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Ninth Edition

Public Policymaking

An Introduction

James E. Anderson

with Jeffrey Moyer and George Chichirau



Public

Policymaking

An Introduction

NINTH EDITION

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Texas A&M University

With Jeffrey Moyer and George Chichirau



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**Public Policymaking:
An Introduction,
Ninth Edition**

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with Jeffrey Moyer and
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Preface

When Professor James Anderson's 1st Edition of *Public Policymaking* was released, the Soviet Union still existed, President Bush (the Senior) was still in office, and we had not even started our primary education. Since then, Anderson's text has served as one of the entry level texts in the field, and we were honored by Cengage Learning's request to review and update this key volume so students today could benefit from it.

In *Public Policymaking: An Introduction*, Ninth Edition, we see again that despite the din of the news cycle, little has changed in the fundamental structure of the political system, and we believe that policymaking is best presented as a policy cycle—a sequence of functional activities beginning with problem identification and agenda formation, and continuing through the evaluation of policy, which may result in the continuation, modification, or termination of policy. This may restart the policy cycle in a search for alternatives for handling a problem.

The policy cycle schema is a workable and flexible approach to the study and analysis of public policymaking, whether in the United States or elsewhere. In addition, the text looks at some other ways to study policy formation (e.g., group theory and elite theory); makes some comparisons with action in other countries; and delves into some of the logistical aspects of policymaking, such as majority building, cost-benefit analysis, and decision-making.

Since the eighth edition of this book was written, some of the fundamental assumptions of American political life and public policy have changed. Donald Trump rode a golden escalator down to announce his run for the Presidency, and despite few at the time taking him seriously, radically changed the nature of government and challenged the existing order. While Trump himself has since left office after being defeated by a “return to normalcy” campaign in the form of current President Joe Biden, few believe that the state of politics can ever return to what it was. Aside from anything former President Trump or current President Biden might have otherwise sought, the COVID-19 pandemic has recast the role of government and changed the culture, economy and society in ways we are only beginning to appreciate and understand. Similarly, the looming threat of climate change poses a challenge to leaders in the United States and elsewhere.

The fundamental structure of the policymaking process remains as before. However, in the last decade not much of significance has made the journey through the policy cycle. Despite this, the framework remains crucial and useful for policy scholars, and as the incoming administration returns to the norms followed during the Obama administration, this traditional approach is likely to demonstrate more applicability than ever.

As the subtitle indicates, *Public Policymaking: An Introduction* is intended to be a starting point for the study of public policymaking by giving some consideration to all of the stages or phases of the policymaking process. For those who wish to explore various stages more deeply, the suggested readings and websites listed at the end of each chapter will be helpful. After decades of studying the policy process, learning is still going on in this field.

This book seeks impartiality and objectivity to the extent these values are possible or helpful. While we are unafraid to call a spade a spade, we have sought to provide analysis and teaching rather than preaching.

Organization and Updates

We have made a number of adjustments and additions to this text, but remain indebted to Professor Anderson for his concise descriptions of key concepts, thorough coverage of the field and scholarship within, and insightful analysis of the key concepts and theories. Much of our work consisted of providing a comprehensive update to the original examples, as well as the addition of more relatable content to new students of public policy. Many of Professor Anderson's examples were timeless; in these cases we have simply retained his work, while adding additional context and updates (especially with regard to developments under the Obama and Trump administrations). In some places we have also sought to broaden the material to a non-US audience including the European Union.

We have also added learning objectives placed at the beginning of each chapter based on Bloom's learning taxonomy. Students can then test themselves at the end of the chapter to make sure they understood and retained key material. These additions can also serve as the basis for writing prompts and class discussions.

Chapter 1, "The Study of Public Policy," has new material on the use of public policy in the career fields, the influence of social media on the development of public policy and discussion of developments in drug policy as an example of increasing popular influence in the political decision-making process.

Chapter 2, "The Policy-Makers and Their Environment," surveys the political environment, or context of policymaking, and presents the official and unofficial participants in the policy process. Material has been added on critical theories, regulation of social media, policy diffusion, electoral reform as well as numerous examples pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic and inequality. We retained the Snail Darter case: though old, it remains seminal.

