

**AP Government and Politics**  
**The Federal Bureaucracy: Examining the Fourth Branch**

**University of Virginia Center for Politics**



(Many thanks to the University of Virginia's Youth Leadership Initiative for the creation of the many of the power point slides you will be accessing. This lab activity and the power point presentation have been extensively edited for use in our classroom today). The assignment is due **March 8, 2013 at the beginning of class.**

**Purpose:** On a day-to-day basis, the federal bureaucracy carries out much of the work of the U.S. government. Yet the bureaucracy, sometimes known as “the fourth branch,” is perhaps the least known and understood part of the federal government. In this lesson, you will investigate which departments and agencies make up the federal bureaucracy, and how they function, and examples of the bureaucracy in action including the following case studies: the Bureaucracy of Pizza, the Bureaucracy of the Walmart Employee (and the relationship with the issue of entitlement programs), and the Bureaucracy of natural disasters including Katrina and the Gulf Oil Spill.

**Objectives: Students will**

1. Define the concept of bureaucracy and describe its characteristics.
2. Identify and describe the structure and function of the federal bureaucracy.
3. Investigate the role and mission of several federal departments and agencies.
4. Analyze the role of the bureaucracy in action in case studies: Pizza, Walmart, Natural Disasters, and the Health Care Bill.
5. Interpret and analyze political cartoons.

**Key Words:**

*bureaucracy*  
*implementation*  
*hierarchy*  
*civil servant*  
*merit system*

*federal bureaucracy*  
*administration*  
*red tape*  
*patronage*  
*cabinet departments*  
*government corporations*

*bureaucrat*  
*regulation*  
*fourth branch*  
*independent regulatory commissions*  
*independent executive agencies*  
*spoils system*

**\*\*\*\**revolving door and iron triangle***  
***(from a previous unit and will be very important in this unit, too)***

**Directions: Review the power point presentation and answer the following questions**

**Part 1: Introduction to the Federal Bureaucracy?**

1. What is the literal definition of a bureaucracy?
2. What is a more detailed definition of bureaucracy?
3. What does the word “hierarchy” mean?



4. Read the public perceptions of the bureaucracy. (Think about your own experience trying to get your driver's permit/license.)
5. How many plum appointments does the President extend to office seekers?

### Part 2: What is the Federal Bureaucracy?

1. \_\_\_\_\_million employees; \_\_\_\_\_ million are civilians or "civil servants"
2. President only appoints \_\_\_\_\_% (patronage or political appointments)
3. What does the word "patronage" mean? What are some of the other derivations of this word?
4. If you do not get your job through patronage, how would you get your job? (B)
5. What president was assassinated by a disgruntled office seeker? (B)
6. What legislation was written that created the merit system? (B)
7. If you pass a test and get a job, you receive a General Services rank called a GS rank. The salaries are based on education, experience, and job duties. The salary grades can be found at <http://www.fedjobs.com/pay/pay.html>. An astronaut is a bureaucrat for NASA. How much does an astronaut make his/her first year?
8. \_\_\_\_\_ cabinet level departments
9. \_\_\_\_\_+ independent agencies with \_\_\_\_\_+ bureaus, divisions, branches, etc.
10. What are the three largest departments in order of size?

### Part 3: What does a Federal Bureaucracy do?

1. There are many ways to categorize bureaucratic agencies. One way is to examine the function that each provides. The three functions of the federal bureaucracy are listed in the left-hand column of the chart below. Define or explain what is meant by each function and provide examples of agencies that provide that function.

Functions of the Federal Bureaucracy Define	Examples of Federal Agencies/Departments
Implementation	
Administration	
Regulation	



**Part 4: How is the federal bureaucracy organized?** There are many ways to categorize bureaucratic agencies. Another way is to examine the type or category each belongs to.

