

# **Policy Formulation: Agenda Setting**



## **PHC 6102**

Principles of Health Policy and Management

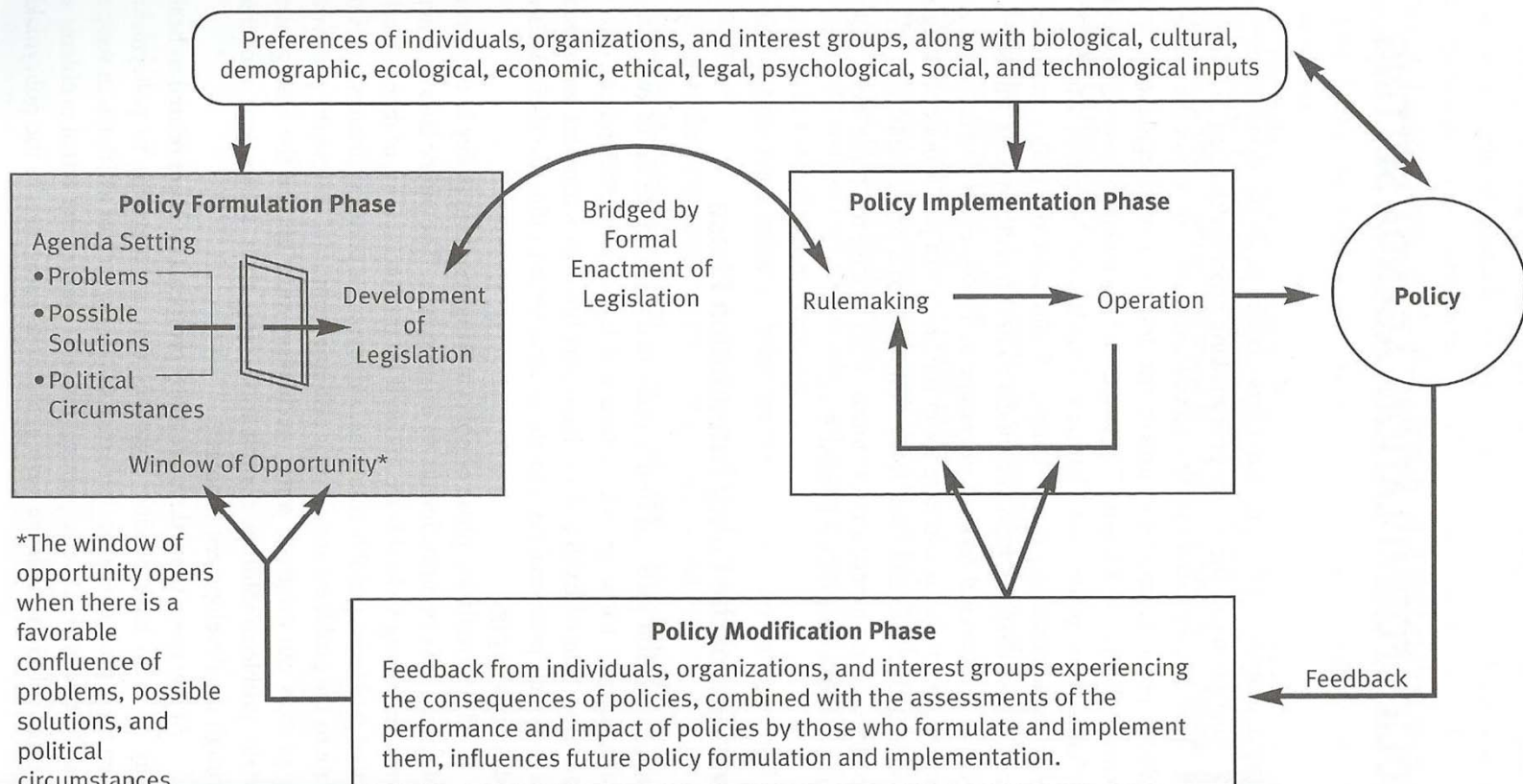
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# Objectives

- Describe the agenda setting of the policy formulation phase of the policymaking process
- Describe how decisions are made about possible solutions in agenda setting Describe the nature of problems that drive health policy agenda setting
- Describe interest group involvement in agenda setting

# Overview of the Policy Formulation Phase

**EXHIBIT 3.1** A Model of the Public Policymaking Process in the United States: Agenda Setting in the Policy Formulation Phase



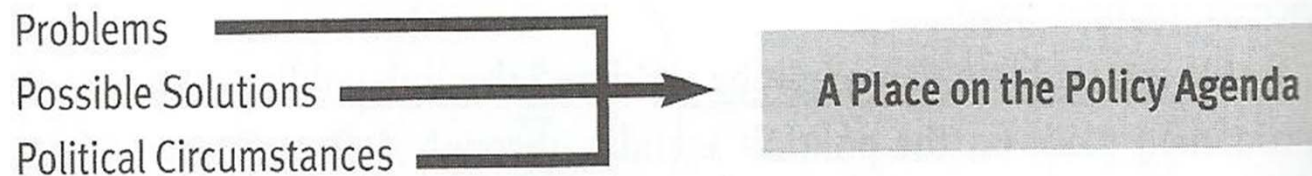
# Agenda Setting

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Health Policymaking in the United States

