

## CHAPTER 21

# Environmental Policy

### OBJECTIVES

This chapter presents several case studies, focusing on the different coalitions that mobilize in response to different environmental problems. After reading and reviewing the material in this chapter, the student should be able to do the following:

1. List three reasons why environmental policy tends to be so controversial and provide examples of each.
2. Describe the role of (a) the United States political system and (b) local politics in shaping environmental policy. Contrast these with environmental policy-making in Britain.
3. Describe the role of entrepreneurial politics in the government's response to global warming.
4. Describe the role of majoritarian politics in the government's efforts to reduce automobile emissions. Explain why majoritarian politics has worked in some cases and not in others.
5. Describe the role of interest-group politics in the government's efforts to resolve the acid rain controversy. List proposed alternative solutions and outline the terms of the compromise reached by Congress and the Bush administration.
6. Describe the role of client politics in the government's efforts to regulate the use of agricultural pesticides and logging in U.S. forests.

### OVERVIEW

Environmental issues illustrate all four styles of policy-making.

*Entrepreneurial politics:* an unorganized public benefits at the expense of a well-organized group. The controversy surrounding global warming and the success of activists seeking to reduce its effects, reveals the workings of entrepreneurial politics. These politics require mobilizing the media, dramatizing the issue, and convincing members of Congress that their reputations will suffer if they do not cast the right vote. To prevent client groups from directing how the laws will be implemented, the bills must be written so that the courts can be used to force action.

*Majoritarian politics:* an unorganized public benefits at its own expense. Examples of these politics include reducing car emissions, raising gasoline taxes, and requiring environmental impact statements. Interest groups tend not to be decisive players. Whether the proposal wins or loses depends on how the public evaluates the costs. Restrictions on the use of private cars and increased gasoline taxes, for example, are not popular. In recent years, the same is often true for environmental impact statements.

*Interest-group politics:* two organized groups with a material stake in the outcome fight over who will pay and who will benefit. Acid rain is an example of these politics. When confronted with interest-group politics, Congress tends to find workable compromises, rather than passing more sweeping legislation.

*Client politics:* an organized group gets a benefit and an unorganized public must pay. Logging in the national forests often generates client politics. These depend on each group having strategically placed allies in Congress and on preempting any effort to generate entrepreneurial politics.

In general, entrepreneurial politics has played the dominant role in most environmental issues. This is because the issues can be portrayed in life-threatening terms, the goals can be related to what most people believe is the good life; and the costs can be minimized, deferred, or placed (seemingly) on small groups. As a result, policy entrepreneurs have been very successful in sensitizing the public to environmental issues, building a momentum into their messages. Also, a variety of public-interest groups have established themselves, each with close ties to the media and each with the ability to threaten recalcitrant legislators.

## CHAPTER OUTLINE WITH KEYED-IN RESOURCES

- I. Introduction
  - A. Environmental policy: why is it so controversial?
    1. Creates both winners and losers
      - a) Losers may not want to pay the costs
      - b) Example: auto emissions control
    2. Shrouded in scientific uncertainty so problems and solutions are uncertain
      - a) Example: greenhouse effect
      - b) Scientists do not know how large the greenhouse effect is, and what should be done about it
    3. Takes the form of entrepreneurial politics
      - a) Encourages emotional appeals
      - b) May lead to distorted priorities
      - c) Example: the possibility that cancer is caused by pesticides receives a higher profile than does pollution-causing runoff from farms and towns
    4. Profoundly affects how federal government deals with states and other nations
      - a) States have passed more than 36 laws to lower emission of various greenhouse gases
      - b) Government participated in drafting 1997 Kyoto Protocol calling for 5% worldwide reduction in greenhouse gases
        - (1) Clinton administration never pushed for Senate ratification of treaty
        - (2) Treaty allows several countries to keep generating gases, but requires a 25% decrease in U.S. by 2012
- II. The American context (THEME A: THE POLITICS OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION)
  - A. Environmental policy is shaped by unique features of United States politics
    1. In U.S., policy has the following characteristics:
      - a) Adversarial political culture
      - b) Rules are often uniform nationally (e.g., auto emissions)
      - c) Many regulators and rules, strict deadlines, and expensive technologies required
      - d) Government and business often conflict
      - e) Example: Clean Air Act took thirteen years to revise in Congress (1977–1990)
    2. In England, policy has the following characteristics:
      - a) Rules are flexible and regional
      - b) Compliance is voluntary, it does not rely on formal enforcement
      - c) Government and business cooperate
      - d) Policies are effective
    3. In the U.S., implementing environmental policy depends heavily on states
      - a) Methods to achieve standards are left to states, subject to federal control
      - b) Local politics influences allocations
        - (1) Sewage treatment plants are designed, built and operated by states
        - (2) States decide where to dispose of radioactive waste

