

# Introducing Government

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# Young People and Politics

- Young people have a low sense of **political efficacy**—the belief that political participation matters and can make a difference.
- Young people are the most active members of their communities but have less interest in politics than older generations.



# Government

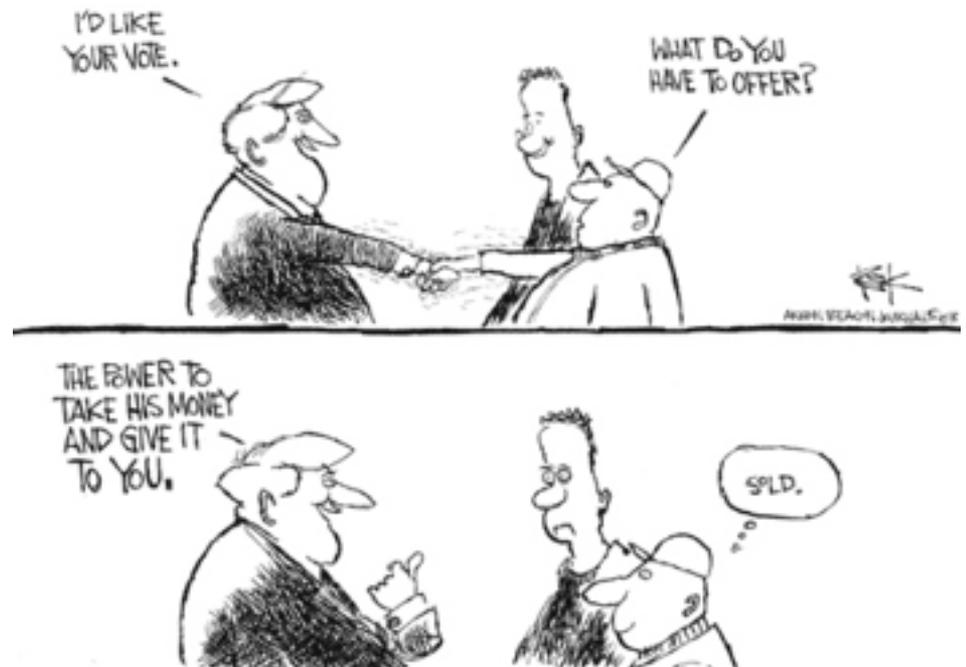
- Definition:
  - Institutions (Executive, Legislative, Judicial, Bureaucracy) that make policy



"Hi — I'm from the Government,  
and I'm here to help you."

# Politics

- Definition:
  - The process by which we select our government leaders and what policies these leaders produce. Politics produces authoritative decisions about public issues.



# The Policy Making Process

- Policy Making Involves:
  - Individuals or groups identify a problem
  - The problem becomes part of the policy agenda
  - Congress passes legislation
  - The bureaucracy implements it
  - Feedback leads to revisions

# Linkage Institutions

- Political Parties
- Elections
- Media
- Interest Groups  
(including single issue groups)



# Policy Agenda

The issues that government is addressing at a point in time

- ▣ Items at the top of the policy agenda are taken care of first.
- ▣ It may take years to get an item on the policy agenda and then several more years to enact policy.



# Implementation

- Once policy is implemented, feedback occurs:
  - Effective or ineffective?
  - Are the resources available?
  - Does the policy need to be revised/clarified?



# Democracy

- Definition:

- A system with free and fair elections and civil rights and liberties.

- Equality in voting

- Effective participation

- Enlightened understanding

- Citizen control of the agenda

- Inclusion

# Theories of U.S. Democracy...

## ▣ Pluralist Theory

- ▣ A theory of government and policies emphasizing that politics is mainly a competition among groups, each one pressing for its own preferred policies.

▣ Groups will work together

▣ Public interest will prevail



# Bowling Alone

- In *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam argues that American civil society is threatened by a decline in group-based participation



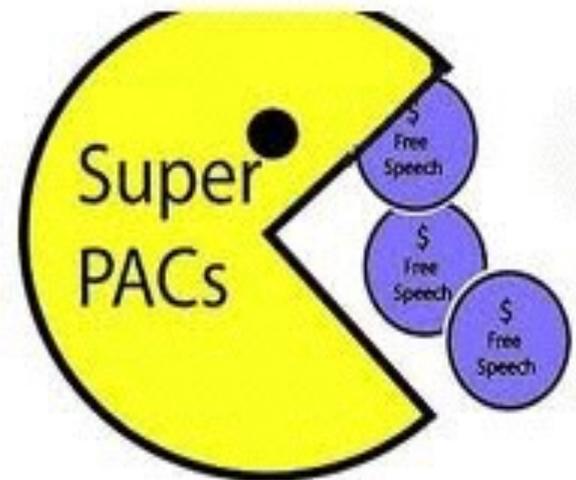
# Theories of U.S. Democracy...

- Elite and Class Theory
  - A theory of government and politics contending that societies are divided along class lines and that an upper-class elite will rule.
  - Policies benefit those with money / power



# Elite and Class Theory

- A super PAC is a political-action committee that is allowed to raise and spend unlimited amounts of money from corporations, unions, individuals and associations. Some nonprofit groups are allowed to contribute to super PACs without disclosing where their money came from.



# Political Culture

- **Political culture** is the set of shared values within American society.
- Americans share a commitment to democratic government.

# Republican Government

- The United States is a **republic**, where representatives are elected to carry out citizens' preferences.

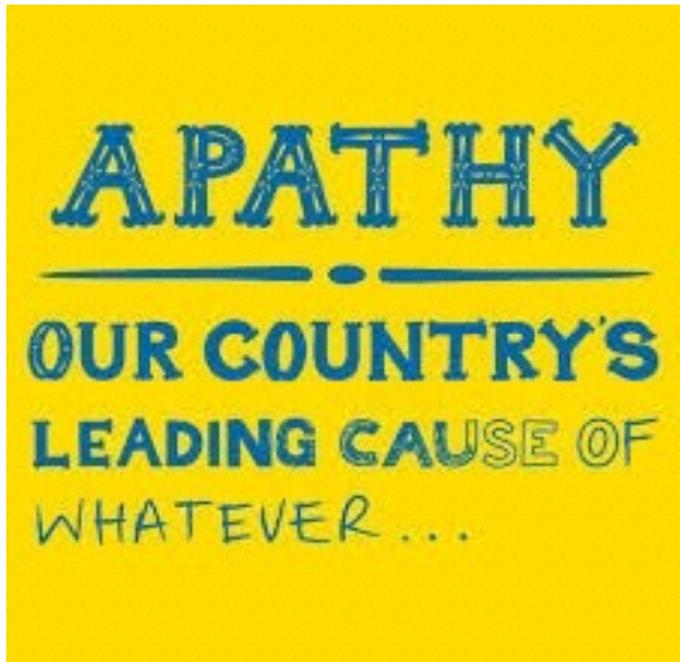


# Challenges to Democracy

- ❑ Increased Technological Complexity
- ❑ Limited Participation in Government
- ❑ Escalating Campaign Costs
- ❑ Diverse Political Interests



# Questions About Democracy



- Are the people knowledgeable enough about government?
- Is low voter turnout a threat to democracy?
- Do political parties meet the needs of most American voters?

# Questions about the Scope of Government

- ❑ Does a bigger, more involved (active) government limit the people's freedoms?
- ❑ Do we need a bigger, more involved government to protect our freedoms?



# Questions about the Scope of Government, continued...

- Does the media adequately inform citizens of what is happening in government?

