

How does public opinion influence policy making politics essay



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Public opinion is the summation of individual attitudes, sentiments or views held by grown-up people. Public opinions can be swayed by public associations and political media. Mass media uses a broad range of advertising techniques to get their message out and change the peoples' opinions. By assessing the opinions at the personal level and combining them, the percentage of the population with particular views and preferences can be established. Public opinions affect policy both positively and negatively depending on the overall general public view on the policy. Governments have in many occasions devised the use of public opinions for guiding their public information and helping in the making of government policies. The fundamental representation of democracy is the provision of a method through which public opinion and public policy are dependably and frequently interacted.

Robert and Gerald (1993) claims that there should be on one hand preferences for the policy and on the other hand public responsiveness to the policy. Political representation has become a major subject in today's politics, and in highly developed democracies there has been increased dissatisfaction with the governments with many people claiming that governments don't represent their interest when formulating policies. According to Holti (1996) the Meech Lake Accord, which was a policy advocating for the Canadian elite accommodation, was met with extensive cries for transparency and public discussion. Many policy planners in addition included public opinion and organized interest groups as important parts in their policy formulation process. Besides public opinion, organized interest

groups also participate as a nongovernmental political determinant of the public policy. Public opinion may influence policy positive or negatively.

How public opinion influences policy

Representation largely depends on a reactive public which watches and responds to what the government is doing. Little advantages are gained on policies where the public is not attentive and uninformed on their preference. Public opinion on policies is very important to representation democratic system as a part of representation itself. A public that is quick to respond behaves like a thermostat as it adjusts its preferences for more or less policy depending on what policy makers do. State governments should develop policy outputs that replicate the concerns of the public and organized interests. Interest groups can also participate various roles standing-in as public or clients representatives as a broker of political information or as policy experts. Public opinion should hold larger weight on policy- making when a mood of the public is successfully communicated by use of interest group activities. The interest group serves as a representative of the mood of the people with their own policy goals. Population based approximations have been used but their effects have been difficult to ensnare from the split effects of socioeconomic conditions According to Daniel (2005) in the last fifteen years, new measures of state public opinion supported on group disaggregated nationwide surveys had revealed a good linkage between the state policy, open-mindedness, and public opinion. Interest groups and general public play an important role in influencing bureaucratic decision making. In USA, both the state public views and those done by interest groups support the addition of non- governmental forces in manipulating <https://assignbuster.com/how-does-public-opinion-influence-policy-making-politics-essay/>

policy outcomes. For example, by examining the effect of public opinion of environmental, health and education policies, the conservatives will prefer a free market situation whereas the liberals will pursue a government centered regulation to address these problems in aforementioned areas. By using interest groups, the more groups that are organized around a particular policy area, the more authority that advocacy community has on public policy outputs. By increasing the numbers of advocacy communities, they are able to communicate their ideas to policymakers more frequently and urgently. Public interests group serve as representative by including an interaction between the public and the organized interests. The environmental groups serve to represent a broader public as compared to health and education.

The governments' political situations such as party control of country's legislature and governorship, together with party competition with the state, is also a policy determinants. Party competition within the state as a government political condition affects public policy and thus affects public opinion. A party competitiveness will create a positive public policy and public opinion. External State conditions are also determinants of public policy, which may include population indicators, economic, and geographic conditions. For example, richer states usually have more capital to spend on environmental programs and are more likely respond to a higher increase in taxation since their higher incomes exceeds the threshold to satisfy more basic needs. Higher incomes levels have an encouraging relationship on environmental policy.

The mass public opinion concerning American foreign policy has been expressed inconsistently and rationally and on incoherence on the other side. In general, the American public do not support the foreign policy due to lack of their involvement in the policy making process. According to Witt Kopf (1990) this is because the American people are ill informed and not interested about foreign policy with equivalent weakness to demonstrate that unstable foreign policies are liable to manipulation by political elites.

Poverty rates affect both health and education policy's negatively.

Contrasting to access to health care the burden of education expenditure for impoverished population is in general manifested in increased states spending compared to local expenditures because small income base of regions with larger poor people. The proportion of locally raised education income is a good indicator of how states fund their education system. Some states preserve a high level of control over their schools systems and thus provide the bulk of the required funding.

According to Courtney and David (2005) increases in educational attainment improve both verbal and writing skills and results to higher income and greater professional prestige, enhancing social capital and improved understanding of political processes, which in turn leads to greater political participation. Views of those who are more learned have a greater influence than views of those with less learned.

The possibility of comparative pressure depends on which policies are chosen as outcomes variables. The suggestion follows from the contingent model of public opinion's weight on policy which affirms that the degree to

which a policy is affected by judgment is related to the salience of the subject to the public. The underlying principle for saliency's effect on policy awareness is that people are more politically active when matters are important to them. For example, the effects of public views on civilian rights policies in US. Civil rights matters are possibly more salient issues to blacks than whites and as a result attitudes of blacks may carry more weight with politicians than attitudes of whites.