Chapter 3, "Policy Formation: Problems, Agendas, and Formulation," examines policy problems and agendas, agenda-setting processes, and the formulation (or crafting) of policy proposals. These are the pre-adoption aspects of the policy process. Here we have added discussion of Schneider & Ingram's

social constructions of target populations theory, as well as significant updates to the environmental and health care examples to incorporate current events.

Chapter 4, “Policy Adoption,” centers on decision-making processes and criteria and the adoption of policies. Here we have added discussion of new approaches to decision-making in public policy, updated consideration of political culture and partisan ideologies, material on the difficulties of measuring public opinion via polling, and developments on the filibuster.

Chapter 5, “Budgeting and Public Policy,” discusses the national budgetary process because of its importance for the substance, implementation, and impact of public policies. Budgetary numbers are updated. There is a new case study on the U.S. federal government’s response to the COVID-19 recession, providing a broad overview of the most important fiscal and monetary policy debates arising from the arrival of the global pandemic. There is also more detail on the “ongoing saga of the struggle for a balanced budget” (in Professor Anderson’s words), which has been drastically impacted by the events of 2020.

Chapter 6, “Policy Implementation,” roams over much ground to provide understanding of the implementation or administration of public policies. Changes here include new material on the evolution of the No Child Left Behind Act, the EPA under the Trump administration, an overview of general expenditures during 2020, the outlook for carbon emissions trading in the US, IRS enforcement of tax regulations and more.

Chapter 7, “Policy Impact, Evaluation, and Change,” probes the effects of policies, their evaluation, and possible termination. Numerous limited modifications, additions, and deletions have been made here. There is more on education programs, accountability at the Pentagon, and net neutrality. The concluding case study on airline deregulation has also been slightly updated.

Chapter 8, “Reflections and Observations,” goes beyond stating conclusions – as in previous versions. It is, rather, an informative essay on the American policymaking process.

Instructor Resources

Additional instructor resources for this product are available online. Instructor assets include an Instructor’s Manual, PowerPoint® slides, and a test bank powered by Cognero®. Sign up or sign in at www.cengage.com to search for and access this product and its online resources.

Acknowledgments

We wish to express our appreciation to all who have assisted in our revisions to this volume. At the request of Cengage Learning, several scholars provided pre-revision reviews. They provided many good ideas and suggestions for

change and improvement. We did not agree with everything that came through this process, but we nonetheless appreciated the time and engagement of these scholars. Our thanks go to the following professors for reviewing the text and offering their evaluations, comments, and suggestions:

Dr. John M. Aughenbaugh Virginia Commonwealth University

William Lester Jacksonville State University

We would like to thank our colleagues and faculty at the University of Massachusetts, Boston for their mentorship and support to help us understand the field of public policy and the numerous scholars who have come before us – especially professors Mark Warren and Michael Johnson.

Our work was greatly aided by the Politics editor at Cengage, Emily Hickey, who provided detailed feedback on each of the revised chapters and gave valuable insight on how to best approach thorny topics. Others such as Manoj Kumar, Lauren Gerrish, Sheila Moran, Carmine Scavo, and Chris Sabooni helped keep the project moving and bring it to a successful conclusion. Any shortcomings in the book—errors of fact or faulty judgments—are our own doing, so responsibility for them rests squarely with us. We would appreciate readers informing us about them.

Jeffrey Moyer

George Chichirau



The Study of Public Policy

Learning Objectives

This chapter will introduce you to the study of public policy and define the framework by which scholars and practitioners understand the field and contributions to public life.

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- 1-1** Discuss the definitions, problems, and benefits associated with a scientific policy studies approach to the field of public policy.
- 1-2** Understand what a public policy is and what it is not.
- 1-3** Discuss the problems, goals, demands, and outputs of various categories of public policy using relevant examples.
- 1-4** Appraise how each of the five theoretical approaches that scholars use for analyzing policy making generates knowledge and examines public policies.
- 1-5** Summarize the methodological difficulties that can encumber the study of public policy.

In the course of their daily lives, people are affected, directly and indirectly, obviously and subtly, by an array of public policies. Consider automobile owners. When a car is purchased, the Truth in Lending Act requires provision of accurate information by a lender on the cost of credit. The vehicle features safety equipment, such as a padded dash and seat belts, required by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and a catalytic converter to reduce tailpipe emissions, necessitated by Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rules. Out on the highway, financed jointly by the state and national governments, our driver needs to be aware of state and local traffic regulations or risk direct contact with law enforcement officials. State policy requires that the automobile be insured and that both it and the driver be licensed. The price of the gasoline the car consumes is indirectly affected by national energy policies and directly increased by national and state excise taxes. The vehicle's gas mileage must meet the national corporate average fuel economy standard or a "gas guzzler" tax will apply. Further, these energy policies and fuel efficiency standards are informed by international agreements on addressing climate change, such as the Paris Accords signed in 2015. Many more laws and rules apply to automobiles.

