



AP Government & Politics: United States 1999 Sample Student Responses

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It seems as if the legislative process, especially when money is involved is becoming slower and slower. This is because of the countless barriers, both budgetary and non-budgetary that hinder the creation of new initiatives.

The biggest financial hindrance is the growing amount of ~~mandatory~~ mandatory payments, which will account for 72% of the total federal budget by the year 2003. The biggest chunk of this is in entitlements, a broad category that includes all the money the government must pay out such as Welfare, or Veterans pension. This category not only accounts for most of the federal budget, but it is also growing every year. This is because the population in the United States is growing extremely quickly through both natural growth and immigration. Also, because of the baby boom generation, the population is growing older. Therefore, entitlement payments such as Medicare have been increasing at faster rates.

Another large chunk of the mandatory spending is the payments on interest to the national debt. We are now paying the price for trillions of dollars in debt accumulated in the 1980s. The interest, which must be paid every year now takes billions of dollars. ~~However,~~ This will never go away simply because of the overwhelming magnitude of the public debt. Although, ~~with~~ with a budgetary surplus we are now reducing it, the debt, ~~and~~ and mandatory interest payments are permanent. The way in which mandatory spending hinders new policy is pretty straightforward. Quite simply, it is hard to allocate money for new projects when almost ~~3/4~~ three-fourths of the budget has already been spent covering mandatory costs.

Currently, the greatest non-budgetary hindrance to the creation of new policy initiatives is the political atmosphere. With the 1992 Republican revolution came many bitter and hard feelings. The tactics of Newt Gingrich and the Republican leadership created tension and animosity between the two political parties. It has been a growing trend in the 1990s for votes on legislation to be split exactly along party lines. In these cases,

President Clinton has often ~~exercised~~ exercised his veto power. In cases
of Democratic initiatives - those both rarely leave the Republican Congress.
This bitter gridlock, clearly manifested in the recent impeachment hearings,
allows very little ^{few} effective policy initiatives to pass.

Several barriers exist to hinder the creation of new policy initiatives. Some of these barriers are ~~the~~ budgetary, while others lie in the legislature.

The increase in mandatory spending has increased from less than 30% in 1963 to over ~~30%~~ ~~project~~ 60% in 1993, and a projected 72% ~~for~~ for 2003.

This increase in mandatory spending leaves less flexibility in the budget for new policy initiatives. Reasons for the increase in mandatory spending are because we are a growing nation, we must spend more on social security, and as the deficit grows, money must be used to pay an interest, which is also increasing. The decrease in discretionary spending, as a result in crease in entitlements is another budgetary barrier. The money spent on entitlements, such as social security increases as more people need it. As the baby boomers generation gets older, more money (58.2%) must be spent on entitlements.

One non budgetary barrier to the creation of new policy initiatives is the ineffectiveness and long processes of Congress. Policies have to go through committees, and subcommittees, where they are often killed. Then they have to be presented to the floor, debated, and voted on. This must be done in the House and Senate, and then they must receive presidential approval. ~~The~~ Congress's long processes, as well as pressure from interest groups, hinders the ~~the~~ creation of new policy greatly.

There are many barriers to new policy creation. Many are budgetary. As more money is required to be spent on things like interest and social security, less money can be devoted to new policies. Barriers also lie in our political process, and the way things must go through Congress. These barriers keep new policy from being created; however, most of these problems cannot be changed.

Two budgetary barriers that hinder the creation of new policy initiatives include discretionary spending and entitlement spending. Discretionary spending persists but is declining while entitlement spending is continuing to increase. Discretionary spending is spending on unprecedented policies. It is spending on new policies. This spending persists but declines because there are fewer new policies to fund. Entitlement spending includes spending on ongoing policies. The ongoing policies hinder the creation of new policies because of its continual increase in funding and its lack in remaining funding for other policies.

A new budgetary barrier that hinders the creation of new policy initiative is pressure from interest groups opposing the creation of the new policy. Interest ~~groups~~ groups have such influence that if some oppose a new policy, it will be unlikely to pass. The interest groups are able to have so much influence because of their lobbying and funding ability. They are able to pressure senators, representatives, and other groups onto their position side. They create one obstacle and barrier for the creation of new policy initiatives.