Component of the Federal Bureaucracy	Characteristics	Examples of Agencies & Departments
Cabinet Departments		
Independent Executive Agencies		
Independent Regulatory Commissions		
Government Corporations		



**Part 5: Go on a real scavenger hunt.** Your task is to find ONE example of when a bureaucratic agency is using its discretionary authority. One example: The TSA’s policy permitting liquids of 4 oz or less onto a plane. List the agency, the policy, the source (can be a video clip, a newspaper article, internet source, etc.)

**Part 6: Who works for the federal government?**

1. Identify several statistical characteristics of federal employees
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
  - e.
2. What are the three largest occupations bureaucrats do?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
3. Describe the “typical” bureaucrat.

**Part 7. Who supervises the federal bureaucracy? Complete the chart and answer the following question:**

1. Of the tools at his disposal, what is the most effective check the President has on the bureaucracy? Congress? The Judiciary? Explain.

**Part 8: Thinking Critically – Answer the questions below.**

1. Why is the federal bureaucracy often referred to as “the fourth branch” of government?
2. Some believe that the real power in the federal government lies with the federal bureaucracy. To what extent do you believe this is true?



### **Part 9: Cartoon Analysis**

**Directions: View the cartoons shown in the power point presentation and answer the following questions regarding **ONE** cartoon. Identify the one you chose.**

1. What is the artist's message in the cartoon? What do you think is its purpose?
2. Identify any symbols (ex: an elephant to represent the Republican Party) portrayed in the cartoon and analyze what they represent.
3. What does this cartoon tell us about bureaucracy?



**Part 11: Case Studies (All of these studies are here for you to view and make a mental note of regarding the bureaucracy. No writing is necessary. Just read the material I have provided for you in these case studies.)**

Case Study #1: The Bureaucracy of Pizza

Directions: View slide #28. Speculate what agencies you think might have a role ***in administering, implementing, and regulating*** the pizza you ordered for dinner last night. Read the following chart and note the list of agencies that make up the “Bureaucracy of Pizza.” Did you speculate accurately? Does this ruin your appetite? Make you feel healthier? Safer?

PIZZA PART	FEDERAL AGENCY AND/OR DEPARTMENT; RATIONAL
Cardboard Box	The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) regulates the manufacture of pulp and paper and pollutants produced from it.
Tomato Sauce	The USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) recommends that tomato sauce manufacturers add bottled lemon juice to their product to ensure a safe acidity level.
Crust	The FDA (Food and Drug Administration) regulates how a food must be labeled if it contains a major food allergen, like wheat.
Cheese	The FDA regulates the moisture content, fat content, and type of milk used in cheeses.
Mushrooms	The FDA requires that any mushrooms picked from the wild must be individually examined by a mushroom identification expert to ensure they are safe to eat.
Anchovies	The USDA recommends that anchovies not be shipped in glass containers, as they can break easily.
Pepperoni	The USDA tightly controls the importation of processed beef—used in the production of pepperoni—from countries with known incidences of mad cow disease.
Onions	The USDA regulates the size and maturity of onions imported into the United States
Delivery Vehicle	The EPA regulates and sets pollution emission and fuel efficiency standards for cars and trucks.
Diet Soda	The FDA regulates the ingredients in carbonated beverages. Aspartame used in many diet colas was approved by the FDA in 1983.

Case Study #2: The Bureaucracy of the Walmart Employee (regarding the entitlement programs the employees receive).

Wal-Mart's low prices don't come cheap. In fact, each Wal-Mart store employing 200 people costs taxpayers approximately \$420,750 annually in public social services used by Wal-Mart workers whose low wages and unaffordable health insurance mean most of them are among the working poor. That's the finding of [Everyday Low Wages: The Hidden Price We All Pay for Wal-Mart](#), a report by the minority staff of the U.S. House of Representatives Education and the Workforce Committee.



Case Study #3: The vast size of the Department of Homeland Security. Take a look: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=128650264> (No writing is necessary. Just view.)

