Interest groups also track the voting records of members of Congress and rate the members on the issues. Project Vote Smart tracks the performance of thousands of political leaders, including their campaign finances, issue positions, and voting records. You can contact Project Vote Smart at:

Project Vote Smart
One Common Ground
Pittsford, NY 14558
Voter Hotline toll-free 1-866-VOTE-SMART
(1-888-868-3762)
www.vote-smart.org

Finally, if you want to know how your representatives funded their campaigns, contact the Center for Responsive Politics (CRP), a research group that tracks money in politics, campaign fund-raising, and similar issues. You can contact the CRP at:

The Center for Responsive Politics
1101 14th St. N.W., Suite 1030
Washington, DC 20005
202-857-0044
www.opensecrets.org

▼ **The OpenSecrets.org homepage**
(www.opensecrets.org)



Pages: 16, 41, 62, 88, 112, 139, 169, 197, 224, 249, 274, 298, 326, 355

Feature to Show:

Discussion and Analysis/ Helpful Online Resources

Placed conveniently at the end of each chapter are relevant and current ideas and topics for discussion, debate, and study. This section helps both students and instructors find research ideas and class discussion ideas that truly reinforce concepts and processes of American government. The ‘Helpful Online Resources’ provides links to pertinent websites and data bases which align with the topics and institutions of each chapter.

QUESTIONS FOR

discussion and analysis

1 What characteristics do you think voters look for when choosing a president? Might these characteristics change as a result of changes in the political environment and the specific problems facing the nation? If you believe voters almost always look for the same characteristics when selecting a president, why do you think this is so? If you believe voters' choices may vary depending on circumstances, which circumstances favor which kinds of leaders?

2 Many presidents have been lawyers by profession, but George W. Bush was a businessman, Ronald Reagan was an actor, and Jimmy Carter was a naval officer and peanut farmer. What advantages might these three presidents have gained from their career backgrounds? In particular, what benefits might Ronald Reagan have derived from his experience as an actor?

3 Is executive privilege really necessary? Why or why not? What would happen if executive privilege ceased to exist?

4 With a single exception, every eight years since 1953 the presidency has been taken over by the other party. The only exception is Reagan's first term—had Carter been reelected instead, the pattern would have been perfect: eight years of Republican Eisenhower, eight of Democrats Kennedy and Johnson, eight of Republicans Nixon and Ford, eight of Democrat Carter, eight of Republicans Reagan and G. H. W. Bush, eight of Democrat Clinton, eight of Republican G. W. Bush, and finally a Democrat again, Barack Obama. Why might the voters prefer to pick a president from the other party every few years?

helpful online Resources

CONNECTING TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

The president's Web site, www.whitehouse.gov, contains a wealth of information on the administration.

Nate Silver became famous as an opinion poll expert during the 2008 presidential elections. Silver's continuing commentary on the president and Congress is mostly based on data and research. Check out the site at: www.fivethirtyeight.com

C-SPAN provides a companion Web site for its television series *American Presidents: Life Portraits* at: www.americanpresidents.org

The site provides extensive video resources on all of the presidents.

a special WebSite

FOR YOUR TEXT

Go to this book's special Web site at academic.cengage.com/polisci/Schmidt/

Pedagogical Features

Throughout every chapter there are a variety of large and pronounced images that correspond in an interesting way with the topic of the chapter and section. Under each of these is not only a description of the image but questions pertaining to the concepts that the images represent. These questions are designed to challenge the student's critical thinking skills and knowledge of concepts and processes. This is a great benefit to the text and it is sure to spark debate and ‘thinking outside the box’ exercises in the classroom.

Below are several examples of such pedagogy:

files for bankruptcy, it asks a federal judge for relief from its creditors. The judge, operating under bankruptcy laws established by Congress, is ultimately responsible for the fate of the enterprise. When a bank fails, the government has a special interest in protecting customers who have deposited funds with the bank. The failing institution is therefore taken over by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), which ensures continuity of service to bank customers.