## EXHIBIT 3.2

Agenda Setting  
as the  
Confluence  
of Problems,  
Possible  
Solutions,  
and Political  
Circumstances



# Problems that Drive Policy Formulation

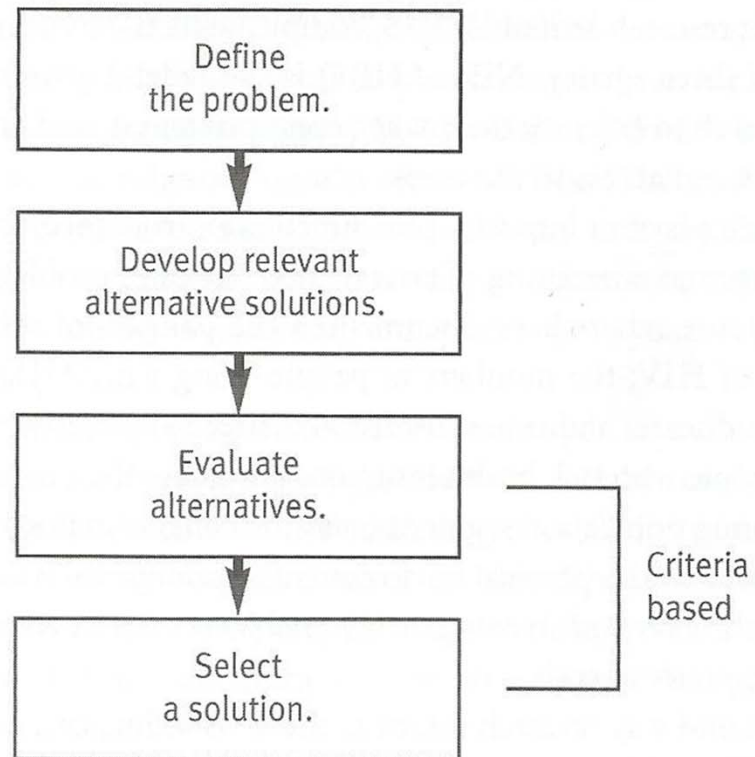
- **Those policymakers broadly identify as important and urgent**
  - Depends on its public salience & the degree of group conflict surrounding it (salience must be high & conflict low)
- **Trends in certain variables reach unacceptable levels**
  - E.g., growth in number of uninsured & cost escalation in the Medicare program
- **Those spotlighted by widespread applicability or impact on a small group but powerful**
  - High cost of prescription medications
- **Those linked to other problems that already occupy secure place on agenda**
  - Cost escalation in Medicare & growth of the federal deficit

# Possible Solutions in the Policy Formulation

- Existence of possible solutions to problems help determines agenda setting
  - Well-conducted health services provides policymakers with facts that might affect their decisions
  - Research plays an important documentation role through the gathering, cataloging, and correlating of facts related to health problems and issues
  - Research informs, and thus influences, the health policy agenda through analyses to determine which solutions may work

# Making Decisions About Alternative Possible Solutions

**EXHIBIT 3.3**  
The Rational  
Model of  
Decision  
Making



# Political Circumstances that Drive Agenda Setting

- Political circumstances surrounding any problems/potential solutions include
  - Relevant public attitude, concerns, and opinions
  - The preferences and relative ability to influence political decisions of various groups interested in the problem
  - The positions of involved key policymakers in the executive and legislative branches of government



# Interest Group Involvement in Agenda Setting

- **Lobbying**
  - Communicating with policymakers to influence their decisions to be more favorable to, or at least consistent with the preferences of the lobbyist
- **Electioneering**
  - Using resources at their disposal to aid candidate for political office
- **Litigation**
  - Challenge existing policies, seek to stimulate new policies, or try to alter aspects of the policy implementation in courts
- **Shaping Public Opinion**
  - Creating television, radio, and print advertising that seek to protect and preserve their views or preferences

# Influential Role of Chief Executives in Agenda Setting

- Ability to present a unified position on issues
- Ability to emphasize problems and preferred solutions in a number of ways including press conferences, speeches and addresses
- Ability to appoint special commissions or tasks to address the issue
- They are well-positioned to focus the legislative branch on the development of legislation and to prod legislators to continue their work on a favored issue

# Summary

- The policy formulation phase involves agenda setting and development of legislation
- Agenda setting is the function of the confluence of three streams of activity: problems, possible solutions to those problems, and political circumstances
  - When all three flow together in favorable alignment, a **window of opportunity** opens, allowing a problem/potential solution combination, which might be developed into a new public law, or amendment to an existing law
- Interest groups influence agenda setting by lobbying, electioneering, litigation, and by shaping public opinion
- The chief executive (the president, governor, or mayor) also influence policy agenda by the institutional resources inherent in the executive office

# Questions

- Discuss the formulation phase of policy making in general terms.
- Identify and discuss the three stream of activities in gender setting
- Describe the nature of problems that drive policy formulation
- Describe the ways that interest groups influence agenda setting
- Describe the role of chief executives in agenda setting at the federal level

# Sources

- Longest, B. B. (2010). Health Policymaking in the United States, Health Administration Press.