Case Study #4: The Revolving Door. "Under current law, government officials who make contracting decisions must either wait a year before joining a military contractor or, if they want to switch immediately, must start in an affiliate or division unrelated to their government work. One big loophole is that these restrictions do not apply to many high-level policy makers..., who can join corporations or their boards without waiting." [http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Government-industry\\_revolving\\_door](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Government-industry_revolving_door)

The first was a report on NPR about an FCC Commissioner leaving to lobby for Comcast, after she approved the merger of NBC and Comcast. Good revolving door story. (4 minutes – 4 seconds) <http://www.npr.org/2011/05/12/136250400/for-government-employees-revolving-door-continues>

Case Study #5: The Bureaucracy of Natural Disasters

- a. View the following videos that address the blame game; what agency and level of government (this is a federalism issue) was responsible for responding to the Katrina disaster.



Video 1: <http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=817233n>

Video 2 (five years later) <http://video.foxnews.com/v/4322970/lessons-not-learned-from-katrina/>

- b. View the following video that addresses the response to the Gulf Oil spill. Questions for the Secretary of Homeland Security will continue during the clip regarding a terrorist incident.

Video 1: Oil Spill and Terrorism:

<http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/video/governments-plan-oil-spill-10537488>

Read the following article regarding the Oil Spill and the Bureaucracy. I have provided a teaser excerpt below: “But **red tape** also has stalled efforts by biologists in Barataria Bay, MSNBC reports, who are waiting for approval from Washington before they can implement clean-up tactics to save the marshlands.” “**The bureaucracy is killing us**,” Ralph Portier, an environmental biologist at Louisiana State University, told MSNBC.

Article 1: [http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/2010/06/29/2010-06-29\\_bp\\_oil\\_spill\\_cleanup\\_blocked\\_by\\_red\\_tape\\_bureaucracy\\_as\\_companies\\_offering\\_a\\_id\\_a.html](http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/2010/06/29/2010-06-29_bp_oil_spill_cleanup_blocked_by_red_tape_bureaucracy_as_companies_offering_a_id_a.html)

**\*\*Now, write a one-two paragraph reflection on your impressions of the federal bureaucracy. Why do you think that many refer to it as a “necessary evil”? What steps would you recommend to “fix” it?**

**End of Lab Activity with helpful notes to follow. Read these notes provided by the Youth Leadership Initiative at the University of Virginia. No work needs to be submitted.**

**TOPIC 1: SPOILS SYSTEM, PENDLETON ACT, OPM - Describe the spoils system, and explain how it changed to the system of many rules that bureaucrats must follow today. Include the Pendleton Act and the Office of Personnel Management in your discussion.**

### I. SPOILS SYSTEM

- A. involved presidents rewarding supporters with jobs
- B. jobs were not given on merit, but on service
- C. were not good for employees - could be fired at will
- D. became difficult for presidents to meet all demands of those who felt entitled to employment (Garfield assassin)

### II. PENDLETON ACT

- A. eliminated spoils system, created merit system





- B. Civil Service Exam - required for all
- C. rules make it difficult to fire someone
- D. Senior Executive Service (SES) is different - these are elite employees who get raises based on performance and can be fired easily
- E. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) hires all employees (heads of bureaus have little control)

## **TOPIC 2: CRITICISM OF BUREAUCRACY - Identify and describe ways in which the bureaucracy is criticized.**

### **I. RED TAPE**

- too many rigid procedures >>> ex: all hiring must be done through OPM
- too many policies with no flexibility for special circumstances
- too many forms to fill out, lines to wait

### **II. INEFFICIENCY**

- lack of incentive to be productive - no profit motive

### **III. DUPLICATION OF SERVICES**

- bureaucracy is so complicated
- agencies are performing similar and sometimes the same functions
- Dept. of Commerce overlaps with Dept. of Agriculture, GSA overlaps with Dept. of Interior, etc.
- federalism makes this more complicated, many services are provided at the state and national level both

### **IV. BUREAUCRACY IS LAW MAKER**

- regulations end up having the effect of law.