- c) Federalism reinforces adversarial politics
  - d) Separation of powers provides multiple points of access
- III. Entrepreneurial politics: global warming
  - A. Environmental movement increased its momentum in the 1960s
    - 1. Santa Barbara oil spill (1969), Earth Day (1970), an aroused public
    - 2. Numerous legislative successes
      - a) 1970: Environmental Protection Agency established, Clean Air Act passed
      - b) 1972: Clean water legislation passed
      - c) 1973: Endangered Species Act passed
  - B. Global warming raises policy problems
    - 1. Science community is deeply divided over this problem
    - 2. Activists have been more influential than scientists, to date
  - C. Endangered Species Act also generates economic problems
    - 1. Forbids buying or selling any creature or plant that is likely to become extinct unless it receives special protection
    - 2. Regulations also forbid adversely affecting habitats of endangered species
    - 3. Firms and agencies that wish to build anything in an area where an endangered species lives must comply with these regulations, often at a substantial cost
- IV. Majoritarian politics: pollution from automobiles (THEME B: TRANSPORTATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT)
  - A. Clean Air Act (1970) imposed tough restrictions
    - 1. Public demanded improvements—initially, entrepreneurial politics
    - 2. 1975: 90 percent reduction of hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide
    - 3. 1976: 90 percent reduction in nitrogen oxides, as well
    - 4. Led to a reliance on catalytic converters, because there was not enough time to redesign the engines
  - B. Emergence of majoritarian politics in auto pollution
    - 1. States were required to restrict the public use of cars
      - a) If auto emissions controls were insufficient—L.A., Denver, New York, etc.—then car pools, gas rationing, parking bans
      - b) Efforts failed: opposition too great
      - c) Congress and EPA backed down, postponing deadlines
    - 2. Consumers, auto industry, and unions objected to standards for new cars
      - a) Cars were now more expensive
      - b) Catalytic converters caused a loss of horsepower
      - c) Car industry feared a loss of competitiveness
      - d) Unions feared a loss of jobs
    - 3. Clean Air Act was weakened in 1977 but revived in 1990 with tougher standards; deadlines were again delayed
    - 4. Most clean air laws passed since 1990 target particular industries (e.g., construction, agriculture)
  - C. Public will support tough laws
    - 1. When someone else pays
    - 2. If costs are hidden (e.g., more expensive cars)
    - 3. But not if they have to change habits (e.g., car pools)
  - D. Majoritarian politics when people believe costs are low
    - 1. Example: National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)
    - 2. Requires environmental impact statement (EIS)
    - 3. Does not require specific action
    - 4. Passed Congress with overwhelming support