The Federal government and both state and local governments have in many times hiked cigarette excise taxes in the current years from 24cents per pack to 34 cents per pack with a total of 19 states complying with the increase. The two effects of the reputation of cigarette excise taxes can be predicted in that one is to create revenue from smokers who continue to smoke and also to persuade minor smokers to quite. The problem that is being addressed is the extent to which tobacco control policies affect the public opinion towards smoking. Tobacco management policies can be used to change inexperienced assumptions on fitness risks caused by smoking and can serve as an alternative for health teaching. The execution of tobacco taxes can eventually change public opinions towards smoking. Several alternatives for public opinion have been developed towards smoking and have been scrutinized with relationship between alternatives and the changes in policy on cigarettes. Smokers who prepare to stop smoking obviously ridicule smoking more than the smokers who don't want to stop. The health behaviors of those who are affluent calculated by the attainment of education may serve as an important pointer for public reaction towards smoking. For that reason, the dominance of smoking by

intention to stop and education achievement arguably serve as better alternatives for attitude towards smoking than the rate of smoking alone. The proxy for the public response towards smoking is related to the explicit support of tobacco control policies and succeeding change in tobacco control laws. The prevalence of educate smokers who don't want to stop is the best proxy for public reaction towards smoking and accordingly changes in cigarette demand. There is always depressing relationship between excise taxes hikes and the predominance smoking which is primarily driven by the predominance educated smokers who don't want to stop. Public reaction towards smoking is a central feature to what extent tobacco policies are implemented. If tobacco control rules such as cigarette excise taxes and smoking bans are related with public reactions towards smoking, then it follows that smoking sentiments influence future demand than the tobacco control policies. The decline in cigarette smoking and the hike in tax reflect to some extent the public reaction towards smoking. Tobacco control policies and public sentiments together help in reducing the rate of smoking.

How public opinion does not influence policy

Policy makers in many times are forced to make an assumption that public views are a reliable guide to making public policy whereas they should not. Public opinion polling often assesses the wishes and liking of respondents but doesn't reflect the costs or threat associated with the policy. Public opinions conveyed in polls cannot tell the policy choice which needs consideration to tradeoffs among values to second-best potential and to unexpected risks.

Opinion polls are not likely to get better enough to help the policy choices. Enhancements make the polls results more expensive or too difficult to get from worn out respondents. Therefore, we should not expect in future that polling will replace the use of reasoned policy choices by chosen spokespersons of the people. Despite all the numerical fancy in modern day's polling, the dug out advice should not direct public policy. Although public requirements for more government intercession to help are real in that people honestly crave the promised improvement, the cries for state action fail to meet even the highest minimal standard of legitimate guidance.

Modern day polls are seducing those who respondent and don't offer them hard choices like the ones faced by policy analysts or legislatures. Polls do not offer wide-reaching advice about policy but they only measure wishes for worlds of advantages with no costs.

Opinion polling has crossed the line between mechanically footage popular attitudes and becoming a political player.

Contemporary polls are not excellent guides to policy making and we don't have the reason to believe they can be improved to stand in place of policy analysis. A triumphant battle against facile entreatment must deal with the way polls are used not the surveys themselves. Abstract craving for public bounty should only be regarded as interesting curiosities and under no conditions should they notify policymakers or determine policy choices. The capacity of political system to act in response to the likings of its citizens is innermost to democratic presumption and practice. Where assessed, public opinion expresses a reasoned mood or view on a meticulous policy of a

problem in a manner that is identifiable by political influential and it is more likely than not that the progress of the policy will be in the path of public opinion. Two parameters which must be followed are within a broad of constraints established by public views. Politicians and policy entrepreneurs often have considerable room to plot policy in detailed ways that are not noticeable to the public. According to Kenamer (1992) there are different ways to transform welfare, evade spread of communism in underdeveloped countries, fight crime, and address shortage of energy. Secondly whereas the public opinion clearly places important limits on policymaking, the amalgamation of contradictory public views on majority vital policy issues and the capability of political elites to contour or direct views considerably reduce the independent informal impact of public sentiments. Policy questions are intrinsically many sided and is often the reason that strategy and political entrepreneurs can draw upon particular issues structured and abroad ideological underpinnings that have accepted support to endorse meticulous policy schedule.

Conclusion

It is the external demands of public views that hold and influence policy-making decisions and not the widely known formal apparatus of government. The power of the public opinion in relation to party of the legislature does not essentially underrate the power of the government officials and institutions. According to Norris (1997) the American State governments are responsive to the views of general public and to organized publics. State governments function just as representative democracies with policy outputs very much reflecting the state and external political conditions. Public

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opinions at the same time tend to have a steady effect across policy areas while the governments tend to be operating in a representative manner, with policy principally the wills of its citizens. Party platforms and electoral fortunes serve as expansions of outer determinants connecting needs and wants with policies and programs. In addition, the impacts of non-governmental political situations on policy can vary across problem areas. Organized interest are not massive persuaders of public policy and different groups across problem areas have varying effects as they search for to push forward their own specific goals. Even within the same problem, groups can have varying goals and impact across specific agendas and policies. Public opinion tends to have consistent effect across policy areas.