

# Government Institutions and Policy Actors

# Outline

- Growth of government
- Structure of policymaking
  - federalism
  - separation of powers
  - subgovernments/policy subsystems
- Public opinion and public policy
- Interest groups
- Policy stalemate and improving policy capacity

# Growth of Government

- Growth of nation and population
- Increased complexity of society
- Regulation of business
- Protection of social welfare
- Role of U.S. in the world
- Citizen demands

# Government Institutions and Policy Capacity

- Complexity and fragmentation
- Federalism
  - State variation and policy capacity
- Separation of Powers
  - Legislative
  - Executive
  - Judiciary
- Informal Actors
  - Public opinion
  - Interest groups
  - Subgovernments

# Federalism

- Evolution of federalism
  - dual federalism
  - cooperative federalism
- Continuing controversies, especially over federal dollars and state expectations
- State variation in policy capacity
- The pros and cons of devolution of authority to the states

# Separation of Powers

- Power is shared among three branches
  - legislature, executive, and judiciary
- Founders were concerned with possibility of government tyranny
- Has added to the complexity of governing
- Has added to the challenge of building consensus for policy action, especially between the legislature and executive

# Separation of Powers: Policymakers

- **Legislature – lawmaking**
  - bicameral system
  - committee system (division & specialization of labor)
- **Executive – law enforcing**
  - president/bureaucracy involved in policy development
  - bureaucratic structure
- **Judicial – law interpreting**
  - reactive rather than proactive
  - judicial review

# Organizational Formats

- Legislative organizations (e.g., committees, individual members, party leadership)
- Executive Office of the President (EOP)
  - executive departments (cabinet-level departments)
    - » subagencies
  - independent executive agencies (e.g., EPA)
  - independent regulatory commissions



# Informal Actors: Public Opinion

- Public opinion
  - is important in a democratic system
  - is fleeting
    - » many people are inattentive to politics and policy
  - can be voiced in numerous ways
  - can have an impact, if people willing to take the time/effort
  - can lead to interest group formation and activity

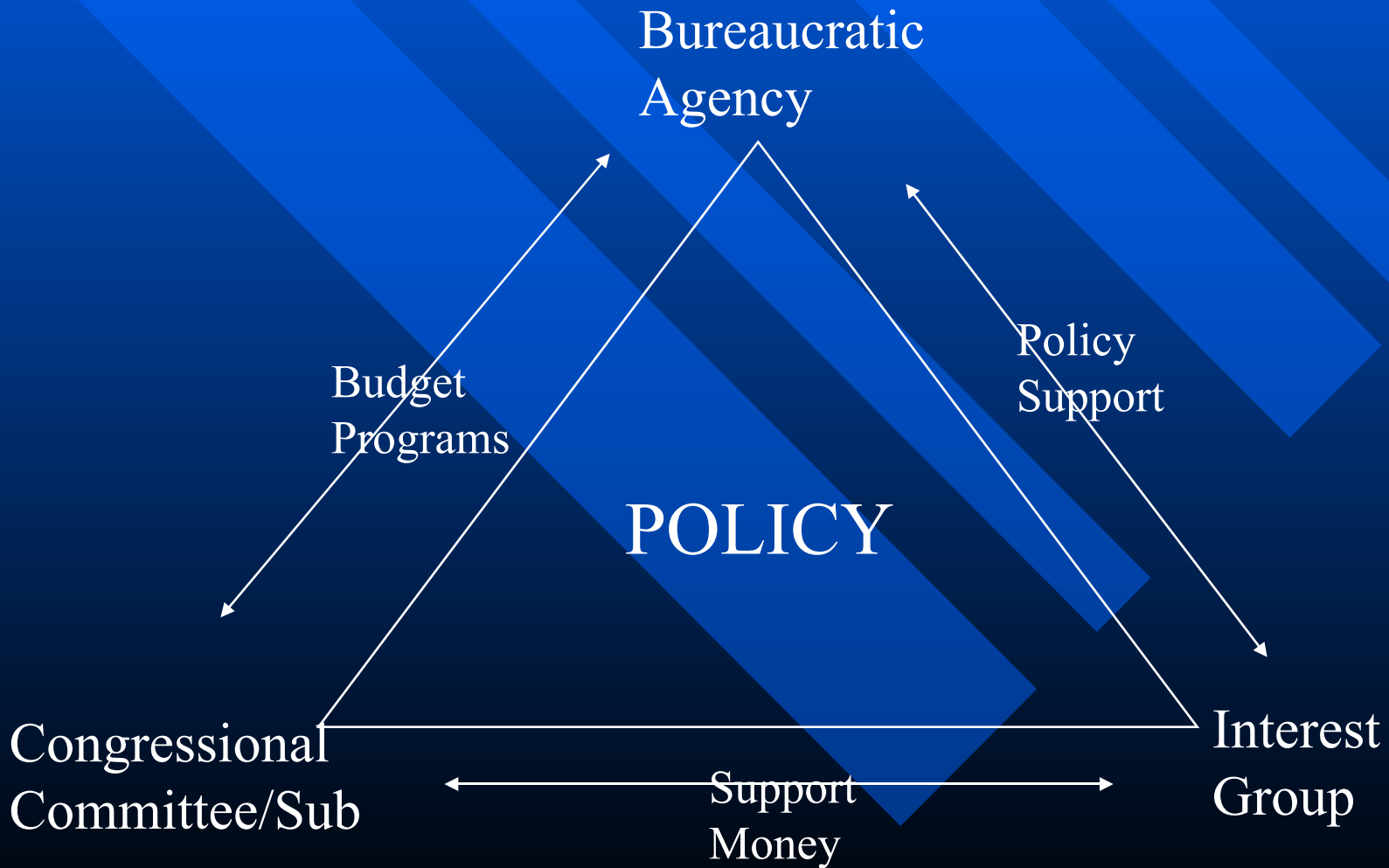
# Informal Actors: Interest Groups

- Important in politics, governance, and policymaking
- Lobbying – all branches, both for/against policies
  - money for elections
  - use of media
  - information (substantive and political)
  - litigation
  - direct contact w/policymakers

# Informal Actors: Policy Subsystems

- Informal settings in which policies are made
- Have been called many different things
  - subgovernments
  - issue networks
  - iron triangles

# Iron Triangles



# Policy Stalemate and Capacity

## Why does stalemate occur?

- Constitutional design and divided gov't
  - Complex problems
  - Public opinion and consensus
  - Organized interests
  - Ineffective political leadership
- Improving capacity