Public policies in a modern, complex society are indeed ubiquitous. They confer advantages and disadvantages; cause pleasure, irritation, and pain; and collectively have important consequences for our well-being and happiness. They shape a significant portion of our physical and social environment. This being so, we should know something about public policies, including how they are formed, budgeted, implemented, and evaluated. There are also scientific, professional, and political reasons for studying public policies and policy making.

Scientifically, the systematic and rigorous study of the origin, development, and implementation of public policies will enhance our knowledge of political behavior and governance, as well as of public policy per se. How is policy making affected by federalism and the separation of powers? Were pressure groups or public opinion or the media influential in the adoption of a **policy**? Why did government cease to confront a problem? Concern with questions of this sort is designated as **policy study**.

Professionally, a person may pursue a career as a policy analyst or evaluator. Practitioners of **policy analysis**, which draws heavily upon economic theory and statistical and mathematical analytical techniques, have been increasing in number in recent decades.¹ Policy analysis has an applied orientation and seeks to identify the most efficient alternative (i.e., the one that will yield the largest net social benefit) for dealing with a current problem, such as the control of air pollution or the disposal of household garbage. A variant of policy analysis is evaluation research, which assesses how well policies attain their goals and the other societal effects that they may have. Cost–benefit analysis and risk analysis fall into this category.

Even if you never are called upon to conduct a formal policy analysis or engage in the practice of policy advocacy or lobbying on behalf of a client, the study of public policy is still rewarding for those in the public and private sectors. Many professionals whose job titles have nothing to do with public policy and who spend their entire careers in the private sector still are charged with interacting with government policy on any number of levels, and awareness of the life cycle of policy stages, the interests represented in formulating those policies that are rejected and implemented, will benefit their work in numerous ways. Last, consider that many larger corporations themselves are subject to internal organization that work much like government. Scholars of public policy would be well suited to confront these challenges.

Politically, many people want to engage in **policy advocacy**, using knowledge of public policy to formulate and promote “good” public policies that will have the “right” goals, that is, goals that serve their purposes. They may think of themselves as liberals, conservatives, libertarians, environmentalists, or socialists and disagree greatly in their notions of what is good or just. The research efforts of policy advocates are frequently skewed by their wish to generate data and analysis in line with their preferences. Ideally, policy study is conducted objectively, though scholars and practitioners of policy should always be aware of how implicit bias can impact the work of those they are studying, as well as their own.

This book draws on the scientific policy studies approach to develop a basic understanding of the policy-making process, which is here viewed as an inherently political process involving conflict and struggle among people (public officials and private citizens) with conflicting interests, values, and desires on policy issues. In describing and analyzing the policy-making process, the scientific policy studies approach has three basic aims.² First, its primary goal is to explain the adoption of a policy rather than to identify or prescribe “good” or proper policy. Analysis, rather than advocacy, is its style. Second, it searches for the causes and consequences of public policies by applying social-scientific methodology, which is not restricted to the use of **quantitative data** and methodology. At a minimum, it requires that one should strive to be rational, empirical, and objective. Third, this approach aims to develop reliable theories and explanations about public policies and their politics. Thus, policy studies can be both theoretical and relevant to the more practical aspects of policy making. It has been said that nothing is as practical as a good theory.

The Plan of This Book

There is not a single process by which public policies are formed. They do not come off an assembly line as do automobiles, refrigerators, and other standard products. Rather, variations in the subjects of policies will produce variations in the style, techniques, and politics of policy making. Foreign policy, taxation, health-care financing, surface-transportation policy, occupational licensing, and land-use zoning are each characterized by a somewhat different policy process—different participants, procedures, decision rules, political patterns, and more. Many scholars argue that the type and nature of the policy being shaped will directly inform the politics that inform this policy, though there are significant debates as to what this looks like.

