



Wilson - Ch. 11 - The Bureaucracy

Question 1) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?


-  A) A bureaucracy is a large, complex, and hierarchical organization composed of appointed officials.

Explanation: Government bureaucracies are the 'permanent' government officials, i.e., those APPOINTED civilian and military officials whose terms of office continue irrespective of changes in ELECTED officials. There are many examples of bureaucracies in the private sector outside of government, e.g., large nonprofit organizations have bureaucracies as do large for-profit corporations.


-  B) In the U.S., the executive-branch bureaucracy serves two masters – the president and Congress.

Explanation: This divided authority encourages federal bureaucrats to play one branch of government against the other and make heavy use of the media in doing so. In parliamentary democracies, there is much greater hierarchical control of the bureaucracy by the prime minister and cabinet ministers.

An additional difference is that in the U.S., our Bill of Rights guarantees our individual rights, which allows far more court scrutiny of bureaucratic decisions than is found in most European democracies.

-  C) Compared to Europe, the U.S. has far less government ownership of economic enterprises but far more government regulation of privately owned businesses.


Explanation: In the U.S., we have much less of a 'welfare state' with our 'mixed' economy of predominantly private ownership combined with widespread public regulation of that private property.

-  D) In the U.S., not many federal bureaucracies (departments and agencies) share their functions with related departments and agencies in state and local governments.

Explanation: This division of power is very common in the U.S. federal system, but is far less common in unitary democracies like the U.K. and France.

-  E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.


Question 2) Which one of the following statements, A through D, -is false?

-  A) Members of the executive-branch bureaucracy that are appointed by the president with the advice and consent of the Senate can be fired by the president only with the Senate's consent.


No, except for members of independent regulatory agencies, the president has the right of removal of presidential appointees – even those whose original appointment required Senate approval.

Explanation: George Washington set the precedent that was followed until 1867 when Congress passed the Tenure of Office Act requiring Senate consent for removing any federal officer whose appointment required Senate approval. The Radical Republicans in Congress used the act to block President Andrew Johnson's dismissal of Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and then to use Johnson's violation as an impeachment charge.


However, in 1935, the Court ruled that Congress had the power to limit presidential authority to remove members of the independent regulatory agencies.

-  B) Although presidents can fire appointed executive-branch bureaucrats (except for independent regulatory agency members), Congress has a great deal of influence over those bureaucrats' behavior.

Explanation: Congress sets up all executive-branch departments and agencies, writes the laws that the bureaucracy administers, appropriates the funds for bureaucratic programs and salaries, and investigates bureaucratic performance.

-  C) The Civil War and following industrial revolution sparked a significant expansion in the size of the federal bureaucracy.

Explanation: WWI, the Great Depression, and WWII also generated massive increases in the size and scope of authority of the federal bureaucracy.

-  D) The federal income tax was not a significant source of revenue until WWII.

Explanation: First authorized (by the 16th Amendment) in 1913, the average taxpayer still paid only \$7 in federal taxes by 1940. However, both individual and corporate income tax rates increased substantially during the war (total revenues jumped from \$5 billion to nearly \$44 billion). The end of the war brought no appreciable tax reduction.

☒ E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 3) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

☒ A) The number of civilians working for the federal government is less today than it was during WWII.

Explanation: At about 3 million civilian workers, the number has remained roughly constant since the early 1970s. During WWII, that number was almost 750,000 more. However, there has been an explosive growth in the number of political appointees at the top of the bureaucracy who try to run it.

☒ B) The volume of regulations issued and the amount of money spent by the federal bureaucracy have increased much faster than the number of bureaucrats who write the regulations and spend the money.

Explanation: Congress has delegated substantial authority to executive-branch departments and agencies in three areas: (1) paying subsidies, (2) transferring money from the federal government to state and local governments, and (3) devising and enforcing regulations.

☒ C) Congressional delegation of authority to executive-branch departments and agencies did not become commonplace until the 1960s.

Explanation: No, this delegation proliferated during FDR's New Deal of the 1930s after the U.S. Supreme Court reversed its earlier ruling that such congressional delegations of authority were unconstitutional.

☒ D) The federal civil-service system was designed to recruit qualified individuals for government civilian employment on the basis of merit, not party patronage, and to retain and promote them on the basis of performance, not political favoritism.

Explanation: The federal civil-service system began with the Pendleton Act of 1883, which was enacted by Congress in response to the assassination of President James Garfield two years earlier by a disappointed office seeker, who was unhappy about the patronage position he had been offered in return for his support of the Republican party in the prior election. Prior to the Pendleton Act, practically every federal job was a patronage job.

☒ E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 4) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

☒ A) In recent years, the number of federal civilian employees covered by the civil-service system has fallen from almost 90% to just over half.

Explanation: Many of these non-civil-service individuals are highly trained professionals (lawyers, biologists, engineers, and computer specialists) who could not be ranked on the basis of the available civil-service exams.

☒ B) Employees hired outside the competitive-examination civil-service system are part of the 'excepted service.'

Explanation: They now make up almost half of all civilian employees of the federal government.