### **V. BUREAUCRACY IS TOO BIG**

- privatization would be more effective

### **VI. BUREAUCRACY IS CORRUPT**

- *iron triangle* - reveals the relationship between the Executive branch, Congress and private interest groups that can lead to decisions which benefit the private sector at the expense of the government.

## **TOPIC 3: THE HATCH ACT - Identify the causes, effects and rules of the Hatch Act.**

### **I. CAUSES**

- A) designed to prevent corruption in national elections.
- B) 4 million people could manipulate election outcomes.

### **II. HATCH ACT**

- A) prohibits federal employees from taking an active role in politics
- B) many argue that this prevents otherwise qualified individuals from actively participating in government

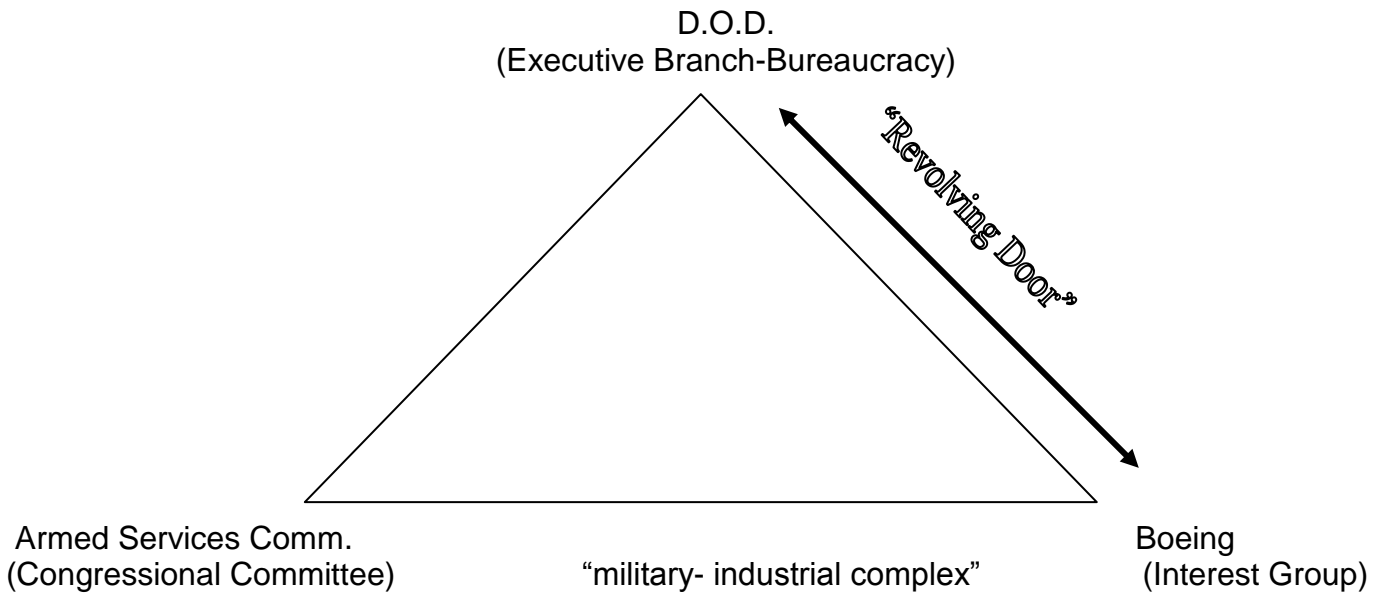


- C) Clinton administration made Hatch Act less restrictive
- D) bureaucrats can't
  - 1- run for public office
  - 2- fund raise for politicians during work
  - 3- discourage political activity
- E) bureaucrats can
  - 1- vote and assist in voter registration
  - 2- contribute money to campaigns
  - 3- campaign off duty
  - 4- hold elected office in political parties

