

## APGoPo Unit 6

# CONTROLLING THE BUREAUCRACY CONGRESSIONAL INFLUENCE

***Congress has a great amount of power over the bureaucracy because Congress can exercise legislative oversight.***

**What are the numerous ways in which Congress can exercise "oversight" of the bureaucracy?**

- ***Creation of agencies***
  - Constitutional power to create and abolish executive departments and independent agencies, or to transfer their functions
- ***Advice and consent***
  - Congress can influence the appointment of agency heads
  - The Senate has the power to confirm presidential appointments
- ***Appropriations of agency budgets***
  - Congress determines how much money each agency gets
- ***Annual authorization legislation***
  - No agency may spend money unless it has first been authorized by Congress
  - Authorization legislation originates in a congressional committee and states the maximum amount of money that an agency may spend on a given program
  - Even if funds have been authorized, Congress must also appropriate the money
- ***Rewriting legislation***
  - If they wish to restrict the power of an agency, Congress may rewrite legislation or make it more detailed
  - The more detailed the instructions, the better able Congress is to restrict the agency's power
- ***Duplication***
  - Giving any one job to more than one agency, keeping any single agency from becoming all powerful
  - For example, drug trafficking is the task of the Customs Services, the FBI, the DEA, the Border Patrol, and the Department of Defense
  - Keeps any one agency from becoming all-powerful
- ***Holding hearings and conducting investigations***
  - Congress can call bureaucrats to testify before committees and subcommittees to determine whether the agency is complying with congressional intent
  - Congress can investigate agencies
- ***Reorganization***
  - By realigning or restructuring departments, agencies and their responsibilities, Congress can contain costs, reduce bureaucratic overlap and improve accountability.
- ***Sunset laws***
  - Provides for the law to cease to have effect after a specific date, unless further legislative action is taken to extend the law
  - Sunset laws create a finite lifespan for a bureaucratic agency
  - In order to be reauthorized, these bureaucracies must prove their effectiveness and merit

**What are the limits on congressional influence?**

- Congress may not really want to clamp down on the bureaucracy:
  - Members profit politically from the existence of federal programs within their states or districts (e.g., military base closure)
  - Easier for Congress to simply pass broadly worded laws and have experts within the bureaucracy fill in the holes
  - No electoral payoff; Political ramifications
  - Oversight is labor intensive/hard work; Lack of technical expertise
  - Congress creates opportunities for casework through red tape
  - Congress lacks expertise/agencies have expertise
  - Congress does not want to be blamed for bad policy
  - Time-consuming