Policy making may also take different forms, depending on its organizational venue. Policy making within agencies is more likely to feature hierarchy, secrecy (or low visibility), and the involvement of experts or professionals than is legislative policy making. Courts do not act in the same way that legislatures or executives do. And certainly, one can discern different patterns in tax policy formation in the United States, Great Britain, and Greece.

This variability does not mean, however, that there are no common functions or elements and that it is impossible to formulate generalizations on policy formation. Given the diversity and complexity in policy-making processes, the development of some sort of general theory that has broad explanatory power is an unrealistic aspiration.³ But we can achieve a useful start toward what political scientists call theory building by striving to develop sound generalizations about such topics as who is involved in policy formation, on what sorts of issues, under what conditions, in what ways, and to what effect. Nor should we neglect to ask about how policy problems develop or obtain a place on governmental agendas. Such questions are not as simple as they may first appear.

To provide a conceptual framework to guide the examination of the policy process in the ensuing chapters, we view it as a sequential pattern of activities or functions that can readily be distinguished analytically, although they may be empirically more difficult to pull apart. Many scholars have sought to build out a similar so-called stages model of public policy, and while this exercise does not imply that the policy process always follows this linear path, identifying these distinct steps can help develop further theoretical and empirical inquiry. The following categories or stages are employed (see their portrayal in Table 1.1), and illustrative questions are included.

1. **Problem identification and agenda setting.** The focus here is on how the problems that may become the targets of public policies are identified and specified. Why only some problems receive consideration by policy makers requires an examination of agenda setting, that is, how governmental bodies decide what problems to address. What is a public problem? Why does some condition or matter become a public problem? How does a problem get on a governmental agenda? Why do some problems not achieve agenda status?
2. **Formulation.** This encompasses the creation, identification, or borrowing of proposed courses of action, often called alternatives or options, for resolving or ameliorating public problems. Who participates in policy formulation? How are alternatives for dealing with a problem developed? Are there difficulties and biases in formulating policy proposals?
3. **Adoption.** This involves deciding which proposed alternative, including taking no action, will be used to handle a problem. In American legislatures this function is performed by majorities. How is a policy alternative adopted or enacted? What requirements must be met? Who are the adopters? What is the content of the adopted policy?
4. **Implementation.** (A synonym is *administration*.) Here, attention is on what is done to carry into effect or apply adopted policies. Often further development or elaboration of policies will occur in the course of their administration. Who is involved? What, if anything, is done to enforce or apply a policy? How does implementation help shape or determine the content and impact of policy?
5. **Evaluation.** This entails activities intended to determine what a policy is accomplishing, whether it is achieving its goals, and whether it has other consequences. Who is involved? Who is advantaged and disadvantaged by a policy? What are the consequences of policy evaluation? Are there demands for changes in or repeal of the policy? Are new problems identified? Is the policy process restarted because of evaluation?

Within this simplified framework, the formation and implementation of policies are seen as political in that they involve conflict and struggle among individuals and groups, officials and agencies, with conflicting ideas, interests, values, and information on public-policy issues. Policy making is political; it

Table 1.1

The Policy Process

	Stage 1: Policy Agenda	Stage 2: Policy Formulation	Stage 3: Policy Adoption	Stage 4: Policy Implementation	Stage 5: Policy Evaluation
Policy Terminology					
Definition	Those problems, among many, that receive the serious attention of public officials	Development of pertinent and acceptable proposed courses of action for dealing with a public problem	Development of support for a specific proposal so that a policy can be legitimized or authorized	Application of the policy by the government's administrative machinery	Efforts by the government to determine whether the policy was effective and why or why not
Common sense	Getting the government to consider action on the problem	What is proposed to be done about the problem	Getting the government to accept a particular solution to the problem	Applying the government's policy to the problem	Did the policy work?

Source: Adapted from James E. Anderson, David W. Brady, and Charles Bullock III, *Public Policy and Politics in the United States, 2d ed.* (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1984).

involves politics. Politics itself was once defined by Laswell as “who gets what, when & how.” This definition is not limited to identifying when a Republican president or a Democratic Congress wins—politics is not equal to partisanship, as it covers a much broader range of activities that govern the allocation of resources and attention. That is, its features include conflict, negotiation, the exercise of power, bargaining, and compromise—and sometimes such nefarious practices as deception and bribery. There is no good reason to resist or disparage this conclusion, or to imitate those who derogate policies that they do not like with such statements as “It’s nothing but politics.” Although it is sometimes implied or even asserted that if enough analysis were done, if enough facts and data were gathered, all right-thinking people would agree on the appropriate course of action to handle a problem, this is not the way the world works. Quite reasonable people can disagree on policy issues because they have differing interests, values, and affiliations. Politics is the way a democratic society resolves such differences.