☒ C) Political appointments and patronage positions constitute a large percentage of all federal jobs.

Explanation: Only a very small fraction (probably no more than 3%) of the federal government employees who are 'excepted' from the civil-service system are political appointments, i.e., individuals selected for policy-making and politically sensitive positions on the basis of partisan or ideological considerations.

☒ D) Most government departments and agencies are dominated by people who have grown up in that department or agency, have not served in any other, and have been in government service most of their lives.

Explanation: This situation has both advantages and disadvantages. On the plus side, life-long employees acquire a great deal of expertise and provide a good deal of continuity to the department or agency. On the negative side, life-long employees can often use their expertise to delay or prevent vital changes in policy.

☒ E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 5) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?


☒ A) Even when bureaucrats come from roughly the same social backgrounds, their policy views seem to reflect those of the department or agency that they work for.

Explanation: Those bureaucrats that work for consumer- and environmental-protection departments and agencies (such as the Federal Trade Commission, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the Environmental Protection Agency, and


the Food and Drug Administration) tend to have more liberal views than those bureaucrats that work for business-oriented departments and agencies (such as the Small Business Administration, the Forest Service, and the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, and Defense) tend to have more conservative views.

Wilson calls the former "activist" agencies and the latter "traditional" agencies. He is misleading – BOTH types are "activist" in defending the interests of their respective clientele.


Wilson is correct when he says, "It is not clear whether the jobs produce these differences in attitudes or whether certain jobs attract people with certain beliefs. Probably both forces are at work."

-  B) Perhaps the most important internal constraint on bureaucratic discretionary authority is the fragmentation of power within those departments and agencies.

Explanation: Government departments and agencies are almost universally complex organizations, the component parts of which do not always see things the same way.

-  C) Legal external constraints imposed on executive-branch agencies and departments that significantly limit their discretionary authority include: civil-service regulations, the Freedom of Information Act, and the Administrative Procedure Act.

Explanation: The latter requires that interested people be notified of and given a chance to comment on proposed new rules, and that such interested parties be afforded an opportunity to introduce evidence at public hearings that must be held before such proposed new rules can be adopted and enforced.


-  D) Political external constraints on executive-branch departments and agencies are imposed by the president, Congress, interest groups, and the news media.

Those departments and agencies most subject to congressional influence are those that distribute benefits among significant groups, localities, or regions within the U.S. Examples include: the Departments of Agriculture, Interior, Housing and Urban Development, and Veterans Affairs as well as the Army Corps of Engineers and the Small Business Administration.

Explanation: Those departments and agencies least subject to congressional influence (and hence most subject to presidential influence) are those that do not distribute benefits among significant groups, localities, or regions within the U.S. Examples include: the Departments of State, Treasury, and Justice as well as the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

-  E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 6) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?


-  A) Few executive-branch agencies have neither a presidential nor a congressional orientation and can act somewhat independently of both.

No, there are over 100 such 'independent' agencies. These tend to be the executive agencies that exist separate from the 15 cabinet departments. They fall into 3 categories:

1) independent regulatory agencies (EPA, CPSC, FCC, FTC, NLRB, NRC, SEC, Federal Reserve Board, etc.) that were established outside cabinet departments by the U.S. Congress to regulate some aspect of the U.S. economy;


Explanation: 2) independent administrative agencies (GSA, NASA) that were established outside cabinet departments by the U.S. Congress to provide a product or service to other federal government departments and agencies; and

3) public corporations (AMTRAK, FDIC, FSLIC, LSC, NSF, TVA, USPS) that were established outside cabinet departments by the U.S. Congress to provide a product or service to the public that the private sector was unwilling to provide (because of insufficient profit incentives).


-  B) Since many federal agencies and departments were created explicitly to promote some sector of society – agriculture, business, labor, the environment, minorities – it is not surprising that interest groups representing these sectors have substantial influence over the departments and agencies designed to serve them.

Explanation: Many federal regulatory agencies, that were created explicitly to REGULATE (not promote) some sector of the U.S. economy, exhibit a tendency to become 'captured' by those industries. Current examples include the FAA and FCC. The non-conspiratorial reason is that the members of those regulatory agencies tend to be recruited from within those target industries simply because that is where the appropriate expertise is concentrated. For example, to be a knowledgeable regulator of the commercial aviation industry, you need to have acquired training and experience in

commercial aviation that is not readily available outside of that industry.

-  C) An 'iron triangle' is a durable and symbiotic relationship among an executive-branch bureaucracy, an interest group, and a congressional committee or subcommittee.


Explanation: The relationship is mutually beneficial and tends to be long lasting. The interest group provides electoral support to the members of the congressional committee or subcommittee in exchange for legislation that creates and maintains a program or subsidy desired by that interest group. The congressional committee or subcommittee provides appropriations (and hence job-security) to the bureaucracy in return for their administering the program or subsidy.

-  D) An 'issue network' is larger and more complex than an 'iron triangle.'


Explanation: In addition to the 3 members of the 'iron triangle,' an 'issue network' includes other, competing interest groups, think tanks, policy experts, and the news media.

-  E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.