5. But encouraged numerous lawsuits that block or delay projects
6. Popular support remains strong because costs appear low, benefits high
- E. Majoritarian politics when people believe the costs are high
  1. Example: Increased gasoline taxes
    - a) Would discourage driving, save fuel, reduce smog
    - b) Most would pay, most would benefit
    - c) But costs come long before benefits
    - d) And benefits may not be obvious
  2. Easier to raise gas tax if benefits are concrete, such as highways, bridges, a reduction in the federal deficit
- V. Interest-group politics: acid rain
  - A. Source of acid rain
    1. Burning of high-sulfur coal in midwestern factories
    2. Winds carry sulfuric acid eastward
    3. Rains bring acid to earth
  - B. Effects of acid rain
    1. Acidification of lakes in East
    2. Destruction of forests in East
    3. Long-term and some short-term effects are unclear
  - C. Regional battle
    1. East versus Midwest, Canada versus the United States
    2. Midwestern businesses deny blame and costs
  - D. Solutions and compromises
    1. One alternative is to burn low-sulfur coal
      - a) Effective but expensive
      - b) Low-sulfur coal comes from West, high-sulfur is local to Midwest factories
    2. Another alternative is to install smokestack scrubbers
      - a) Costly, not always effective, and leaves sludge
      - b) But scrubbers allow the use of cheap high-sulfur coal
    3. Congress voted for scrubbers for all new plants
      - a) Including those that burned low-sulfur coal
      - b) Even if plant was next to low-sulfur coal mine
    4. Political advantages
      - a) Protected jobs of high-sulfur coal miners who had powerful allies in Congress
      - b) Environmentalists preferred scrubbers as a solution to problem
      - c) Scrubber manufacturers preferred scrubbers
      - d) Eastern governors preferred scrubbers because these made their plants less likely to close and move west
    5. Practical disadvantages
      - a) Failed to allow for plants that burn low-sulfur coal
      - b) Scrubbers didn't work well
    6. Stalemate for thirteen years
    7. Two-step regulation proposed by Bush became part of the Clean Air Act of 1990
      - a) Before 1995: some plants could choose their approach to reducing emissions by a fixed amount
      - b) 1995–2000: sharper reductions for many more plants, requiring the use of some scrubbers
      - c) Sulfur dioxide allowances could be bought and sold
      - d) Financial compensation provided for coal miners who lose jobs

- E. Interest-group politics also affects other environmental issues
  1. Example: zoning regulations and land-use controls
  2. Established residents oppose developers
- F. New interest groups
  1. More fervent and committed than ever, with a stake in current policy
  2. Able to block policy change
  3. Examples
    - a) Environmental protection industry: makes products designed to improve the environment
    - b) Environmental Defense Fund
  4. Momentum remains with policy entrepreneurs
- VI. Client politics: agricultural pesticides
  - A. Issue: use and runoff of pesticides
    1. Farmers have mostly resisted policy entrepreneurs
    2. DDT is the exception
  - B. EPA efforts to evaluate safety of all pesticides
    1. Given mandate by Congress in 1972
    2. Program has not succeeded
      - a) Too many pesticides to evaluate
        - (1) Many have only long-term effects, which require extended study
        - (2) Expensive and time-consuming to evaluate
      - b) Benefits of pesticides may outweigh harm
    3. Political complications
      - a) Farmers are well represented in Congress
      - b) Subsidies often encourage overproduction and that also encourages overuse of pesticides
      - c) Damage is hard to see and dramatize
    4. EPA budget for reviewing pesticides is kept small
    5. Few pesticides have been removed from market
      - a) Only those receiving heavy media coverage like DDT in 1972—entrepreneurial politics
      - b) Aided by scientific research that suggests human health effects are minimal
  - C. Timber industry also has client politics
    1. Issues: access to U.S. Forest Service timber, clear-cutting, harvesting old-growth forests
    2. Congress has supported loggers
      - a) Forest Service has been forced to sell harvesting rights at below-market prices
      - b) Subsidizes industry
    3. Endangered species (spotted owl) has become a way for policy entrepreneurs to stop clear-cutting
- VII. The environmental uncertainties
  - A. Why is a coherent environmental policy so difficult to formulate and affect?
    1. Many environmental problems are not clear-cut
    2. Goals are often unclear
    3. Means of achieving goals (command and control strategy) are complicated
      - a) Local circumstances
      - b) Technological problems
      - c) Economic costs

- B. Examples of EPA and politics
1. What is the problem?
    - a) EPA is not left alone to define problem
    - b) Scandals and congressional demands can shift priorities
  2. What are the costs and benefits?
    - a) People do not distinguish between realistic and unrealistic threats, reasonable and unreasonable costs
    - b) Difficult to keep policy focused on real risks, not diverted by unfounded popular concerns
  3. What are our goals?
    - a) Many are completely unrealistic
    - b) EPA is forced to ask for extensions and revisions
    - c) Enforcement agencies therefore seem to be giving in to industries
  4. How do we achieve our goals?
    - a) Rules have been replaced by incentives
      - (1) Offsets
      - (2) Bubble standard
      - (3) Pollution allowances (or banks)
    - b) Complaints about command-and-control strategy are now coming from environmental groups and government
      - (1) Clinton administration reexamined old approaches
      - (2) People are learning from experience

