

Political Science 367.01

Legislatures and Interest Groups

Lecture 5: Agenda Setting in Congress January 29, 2001

1. Administrative tasks:

- a) Papers need to be turned in by the end of class or they are considered one day late.
- b) Any other problems, concerns, questions, etc.?

2. The Lecture

A. The Principal-Agent Problem.

1. Why do you party when your parents leave town?
2. What is a principal and what is an agent?
3. What is the problem here? What sort of losses are incurred by the Principal?
4. How does this relate to our discussion of members and interest groups?
 - a. Who is the principal and who is the agent when it comes to information?

B. The Policy Process in Congress: Agenda setting, policy-making, implementation, and evaluation.

1. What is an issue (or a problem)? How do they emerge?

- a. What brings an issue to the forefront?
- b. Cobb and Elder and Kingdon's versions

2. What is an alternative? How is an alternative different from an issue?

3. What is an agenda? There are two basic types...

- a. Systemic Agendas vs. Institutional or Formal Agendas
- b. What sorts of policies make up an agenda? Old vs. new
 1. Some problems make the agenda and others fade away. Why?
 2. Differential access to the agenda-setting stage.
 - a. Why are some groups or individuals advantaged?

4. How are agendas set? Why do some alternatives (policies) make the agenda while others do not?

- a. What is a stream? How does Kingdon think about them?
- b. Policy vs. political vs. problem streams
- c. Joining streams and policy windows...what are these things?
- d. What is the role of the entrepreneur here? Who is an entrepreneur?
- e. How can interest groups help the entrepreneur? Information, my friend...

5. Summary and conclusions.