From Pentagons to Pyramids: Investigating The Federal Bureaucracy
What is the bureaucracy?

• A complex set of hierarchical departments, agencies, and commissions that help the president execute the law.

• Often called the “fourth branch” of government:
  – Immense size (employs millions)
  – Agencies implement law and some can create and even interpret the law (Executive, legislative, & judicial functions)
  – Impact on daily life (It’s the closest branch of government most citizens can connect to)
Federal Level Bureaucratic Organization:

The Government of the United States

The Constitution

Legislative Branch
- The Congress
  - Senate
  - House
- Architect of the Capitol
- United States Botanic Garden
- Government Accountability Office
- Government Printing Office
- Library of Congress
- Congressional Budget Office

Executive Branch
- The President
  - The Vice President
- Executive Office of the President
  - White House Office
  - Office of the Vice President
  - Office of National Drug Control Policy
  - Office of Management and Budget
  - Office of National Drug Control Policy
  - Office of Policy Development
  - Office of Science and Technology Policy
  - Office of the Ombudsman
  - Trade Representative

Judicial Branch
- The Supreme Court of the United States
- United States Courts of Appeals
- United States District Courts
- Territorial Courts
- United States Court of International Trade
- United States Court of Federal Claims
- United States Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces
- United States Tax Court
- United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims

Independent Establishments and Government Corporations
- African Development Foundation
- Broadcasting Board of Governors
- Central Intelligence Agency
- Commodity Futures Trading Commission
- Consumer Product Safety Commission
- Corporation for National and Community Service
- Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- Export-Import Bank of the United States
- Farm Credit Administration
- Federal Communications Commission
- Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
- Federal Election Commission
- Federal Housing Finance Board
- Federal Labor Relations Authority
- Federal Maritime Commission
- Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service
- Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission
- Federal Reserve System
- Federal Reserve System
- Federal Trade Commission
- General Services Administration
- Inter-American Foundation
- Inter-American Foundation
- Merit Systems Protection Board
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration
- National Archives and Records Administration
- National Capital Planning Commission
- National Credit Union Administration
- National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities
- National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities
- National Labor Relations Board
- National Labor Relations Board
- National Mediation Board
- National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak)
- National Science Foundation
- National Transportation Safety Board
- Nuclear Regulatory Commission
- Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission
- Office of the Director of National Intelligence
- Office of Government Ethics
- Office of Personnel Management
- Office of Special Counsel
- Overseas Private Investment Corporation
- Peace Corps
- Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation
- Postal Regulatory Commission
- Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation
- Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation
- National Railroad Retirement Board
- Securities and Exchange Commission
- Selective Service System
- Small Business Administration
- Social Security Administration
- Tennessee Valley Authority
- Trade and Development Agency
- United States Agency for International Development
- United States Commission on Civil Rights
- United States Commission on Civil Rights
- United States Commission on Civil Rights
- United States Postal Service
- United States Postal Service
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Another darn good bureaucratic flow chart
Micro Example: Labor Dept. (Obama)

- Someone gets paid to draw these things, what a job
Gee mom, can I be a bureaucrat?

• Why yes you can…
• The bureaucratic workforce is as varied and the private sector
  – Archeologists, administrators, soldiers, librarians, computer programmers, security guards, engineers, plumbers, doctors, postal carriers, lawyers, zoologists all work for the government
• Most bureaucrats are hired using the merit system while others are appointed by the president
Breaking Down the Federal Bureaucracy

The Cabinet

• 15 departments
• Advise/carry out duties for the President
  – Losing influence due to conflicting loyalties
• Employs ~60% of federal workers

Independent Agencies

• Reasons for existing outside the cabinet:
  – Responsibilities don’t fit
  – Protection from politics
  – More responsive to interest groups
  – Sensitive functions

• Three categories:
  – Ind. Executive Agencies
  – Ind. Regulatory Commissions
  – Government Corporations
Independent Executive Agencies

• Similar to cabinet departments but have a more narrow scope of responsibility

• Responsibilities could be misused if absorbed into a cabinet department

• Examples include NASA, CIA, & EPA
Independent Regulatory Commissions

• Powerful overseers of economic activity
• Possess executive, legislative, & judicial powers within the area of focus
• Examples include: Federal Reserve, FCC, NRC, & SEC
Government Corporations

- Government businesses established by Congress & administered by the executive branch
- Examples include: USPS, FDIC, AMTRAK
Just how big is this thing called bureaucracy?

- Nearly 17,000,000 individuals are employed by local, state, and federal levels of government
  - ~3 million federal employees
  - General trend of expansion over decades with minor ebb & flow since the 1970s
  - Growth caused by increasing demands/needs of the populace
  - When a government program is established or a regulation is added there must be individuals to oversee the matter
17 Million Workers

Postal workers 0.9 m
Uniformed military 1.5 m
Federal civil servants 1.9 m
On federal contracts 5.6 m
On federal grants 2.4 m
Working under federal mandate for state or local governments 4.6 m

Size matters…

- The immense size and complexity of the federal bureaucracy allows it a sense of independence from the executive & legislative branches
  - Agencies/workers far more knowledgeable than the president or members of Congress on policy matters
  - The sheer number of agencies and delegated authority within each agency makes it difficult to determine accountability
  - It would be nearly impossible to carry out laws passed by Congress without thousands of bureaucrats to help implement it
Is the bureaucracy too big for it’s britches?
Is the bureaucracy too big for it’s britches?