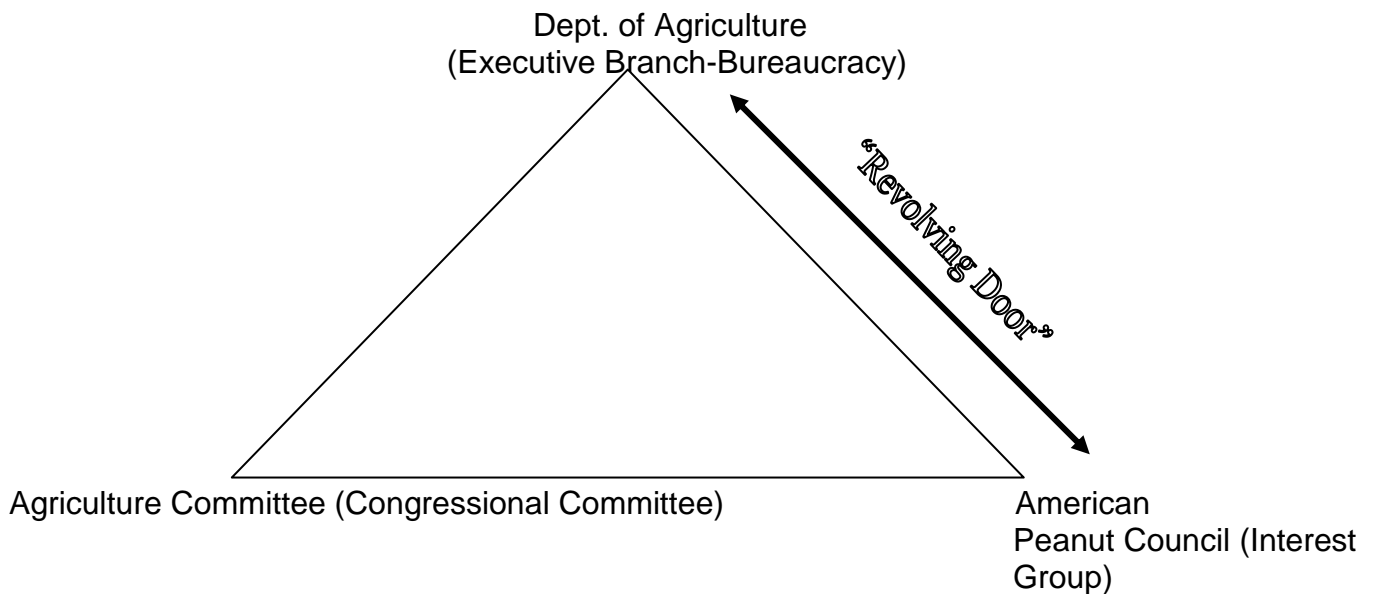
**TOPIC 4 IRON TRIANGLE - Discuss the iron triangle relationship and explain how this can be applied to both Agriculture and Defense.**

- I. **IRON TRIANGLE** – often referred to as “sub-governments.” It is the relationship between persons in executive branch (bureaucracy), congressional committees, and special interest groups who are all involved in one area of policy making.
  - A. it is a working relationship that can be beneficial because it improves efficiency.
  - B. however it can also cause decisions to be made which benefit the special interest group at the expense of the government.
  - C. **Revolving door** - The government-industry revolving door puts industry-friendly experts in positions of decision-making power. Often individuals rotate between working for industry and working for the government in regulatory capacities, arrangements that are fraught with potential for conflicts of interest.
- II. Examples of the Iron Triangle
  - well known examples include the iron triangle of defense, which is often linked to the \$400 hammer, and the iron triangle of agriculture, which is often linked to continuing farm subsidies.

### Defense



### Agriculture



TOPIC 5: DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY - Describe the background and primary functions, duties and jurisdictions of the new Department of Homeland Security.