#### VIII. The results

- A. Environment has improved since 1970 in some aspects
  1. Less air pollution—less carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, lead
  2. May be less water pollution but harder to judge
- B. Hazardous wastes remain a problem

## WEB RESOURCES

Environmental Defense Fund: <http://www.environmentaldefense.org/home.cfm>

Environmental Defense Scorecard: <http://www.scorecard.org/>

Greenpeace USA: <http://www.greenpeaceusa.org/>

Sierra Club: <http://www.sierraclub.org/>

U.S. Department of Energy: <http://www.energy.gov/>

U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Environmental Management:  
<http://www.em.doe.gov/index4.html>

U.S. Department of Transportation: <http://www.dot.gov/>

U.S. Department of the Interior: <http://www.doi.gov/>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: <http://www.epa.gov/>

## RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

**When do we care about the environment?** Page 564 lists the major environmental laws of the United States. Ask students to research the passage of these laws, in order to see what circumstances bring environmental concerns onto the policy agenda and what kinds of politics facilitate the passage of environmental protection legislation. Then consider the other side of this issue: Why did it take thirteen years to amend the Clean Air Act? (See also Figure 21.1).

**How should we dispose of nuclear waste?** In the United States, as in other nations throughout the world, disposing of nuclear waste creates a major policy problem. Scientists have been working for many years to create a national disposal site at Yucca Mountain in Nevada, but this site has many problems. Two Native American tribes claim to own the land on which the dump is located, environmentalists and engineers question the design of the holding facility, and Nevada state residents object to the presence of such a storage facility less than two hours outside Las Vegas. If we don't store materials at Yucca Mountain, then where should be put them? What are the implications of this decision for the future of nuclear power?

**Do we develop our own fossil fuel reserves or depend on those of other nations?** As students study the map, entitled "The Politics of Energy: Sources of Fossil Fuels in the United States," ask them to think about the regions in which these resources are located? What will be the effects of extractive industries on the local economies and local environments? What priority should be assigned to the economy versus the environment? And how do these values relate to foreign policy matters of energy, fuel dependence, and international trade?

## IMPORTANT TERMS

- \*acid rain** Rain, snow, or dust particles containing sulfuric (or nitric) acid which fall onto land. One source is from burning fuel, especially coal, with a high-sulfur content. The problem is most critical in the midwestern and Great Lakes region, where steel mills and power plants emit sulfuric fumes that are carried eastward by prevailing winds. Acid rain is blamed for turning many lakes in the eastern United States and Canada acidic as well as for killing forests.
- \*bubble standard** An incentive devised by the Environmental Protection Agency to replace some rules. It refers to the total amount of air pollution which can come from a given factory. A company is free to decide which specific sources of pollution within the factory must be reduced and how to meet the standard.
- \*Clean Air Act** A federal statute passed in 1970 which imposed tough restrictions on the amount of pollutants emitted by automobile tail pipes. A second provision required states to develop land use and transportation rules to help attain air quality standards. The revision of the act in 1990 set new, tougher auto emission control standards but pushed the compliance deadline back to 1995. In addition, the 1990 law requires power plants to reduce their emissions of sulfur in two phases, with power plants nationwide contributing to the cost.
- \*command and control strategy** A strategy to improve air and water quality, involving the setting of detailed pollution standards and rules.
- \*Earth Day** A national event in 1970 which signified the birth of the environmental movement and has since been observed annually. It generated much publicity and applied pressure on Congress.
- \*environmental impact statement** A report required by federal law that assesses the possible effect of a project on the environment.
- \*Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** The federal agency responsible for administering pollution and environmental programs.