• Most common complaint...bureaucratic waste:
  Slow + inefficient + redundant + red tape =INEFFECTIVE

• Common remedies include privatization and reduction in size by reducing overlap of duties

• But like a phoenix rising from the ashes the bureaucracy will never die...
Iron Triangles & Issue Network Decagons

Yes, geometry has a purpose

How the bureaucracy & geometry go hand-in-hand
So what is an Iron Triangle?

- You don’t need the Pythagorean theorem to figure it out
- **IRON TRIANGLE** - a relatively stable relationship and pattern of interaction that occurs among federal workers in bureaucratic agencies, interest groups, and relevant Congressional committees
- So how does an iron triangle work…
Iron Triangles (aka Cozy Tri’s)

**CONGRESS**
- Provide campaign money & votes
- Enforce laws created by Congress
- Make laws to keep dept. important
- Enforce laws created by the group favors—possibly “pork”
- Create jobs to implement laws
- Appropriate $ to fund dept.

**INTEREST GROUPS**
- Provide information—often slanted
- Pass/oppose legislation the group favors—possibly “pork”
- Information & research
- Conduct research
- Enforce legislation favorable to group
- Conduct research
- Access to government
- Positive media attention
- Lobby for protection of jobs to Congress

**BUREAUCRACY**
- Provide information for committee hearings
- Conduct research
- Access & influence
- Provide information for committee hearings
- Provide campaign money & votes
- Provide information for committee hearings
- Provide information for committee hearings
Issue Network Decagon: The Next Big Thing

CONGRESS

Congressional Staffers

BUREAUCRACY

Career Bureaucrats
Low-level Decisions make agency behavior

Bureaucratic Agency Officials (Big Whigs)

INTEREST GROUPS

Lobbyists

Lawyers & Courts

Consultants PR firms

Large Corporations

Academy Artworks
Why are Iron Triangles and Issues Networks formed?

• Two words…
• MUTUAL BENEFIT

• Congress, interest groups, and the bureaucracy don’t need one another to survive but they do rely on one another to thrive
Why does Congress willingly give the bureaucracy policy making discretion in implementing law?

- It is more efficient…
- Congress:
  - Lacks expertise
  - Does not want to be blamed for bad policy
  - Implementing law is time consuming
Checking the bureaucracy

• Congressional checks
  – Appropriations- can reward or punish an agency
  – Legislation- Create laws that alter the bureaucracy’s activities
  – Create or abolish programs & agencies
  – Oversight- hold hearings/investigations
  – Senate confirmation/rejection of appointments

• Presidential checks
  – Appointment of department heads
  – Propose annual budget (increase or decrease funding)
  – Issue executive orders
Checking the bureaucracy

• Judicial checks
  – Rule on constitutionality of rules, regulations, & actions taken by bureaucratic agencies

• The public/interest groups
  – First Amendment rights
Checking the bureaucracy

• However the bureaucracy isn’t considered the “fourth branch” of government without powers of its own
  – The president cannot be expected to follow day-to-day actions
  – Congressional dependency in carrying out the laws it creates
  – The ability to set regulations from congressional laws
  – Bureaucratic expertise outweighs the knowledge of Congress & the President
  – Many agencies have semi-executive, legislative, & judicial powers
Concluding thoughts…

• Do we need the bureaucracy?
• How much bureaucracy do we need?
• How effective is the bureaucracy?
• Pros/cons of the bureaucracy
The Federal Budget
The Federal Budget Process
Money in, money out and debt

The Total Budget

This inlay graph depicts total outlays (expenses) and receipts (collections) for the 2008 federal budget and is not to scale with the rest of the poster.

Outlays: 3.591 Trillion +10% +34%

Social Security: 696 Billion +7% +10%

Non-Military / Nat. Security Discretionary: 520 Billion +6% +65%

Income Security: 477 Billion +14% +21%

Military / Nat. Security Discretionary: 901 Billion +1% +1%

Medicare: 452 Billion +8% +10%

Medicaid: 290 Billion +22% +30%

National Debt Interest: 176 Billion -19% -34%

Veterans Benefits: 57 Billion +13% +7%

Other: 24 Billion

Budget Deficit: 1,405 Billion +109% +352%

Receipts: 2.333 Trillion -5% -14%

Incorporation Income Taxes: 221 Billion -14% -42%

Excise Taxes: 76 Billion +7% -1%

Federal Reserve Deposits: 28 Billion -9% -26%

Customs Duties: 25 Billion -5% -14%

Estate / Gift Taxes: 20 Billion -15% -10%
How the Money is Spent

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Receipts
- 2.333 Trillion -5% -14%
  - Social Insurance / Retirement Receipts: 939 Billion +2% +0%
  - Income Taxes: 1,050 Billion -4% -8%
  - Corporation Income Taxes: 221 Billion -14% -42%
  - Excise Taxes: 76 Billion +7% +1%
  - Federal Reserve Deposits: 28 Billion -9% -26%
  - Customs Duties: 25 Billion -5% -14%
  - Estate / Gift Taxes: 20 Billion -15% -10%
  - Budget Deficit: 1,405 Billion +109% +352%