Question 7) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

-  A) Congress – not the president – creates executive branch departments and agencies.


Explanation: Except for a few, minor offices and commissions, no executive-branch department or agency may exist without congressional approval.

-  B) Congress influences – and sometimes determines precisely – the behavior of executive-branch departments and agencies by the statutes it enacts.

Explanation: From the 1930s until the 1960s, Congress tended to allow the bureaucracy a great deal of discretionary authority by often writing statutes that set broad goals but allowed executive-branch departments and agencies to determine the detail and specifics concerning how those goals would be achieved. Since the 1960s, Congress has tended to sharply restrict this discretionary authority by writing much more detailed statutes.

-  C) No money can be spent by the federal bureaucracy unless it has first been authorized and appropriated by Congress.


Explanation: Authorizations to spend usually originate in a subject-relevant legislative committee (e.g., Agriculture, Defense, Commerce, etc.). Appropriations originate in the House Appropriations Committee and its various and influential subcommittees. An appropriation may be, and usually is, for less than the amount authorized in order to meet broader spending goals.

-  D) Spending from 'trust funds' is subject to the annual appropriations process.

Explanation: No, such 'trust funds' are set up to pay for the benefits legally mandated in 'entitlement' programs (such as social-security and veterans' pensions). Therefore, these legally mandated payments cannot be reduced in the appropriations process. To be reduced, Congress would have to pass legislation repealing the legally mandated entitlement payments.

-  E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 8) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

-  A) Congressional committees sometimes request 'committee clearance,' i.e., that an executive-branch department or agency consult with the committee chairperson before taking certain actions.


Explanation: These demands are not usually legally binding, but few agency or department heads will ignore them.

-  B) Since the 1930s, Congress has rarely used the 'legislative veto' to limit executive-branch discretionary authority.

No, since 1932, Congress has inserted a 'legislative veto' provision into several hundred congressional statutes. Such a statute authorizes the executive-branch department or agency to engage in some activity but makes that authorization contingent upon later disapproval by a prescribed vote majority in either a committee, chamber, or both houses of Congress that is not subject to presidential veto.


Explanation: An example is the War Powers Act of 1973 that says that the president may commit U.S. military forces to foreign combat for a maximum of 60 days without a majority of both houses of Congress either declaring war or authorizing the continuation of the undeclared war. If Congress fails to provide that required vote, then the president has an additional 30 days to safely withdraw U.S. forces from the combat zone.

Congress does not have to wait the full 60 days to vote. And, it can, by a simple majority vote of both houses, order the president to withdraw U.S. forces from the combat zone.

-  C) In a 1983 case, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the 'legislative veto' was unconstitutional because it was not subject to a presidential veto like other legislation.
Since 1983, Congress has ignored the Supreme-Court ruling and passed a number of new laws that contain legislative veto provisions. So far, no one has challenged this in the courts.

Explanation: The explanation seems to be that presidents and bureaucrats like being granted broad discretionary authority that Congress rarely reigns in by invoking the legislative-veto option, so they are not going to bring suit.

Interest groups (whether liberal or conservative) have not brought suit, either. As we have seen, both liberal and conservative interests are served by 'activist' departments and agencies that make use of discretionary authority to advance and subsidize clientele interests.

-  D) Since 1792, congressional investigations of the bureaucracy have been a regular feature of U.S. politics.


The power of Congress to investigate the executive branch is not enumerated in the Constitution – it is one of those implied powers claimed by Congress as 'necessary and proper' to carrying out its enumerated power to make the laws.

Explanation:

As we saw in Chapter 8, the president and his principal subordinates sometimes refuse to answer specific congressional inquiries on the grounds of executive privilege.

-  E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.


Question 9) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

-  A) Bureaucratic malfunctioning is not exclusive to government.


All sorts of large organizations – business, professional, religious, recreational, etc. – exhibit similar pathologies.

Explanation:


Nor are bureaucratic pathologies exclusive to the civilian government. The military exhibits all of the same pathologies.

-  B) The common pathologies found in government bureaucracies are counteracted by the dispersion of power that defines our system of government.

Explanation: No, quite the opposite. Our federal-presidential system of government makes bureaucratic pathologies worse than they would be in unitary-parliamentary systems. Mission conflict and duplication as well as bureaucratic imperialism all result because Congress, in setting up agencies and programs, is responding to conflicting interests in society by often asking the bureaucracy to achieve large numbers of different, partially inconsistent, goals. Certainly, the red tape and waste in the federal bureaucracy is exacerbated by the dispersion of power and representation in our federal and presidential system.

-  C) The common malfunctions found in government (and non-governmental) bureaucracies are caused or made worse by the self-interest and shortsightedness universal to human nature.

Explanation: The self-interested cooperation of bureaucrats, interest groups, and congressional committees is what produces and perpetuates the 'iron triangles' discussed earlier.

-  D) There is an inverse relationship between reducing 'red tape' and solving any of the other major forms of bureaucratic pathology.

Explanation: For example, reducing red tape can be achieved only at the cost of making duplication and waste harder to prevent or punish.

-  E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.