The policy-process (sometimes it is called the **policy cycle**) approach to policy study has several advantages. First, and most important, the policy-process approach centers attention on the officials and institutions who make policy decisions and the factors that influence and condition their actions. We need to be concerned about more than the complexity of public problems, the goals of the polity, the general forms policy responses can take, and similar matters. Knowledge of these is clearly of value, but we also want to know who makes policy decisions and how they do it. Consequently, answers are needed for such questions as: What is the legislature’s role in policy making? How does its structure affect decision making? What sorts of factors or considerations influence the legislators’ decisions? The policy-process approach not only helps us learn about policy making and policy; it also causes us to take a more holistic view of how government works.

Second, policy making usually incorporates the stages or categories of activity that we have described. This sequential nature thus helps one capture and comprehend the flow of action in the actual policy process. However, in actuality, the formulation and adoption stages may blend together, as when proposed legislation on welfare reform is modified during consideration in committees and on the House and Senate floors in order to win votes needed for its enactment. Administrative agencies issue rules elaborating policy while implementing it simultaneously. The adoption of a policy, such as restrictions on abortion, solves a problem for some people while it creates a problem for others, who then restart the policy process in an effort to modify or repeal the disliked policy. Even in such instances, the policy-process approach can be used to analytically distinguish the various activities involved.

Third, the policy-process approach is flexible and open to change and refinement.⁴ Additional stages can be introduced if experience indicates that they would strengthen description and analysis. Perhaps budgeting should be recognized as a separate stage of the process. Various forms of data collection and analysis, whether quantitative (statistical), historical, legal, or

normative (value-oriented), are compatible with it. It can be used to study a single policy (e.g., the Americans with Disabilities Act) or to compare the enactment and implementation of several civil rights laws. Group, institutional, and other approaches to policy study can be fitted into it. The group approach may help explain policy adoption; institutionalism can cast light on its implementation. Systems theory may help alert us to some of its societal consequences.

Fourth, the policy-process approach helps present a dynamic and developmental, rather than static and cross-sectional, view of the policy process. It is concerned with the evolution of policy and requires that one think about what moves action on policy from one stage of the process to another stage. Moreover, it helps emphasize relationships, or interactions, among the participants in policy making. Political parties, interest groups, legislative procedures, presidential commitments, public opinion, and other matters can be tied together as they drive and help explain the formation of a policy. Further, one can seek to discover how action at one stage of the process affects action at later stages. For example, how does the design and content of legislation ease or complicate its implementation? How does implementation affect its impact?

Fifth, the policy-process approach is broadly applicable across contexts. It can readily be used to examine policy making in foreign political systems. It also lends itself to manageable comparisons explored in this text, such as how problems reach governmental agendas, how policies are legitimated, or how policies are implemented in various countries.⁵

In this discussion of public policy, scholars and practitioners can sometimes lose sight of democracy and the impact of popular will.⁶ There is often not much space given for discussions of ensuring democratic accountability in the studies of public policy, through events over the last decade, such as the decision by British voters to leave the EU as well as the election of Donald Trump and the policy implementation challenges encountered by his administration, often gave rise to challenges between the expressed will of political leaders and the outcomes of the political process.

We now turn to an explanation of public policy and of various ways of categorizing public policies.

What Is Public Policy?

In general usage, the term *policy* designates the behavior of some actor or set of actors, such as an official, a governmental agency, or a legislature, in an area of activity such as public transportation or consumer protection. Public policy also may be viewed as whatever governments choose to do or not to do. Such definitions may be adequate for ordinary discourse, but because we set out in this book to do a systematic analysis of public policy, a more precise definition or concept is needed to structure our thinking and to facilitate effective communication with one another.

In this book, a policy is defined as *a purposive course of action or inaction followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern*. This definition focuses on what is actually done instead of what is only proposed or intended; differentiates a policy from a decision, which is essentially a specific choice among alternatives; and views policy as something that unfolds over time.