## Department of Homeland Security Background

- President Bush signed the Homeland Security Act of 2002 on Monday November 25, 2002 to take the next critical steps in defending our country from the continuing threat of terrorism after September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001.
- The bill proposed the creation of a Department of Homeland Security.
- The Department consists of 22 agencies and 180,000 employees.
- The Bush Administration developed a strategy of six key areas. 1) Intelligence and warning. 2) Border and transportation security. 3) Domestic counterterrorism. 4) Protecting critical infrastructure. 5) Defending against catastrophic threats. 6) Emergency preparedness and response.

Bush nominated:

- 1) Governor Tom Ridge as 1st Secretary of Homeland Security
- 2) Current Secretary of Homeland Security under President Obama is Janet Napolitano

## The primary functions of The Department of Homeland Security:

1. To prevent and protect the American homeland from terrorist attacks and weapons of mass destruction.
2. To help our country recover from terrorist attacks that may occur.
3. To manage federal emergency response activities so that our country may be prepared.
4. To strengthen and combine border and transportation security.
5. To gather and analyze homeland security intelligence from different sources.
6. To improve communication with state and local governments, as well as with the American public about threats and preparedness.
7. To watch for connections between illegal drug trafficking and terrorism, and attempt to break any existing connections.

## Duties of Department of Homeland Security

1. **Awareness** -- Identify and understand threats, assess vulnerabilities, determine potential impacts and disseminate timely information to our homeland security partners and the **American Public.**
2. **Prevention** -- Detect, deter and mitigate threats to our homeland.
3. **Protection** -- Safeguard our people and their freedoms, critical infrastructure, property and the economy of our Nation from acts of terrorism, natural disasters, or other emergencies. **Response** -- Lead, manage and coordinate the national response to acts of terrorism, natural disasters, or other emergencies.
4. **Recovery** -- Lead national, state, local and private sector efforts to restore services and rebuild communities after acts of terrorism, natural disasters, or other emergencies.
5. **Service** -- Serve the public effectively by facilitating lawful trade, travel and immigration.
6. **Organizational Excellence** -- Value our most important resource, our people. Create a culture that promotes a common identity, innovation, mutual respect, accountability and teamwork to achieve efficiencies, effectiveness, and operational synergies.

## Strengths



- Bipartisan agency with an agenda that transcends party lines
- Constant focus on protecting the United States and its citizens, no underlying agenda
- Able to work with almost every Federal Department- almost each one has involvement with one or more aspects of defending the country
- Large, compact organizations help provide unity of purpose, builds trust and confidence by facilitating coordinated action
- Structured to be a product of the times, able to change with the unstable situations associated with global terrorism
- Sends message to the American public that federal government is dedicated to protecting their citizens at all costs against the threat of global terrorism.
- Merged 22 separate agencies to encourage efficiency and assure success.
- Provides state and local assistance for emergencies, grants for "first responders" in times of crisis
- Places large emphasis on use of science/technology research that United States specializes in
- Director of department subject to congressional oversight/ senatorial approval
- Undertakes responsibility of other agencies i.e. (border control for drug trafficking), encourages cooperation --Haven't had another terrorist attack

### **Weaknesses**

- Unsure where money would come from
  - No clear distinction as to whom had ultimate authority and decision-making power when department first began, plagued by two overriding issues
  - Congressional leaders insisted that Tom Ridge testify before congress regarding president Bush's homeland security strategy
  - To administer strategy, personnel and finances required from several different agencies. Department of Homeland Security created to counter those issues
  - Large in size, 3rd largest agency
  - Large budget, 4th most expensive to maintain
  - requires congressional restructuring with regards to anti-terrorist activity
  - Approximately 70 separate agencies authorized by congress to spend money on counter-terrorist activities
- Congressional history shows that it is very difficult to recast its own structures/procedures to ensure that a new bureaucracy functions efficiently.
- CIA and FBI left out of DHS >>> turf war not resolved

## **TOPIC 6: CLINTON/GORE'S NATIONAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW (R.E.G.O.) - Identify and describe the Clinton/Gore plan to reinvent government known as the National Performance Review. Evaluate the success of the program.**