Government Ownership of Private Enterprises. The federal government can also obtain partial or complete ownership of a private

▲ When the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae) started to fail, the federal government took over.

Who ultimately paid for its losses? (Karen Bleier/AFP/Getty Images)



▲ In a famous meeting in Yalta

In February 1945, British prime minister Winston Churchill (left), U.S. president Franklin Roosevelt (center), and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin (right) decided the fate of several nations in Europe, including Germany. What happened to

Korea, however, China joined the war on the side of the North, resulting in a stalemate. An armistice signed in 1953 led to the two Koreas that exist today. U.S. forces have remained in South Korea since that time.

The Vietnam War (1964–1975) also involved the United States in a civil war between a Communist North and pro-Western South. When the French army in Indochina was defeated by the Communist forces of Ho Chi Minh and the two Vietnams were created in 1954, the United States assumed the role of supporting the South Vietnamese government against North Vietnam. President John Kennedy sent 16,000 “advisers” to help South Vietnam, and after Kennedy’s death in 1963, President Lyndon Johnson greatly increased the scope of that support. American forces in Vietnam at the height of the U.S. involvement totaled more than 500,000 troops. More than 58,000 Americans were killed and 300,000 were wounded in the conflict. A peace agreement in 1973 allowed U.S. troops to leave the country, and in 1975 North Vietnam easily occupied

Superpower Relations

During the Cold War, there was never any direct military conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. Only on occasion did the United States enter a conflict with any Communist country in a significant way. Two such occasions were in Korea and in Vietnam.

After the end of World War II, northern Korea was occupied by the Soviet Union, and southern Korea was occupied by the United States. The result was two rival Korean governments. In 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea. Under UN authority, the United States entered the war, which prevented an almost certain South Korean defeat. When U.S. forces were on the brink of conquering North

In July, militants of the Shiite radical group Hezbollah, based in Lebanon, crossed the Israeli border, killed several Israeli soldiers, and kidnapped two others. The result was the 2006 Lebanon War, which lasted five weeks. The war consisted largely of Israeli air strikes on Lebanon and Hezbollah rocket attacks on Israel, though Israeli troops did enter southern Lebanon briefly. The war ended with a UN-brokered cease-fire.

In June 2007, the uneasy balance between the Palestinians' Hamas-dominated legislature and their president, the PLO's Mahmoud Abbas, broke down. After open fighting between the two parties, Hamas wound up in complete control of the Gaza Strip, and the PLO retained exclusive power in the West Bank. Western leaders speculated that it might be possible to negotiate exclusively with the PLO government on the West Bank, freezing out Hamas and the Gaza Strip.

For its part, Israel sought to pressure the Hamas regime in the Gaza Strip



▲ **President Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu**

are shown outside the Oval Office of the White House in 2009. Obama has attempted to push Netanyahu to accept a diplomatic solution to the Palestinian problem. Why would a U.S. president have influence with the head of the Israeli government? (Amos Moshe Milner/GPO via Getty Images)

Rich pedagogy can be found in every chapter. Here are some interesting pages:

Ch.1 – 2, 5, 9, 10
Ch.2 – 23, 24, 28, 36
Ch.3 – 47, 53, 55, 56, 58, 60
Ch.4 – 69, 70, 74, 80, 83
Ch.5 – 95, 97, 99, 102, 104, 111
Ch.6 – 120, 121, 124, 129, 136
Ch.7 – 143, 150, 156, 166,
Ch.8 – 174, 175, 176, 188, 193
Ch.9 – 203, 205, 211, 214, 217, 218
Ch.10 – 231, 234, 235, 236, 242, 246
Ch.11 – 257, 261, 264, 266, 267
Ch.12 – 282, 284, 288, 295, 297
Ch.13 – 307, 311, 313, 312, 320
Ch.14 – 332, 334, 335, 338, 340, 343, 347, 352

Chart, Graphs, and other depictions

This text is loaded with helpful graphs and charts which allow complex data to easily be comprehended. From congressional flow charts to graphical depictions of Gerrymandering, these pedagogical items drive home concepts and breakdown challenging institutions into manageable material which benefits the student.