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| <b>*National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)</b> | A federal statute enacted in 1969 which requires federal agencies to prepare environmental impact statements before undertaking activities that will “significantly” affect the quality of the human environment. The law requires only a statement rather than some specific action. Opponents of government-sponsored projects have used this law to block or delay many projects. |
| <b>*offsets</b>                                  | An incentive devised by the Environmental Protection Agency to replace some rules. If a company wants to open a new plant in an area with polluted air, it can do so if the pollution it generates is offset by a reduction in pollution from another source in that area. To get that reduction, the new company may buy an existing company and close it down.                     |
| <b>*pollution allowances or banks</b>            | An incentive devised by the Environmental Protection Agency to replace some rules. If a company reduces its polluting emissions by more than the law requires, it can either use these reductions to cover a future plant expansion or sell them to another company as an offset.  |
| <b>*scrubber</b>                                 | A complicated and expensive device that removes sulfurous fumes from gas before it leaves a smokestack. This technology is one means of addressing the problem of acid rain.   |
| <b>*Water Quality Improvement Act</b>            | A federal statute passed in 1970 which made oil companies liable for up to \$14 million in clean-up costs for oil spills. A bill passed in 1972 enacted even tougher new standards and deadlines for reducing water pollution.   |

## THEME A: THE POLITICS OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

### Instructor Resources

Thomas C. Beierle and Jerry Cayford, *Democracy in Practice: Public Participation in Environmental Decisions*. Resources for the Future, 2002.

Brian Czech and Paul R. Krausman, *The Endangered Species Act: History, Conservation Biology, and Public Policy*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

John Dryzek, Daid Downs, Hans-Kristian Hernes, and David Schlosberg, *Green States and Social Movements: Environmentalism in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, and Norway*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck, *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*. North Point Press, 2000.

A. Denny Ellerman, Paul L. Joskow, Richard Schmalensee, eds., *Markets for Clean Air: The U.S. Acid Rain Program*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Frank Fischer, *Citizens, Experts, and the Environment: The Politics of Local Knowledge*. Duke University Press, 2000.

Clark C. Gibson, Margaret A. McKean, and Elinor Ostrom, eds., *People and Forests: Communities, Institutions, and Governance*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.

Otis L. Graham, Jr., ed., *Environmental Politics and Policy, 1960s to 1990s*. Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000.

Joe Hermer, *Regulating Eden: The Nature of Order in North American Parks*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.



Walter J. Hickel, *Crisis in the Commons: The Alaska Solution*. Institute for Contemporary Studies, 2002.

Tomas M. Koontz, *Federalism in the Forest: National Versus State Natural Resource Policy*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002.

James Howard Kunstler, *The Long Emergency*. Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2005.

Judith A. Layzer, *The Environmental Case: Translating Values into Policy*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2002.

James P. Lester, David W. Allen, and Kelly M. Hill, *Environmental Injustice in the United States*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000.

William M. Lewis, Jr., *Wetlands Explained: Wetland Science, Policy, and Politics in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Brian O'Neill, ed., *Population and Global Warming*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Kate O'Neill, *Waste Trading Among Rich Nations: Building a New Theory of Environmental Regulation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.

Byron E. Pearson, *Still the Wild River Runs: The Congress, the Sierra Club, and the Fight to Save Grand Canyon*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2002.

Edwardo Lao Rhodes, *Environmental Justice in America: A New Paradigm*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.

Lawrence S. Rothenberg, *Environmental Choices: Policy Choices to Green Demands*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2002.

Joseph L. Sax, *Mountains Without Handrails: Reflections on the National Parks*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1980.

Wallace Stegner, *The American West as Living Space*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1987.

John D. Wirth, *Smelter Smoke in North America: The Politics of Transborder Pollution*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000.

## Summary

The federal government has typically been the pacesetter in environmental policy by establishing uniform national standards with strict compliance deadlines, resulting in an adversarial relationship between the government and the chief polluters—businesses. Congress allows the implementation of its policies to be determined at the local level, and federalism thus reinforces the adversarial nature of environmental politics as states and cities fight over standards. The mechanics of environmental policy-making vary, however, with the type of politics involved: entrepreneurial (global warming), majoritarian (automobile pollution), interest-group (acid rain), or client (timber harvests).

**Instructor's Note:** This Theme works well with three boxes: (1) *Major Environmental Laws*, (2) *What Would You Do* exercise on Endangered Species, and (3) the *Who Governs? To What Ends?* Box: Law and Superfund.

## Discussion Questions

1. The text does not, of course, discuss each major environmental issue. What type of politics (client, majoritarian, etc.) is involved in the disposal of toxic wastes? Recycling?