### **I. THE N.P.R. IS THE CLINTON PLAN TO REDUCE THE SIZE OF THE BUREAUCRACY**

- Every President since LBJ has made reducing the federal bureaucracy part of his campaign
- Every President has tried with little success to cut back on the size of the bureaucracy

### **II. CLINTON APPOINTS GORE**

- Gore to head a task force called National Performance Review (NPR)
- This was a research project conducted over several years to assess government efficiency and productivity
- The Gore Task Force made recommendations to the President in two areas:
  - Areas of federal government that could be cut, consolidated or privatized and
  - ways in which government could be run more like a business



### III. MAJOR CHANGES MADE

- A. cut backs in education and agriculture
- B. increase in privatization (private companies doing government work)
- C. Ex: National Parks/Battlefield concessions @ Yellowstone & Gettysburg run by private companies
- D. Customer friendly measures were taken.
  - 1. Social Security Administration - longer hours
  - 2. IRS - Tax forms available on the internet
  - 3. telephone answering systems updated
- E. regulations
  - 1. rewritten to be easier for layman to understand
  - 2. obsolete regulations abolished
- F. rewards were given for efficiency -
  - Hammer Award - in name of \$400 hammer

### IV. SUCCESS -

- A. due to privatization, downsizing of bureaucracy, numbers are somewhat misleading >>> responsibility has simply shifted to the states
- B. Still, REGO is considered most successful effort on the part of a contemporary president to downsize fed. bureaucracy
- C. would not have been possible without a Republican Congress
- D. NOTE: The size of the bureaucracy, though #'s shifted to different areas, is back up to pre-Clinton levels after 9-11, Dept. of Homeland Security, and war in Iraq

## **TOPIC 7: FREEDOM OF INFORMATION & PRIVACY ACTS - Discuss how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Privacy Act have affected the federal bureaucracy.**

### I. GOVERNMENT AND PRIVACY – FOIA (1966)

- A) government was once in the habit of classifying most government documents
- B) citizens who requested documents that effected them personally had no luck
- C) sweeping legislation, known as FOIA, forced the federal government to make most public records accessible to citizens
- D) expensive for the government
- E) your records at school are now open to you
- F) As a result, files at the National Archives on the JFK assassination and Watergate are now open

### II. THE PRIVACY ACT – PA (1974)

- A) The Privacy Act of 1974 regulates government control of documents which concern a citizen.
- B) It gives one “
  - 1. the right to see records about [one]self, subject to the Privacy Act's exemptions
  - 2. the right to amend that record if it is inaccurate, irrelevant, untimely, or incomplete,
  - 3. the right to sue the government for violations of the statute including permitting others to see [one's] records unless specifically permitted by the Act.”



- C) In conjunction with the FOIA, the PA is used to further the rights of an individual gaining access to information held by the government.
- D) The Justice Department's Office of Information and Privacy and federal district courts are the two channels of appeal available to seekers of information.

**TOPIC 8: WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT - Discuss how both the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Whistleblower Protection act affected the federal bureaucracy.**

I. WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT (1989)

- A. this law made it easy for a bureaucrat to report wrong doing on the part of their boss
- B. it created an office of special counsel where federal workers can "tattle" on their bosses and have their job protected

II. Examples:

- A. the whistle was blown on leaders at an FBI crime lab last year who were accused of sloppiness in performing chemical testing in their attempts to detect criminals.
- B. Tim McVey, OK City bomber, already convicted and weeks away from execution (admitted guilt in a book) and didn't want more appeals. Then a bombshell: Several FBI field offices had failed to turn over evidence to defense attorneys that may have cast doubt on McVey's guilt (individual FBI agents brought this to the attention of the Justice Dept. and "blew the whistle).
- C. After 9-11, several FBI agents from field offices in Minneapolis and Florida who reported concerns and/or evidence of suspicious behavior by some of the 19 high jackers beforehand, but were ignored by superiors, testified before Congress.
- D. the whistle was blown on IRS officials who were known for promoting individuals according to the number of seizures and liens

End