FIGURE 9–2: The Fourth Congressional District of Illinois

This district, which is mostly within Chicago's city limits, was drawn to connect two Hispanic neighborhoods separated by an African American majority district.

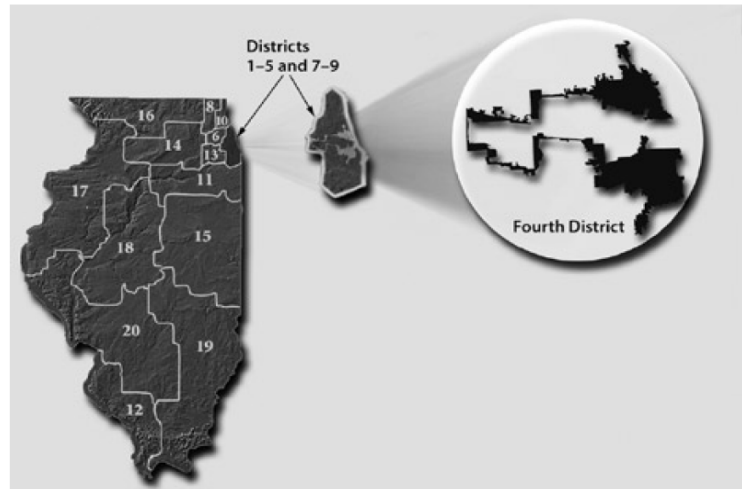
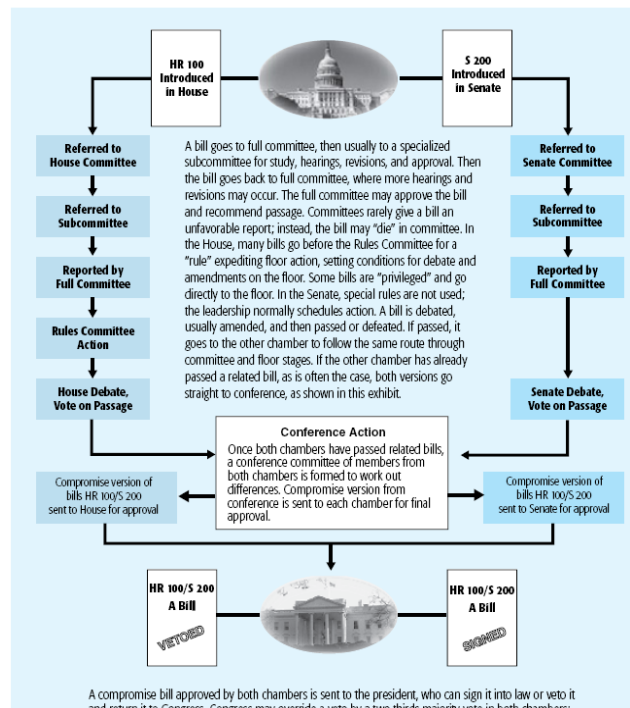


FIGURE 9–3: How a Bill Becomes Law

This illustration shows the most typical way in which proposed legislation is enacted into law. Most legislation begins as similar bills introduced into the House and the Senate. The process is illustrated here with two hypothetical bills, House Bill No. 100 (HR 100) and Senate Bill No. 200 (S 200). The path of HR 100 is shown on the left, and that of S 200, on the right.



Pedagogy of this type can be found all through the text. Here are some recommended pages: 32, 39, 117, 128, 146, 160, 161, 190, 191, 194, 209, 212, 220, 244, 248, 254, 256, 258, 281, 282, 318, and 319.