2. Why didn't Congress or the president invite businesses to assist in devising environmental regulations, as occurred in England? How could the participation of business leaders in England result in a greater degree of improvement in water quality, compared with the United States, where businesses were excluded?
3. Should a national pollution standard be established? How could such a standard be formulated, so that clean areas could sustain their high quality of air and water, while polluted areas would be able to correct some of the damage?

## THEME B: TRANSPORTATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

### Instructor Resources

Robert D. Bullard, Glenn S. Johnson, and Angel O. Torres, eds., *Sprawl City: Race, Politics, and Planning in Atlanta*. Island Press, 2000.

Jack Doyle, *Taken for a Ride: Detroit's Big Three and the Politics of Air Pollution*. Four Walls, Eight Windows Press, 2000.

Arthur S. DeVany et al, *The Inland Waterways: Institutions, Economics, and Policy*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2002.

Marq De Villiers, *Water: The Fate of Our Most Precious Resource*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000.

Robert Jay Dilger and Stanley H. Brandes, *American Transportation Policy*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003.

Jane Holtz Kay, *Asphalt Nation*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Sikivu Hutchinson, *Imagining Transit: Race, Gender, and Transportation Politics in Los Angeles*. Peter Lang Publishing, 2002.

Howard James Kunstler, *Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-made Landscapes*. New York: Free Press, 1994.

Lucinda Lewis, *Roadside America: The Automobile and the American Dream*. Harry N. Abrams Publisher, 2000.

Jim Motavalli, *Breaking Gridlock: Moving Toward Transportation That Works*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001.

Jonathan Y. Richmond, *The Private Provision of Public Transport*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Nick Robinson, *The Politics of Agenda Setting: The Car and the Shaping of Public Policy*. Ashgate Publishing Company, 2000.

Eduardo A. Vasconcellos, *Urban Transport, Environment, and Equity*. Earthscan Publications, Ltd., 2001.

Erik Verhoef and Eran Feitelson, eds., *Transport and Environment: In Search of Sustainable Solutions*. Edward Elgar Publications, 2001.

Geoff Vigar, *Transport, Environmental Politics, and Public Safety*. New York: Routledge, 2001.

## Summary

Much of environmental policy is connected to the nation's transportation system, especially to the use of automobiles. A host of environmental problems can be associated with cars: (1) the greenhouse effect, (2) ozone depletion, and (3) smog. These issues will be difficult to solve anytime soon. Almost 150 million vehicles are operating in the United States, and the number of cars in use is increasing faster than the rate of population growth. A crisis is also looming from the perspective of land availability; the amount of land nationwide devoted to parking lots is larger than the size of the state of Georgia.

If anything, the situation will worsen, for two reasons. First, Americans are driving more, and transportation accounts for a growing proportion of the nation's oil consumption. The second factor contributing to the persistence of automobile pollution is the country's transportation policy. In February 1991, President George H.W. Bush proposed a \$105 billion transportation program that focuses on upgrading highways and limiting funds for mass transit. The Clinton administration followed in the lead of the Bush administration, at least in this policy area. The future is committed to the automobile.

Automobile pollution is an issue of majoritarian politics because everyone benefits from clean air, while car owners will be required to finance any policy to address the problem. The political dilemma is getting the public to support tough laws. From past experience, the public will tolerate anti-pollution policies when costs are hidden (e.g., installation of catalytic converters) but will resist policies demanding a change in driving habits (e.g., car pools). When costs are high, public support can be rallied by linking a tax increase to a concrete project, such as a bridge or highway. As with any majoritarian policy, the role of the president is crucial in the adoption of a proposal.

## Discussion Questions

1. Why is the car such an integral aspect of the American lifestyle? Under what circumstances are cars less important to citizens?
2. What would be the principal elements of an environmentally sensitive, popularly acceptable transportation policy. How could citizens be encouraged to choose environmentally healthy ways of meeting their transportation needs? For example, several urban areas have special express lanes for cars with three passengers or more, and also allow carpooling drivers to pay lower tolls. What other innovations can be designed to encourage conservation?
3. Could a policy to build mass transit systems in metropolitan areas be affected by majoritarian politics, since the benefits may not be widely distributed due to the number of cars already in operation? Is mass transit doomed because most beneficiaries would be poor?