Public policies are developed by governmental bodies and officials. (Nongovernmental actors and factors may of course influence public-policy development.) The special characteristics of public policies stem from their being formulated by what Easton has called the “authorities” in a political system, namely, “elders, paramount chiefs, executives, legislators, judges, administrators, councilors, monarchs, and the like.” These are the persons who “engage in the daily affairs of a political system,” are “recognized by most members of the system as having responsibility for these matters,” and take actions that are “accepted as binding most of the time by most of the members so long as they act within the limits of their roles.”⁷ In short, public policies are those produced by government officials and agencies. They also usually affect substantial numbers of people.

There are several implications of this concept of public policy as a relatively stable, purposive course of action followed by government in dealing with some problem or matter of concern. First, the definition links policy to purposive or goal-oriented action rather than to random behavior or chance occurrences. Public policies in modern political systems do not, by and large, just happen. They are instead designed to accomplish specified goals or produce definite results, although these are not always achieved. And unintended consequences may occur. Proposed policies may be usefully thought of as hypotheses suggesting that specific actions be taken to achieve particular goals. Thus, to increase farm income, the national government has utilized income subsidies and production controls. These programs have indeed enhanced the incomes of many farmers, but by no means all.

The goals of a policy may be somewhat loosely stated and imprecise in content, thus providing a general direction rather than precise targets for its implementation. Those who want action on a problem may differ both as to what should be done and how it should be done. Ambiguity in language then can become a means for reducing conflict, at least for the moment. Compromise to secure agreement and build support may consequently yield general phrasing and lack of clarity in the statement of policy goals.

Second, policies consist of courses or patterns of action followed over time by governmental officials rather than their separate, discrete decisions. It is difficult to think of such actions as a presidential decision to honor a movie actor or a Social Security Administration decision to award disability benefits to Jane Doe as public policies. A policy includes not only the decision to adopt a law or make a rule on some topic but also the subsequent decisions that are intended to enforce or implement the law or rule. Industrial health and safety policy, for example, is shaped not only by the Occupational Safety and Health

Act of 1970 (OSHA) but also by a stream of administrative rules and judicial decisions interpreting, elaborating, and applying (or not applying) the act to particular situations.

Third, public policies emerge in response to **policy demands**, or those claims for action or inaction on some public issue made by other actors—private citizens, group representatives, or legislators and other public officials—upon government officials and agencies. Such demands may range from general insistence that a municipal government “do something” about traffic congestion to a specific call for the national government to prohibit theft of pet dogs and cats for sale to medical and scientific research organizations. In short, some demands simply call for action; others also specify the action desired.

In response to policy demands, public officials make decisions that give content and direction to public policy. They may enact statutes, issue executive orders or edicts, promulgate administrative rules, or make judicial interpretations of laws. Thus the decision by Congress to enact the Sherman Antitrust Act in 1890 was a policy decision; another was the 1911 Supreme Court ruling in *Standard Oil of New Jersey vs. United States*, that the act prohibited only unreasonable restraints of trade rather than all restraints of trade. Each was of major importance in shaping what we might call **antitrust policy**. Such decisions may be contrasted with the innumerable relatively routine decisions that officials make in the day-to-day application of public policy. The Social Security Administration employs many case analysts, for example, to assess applications for disability benefits.

Policy statements in turn usually are formal expressions or articulations of public policy. Among these are legislative statutes, executive orders and decrees, administrative rules and regulations, and court opinions, as well as statements and speeches by public officials indicating the government’s intentions and goals and what will be done to realize them. Policy statements are sometimes notably ambiguous. Witness the conflicts that arise over the meaning of statutory provisions or judicial holdings, or the time and effort expended analyzing and trying to divine the meaning of policy statements by national political leaders such as the president of the United States or the chair of the Federal Reserve Board. Different levels, branches, or units of government may also issue conflicting policy statements, as on such matters as environmental pollution or liability for consumer products.

In recent years, many government leaders have embraced the use of social media as a central tool in communicating with the media, constituents, and other parties. This use of social media can often blur the line between a policy and a policy statement, especially when the leader in question has a great deal of power or influence. In many cases, these policy statements expressed via social media may have little to no practical impact on published regulations or enacted laws, but may instead reveal a systemic philosophy that impacts decisions, budget spending, and symbolic rhetoric.

Fourth, policy involves what governments actually do, not merely what they intend to do or what officials say they are going to do. If a legislature