

## POLICY PROJECTS

Students in Public Policy Methods complete policy analyses on randomly assigned issues. Over the course of the semester, they do memorandum exercises intended to help them apply concepts introduced in [Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice](#) to their issues. Near the end of the semester, each student submits a fifteen page policy analysis (exclusive of an executive summary and an *unlimited* number of pages of appendices) to me and to one other student. The other student writes a collegial critique and I prepare a more comprehensive evaluation following a [template](#) that helps me cover important points systematically.

### **Projects for 1997 randomly assigned from the following list:**

Since January 1994 federal law has limited the flush volume of new residential toilets to 1.6 gallons. (The old industry standard was 3.5 gallons per flush.) Some critics have charged that this restriction reduces the level of sanitation and, because of multiple flushes, may have only marginal benefits in terms of reductions of the use of water. Should this law be changed? Client: Chair, U. S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works

Since 1909 Canada and the United States have jointly managed a number of issues with respect to Lake Ontario. An important issue in recent years, especially to those who own property on the lakeshore, is the level of the lake. Please develop and analyze alternative guidelines for setting target levels that can be used by the joint commission that oversees the outflow of lake water. Client: International St. Lawrence River Board of Control

Should the United States remove the penny as a unit of currency? Client: Secretary, U.S. Department of the Treasury

Authority for the residential rent control program in New York City must be periodically renewed by state legislation. The 1997 debate over renewal was particularly acrimonious. Propose and analyze alternatives for phasing\_out rent control in New York City that might facilitate compromise before the current extension expires. Client: Office of the Governor

Since 1991 the New York State Department of Health has rated hospitals and surgeons in terms of risk\_adjusted mortality rates for coronary artery bypass surgery. Should similar "report cards" be introduced for other medical procedures? Client: Commissioner, New York State Department of Health

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PL 104\_193). Congress authorized the disbursement of \$1 billion in bonuses between 1999 and 2003 to states that perform well in moving people from welfare to work. Develop and analyze alternative procedures for awarding the bonuses. Client: Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services

Republican Lieutenant Governor Betsy McCaughey Ross joined with Democrats in the legislature to push legislation that would have require health insurance companies to cover some experimental medical treatments. Although the bill was stopped in the Senate, it is likely to be

revived in the next session. What policy should New York State adopt with respect to the coverage of experimental treatments by health insurers? Client: Superintendent, New York Department of Insurance

Many Internet users complain about "SPAM," electronic mass\_mailings done for commercial purposes. Should the federal government take any actions to make it easier for the administrators of Internet sites to exclude SPAM? Client: Chair, U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Communications

There is some evidence that the use of a cellular telephone in a moving automobile increases the risk of an accident. Should New York State change its motor vehicle laws in any way to discourage the use of cellular telephones in moving vehicles? Client: New York State Commissioner of Motor Vehicles

Oregon has organized elections in which all ballots are submitted by mail. Should New York State institute "voting by mail" for elections to local offices and school boards? Client: Office of the Governor

A number of police and fire departments around the country have purchased portable defibrillators (devices used to give electric shocks to revive victims of cardiac arrest) for their vehicles. Should New York State encourage, discourage, or regulate the use of defibrillators by police and fire departments and by the general public? Client: Commissioner, New York State Department of Health

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting now receives less than 15 percent of its annual revenue directly from the federal government. Should the Corporation seek to free itself completely from reliance on the government for general support? Client: President, Corporation for Public Broadcasting

Critics of the 21 year\_old minimum legal drinking age charge that it encourages college students and other young adults to experiment with alcohol in dangerous ways. Some have suggested that a "learner's permit" be introduced that would allow those over 18 but under 21 years old to consume alcohol under restricted conditions. Develop and analyze alternatives for allowing limited access to alcohol for those between the ages of 18 and 21 in New York State. Client: Office of the Governor

Review New York State regulations governing home schooling. Should they be revised to make it easier for parents to home school? Client: Regents of the University of the State of New York

Review New York State laws concerning the granting of unlimited tenure to primary and secondary teachers. Should decisions concerning the granting of unlimited tenure be left to local school boards? Client: Regents of the University of the State of New York

Rising automobile insurance rates in California prompted several analysts to propose replacing the mandatory purchase of basic liability coverage with provision paid for through a special gasoline tax \_\_ anyone buying gasoline in the state would thus contribute into the liability fund.

California residents could purchase additional coverage above that provided through the gasoline tax. Should New York State adopt a pay\_at\_the\_pump liability insurance system? Client: Superintendent, New York Department of Insurance

Cities, counties, and states often provide large subsidies to attract professional sports teams or to keep them from leaving for other jurisdictions. These subsidies impose tax burdens that transfer wealth from the general public to franchise owners. Should the federal government heavily tax the imputed value of these subsidies in an effort to discourage local governments from providing them? Client: Chair, U.S. Congress Joint Committee on Taxation

Review the information that the Federal Aviation Administration provides to the public about the performance (on\_time arrival and safety) of airlines. Develop and analyze alternatives for increasing the value of this information to consumers. Client: Administrator, Federal Aviation Administration

Public libraries increasingly provide Internet access to their patrons. Should libraries take any steps to reduce the exposure of children to Internet material that would be judged inappropriate for them if it were available in print format? Client: Executive Director, American Library Association

Candidates in U.S. presidential and congressional elections must report the sources of their campaign contributions to the Federal Election Commission. Under the current reporting system campaign contributions received in the months just prior to the election are not publically available until after the election is over. Should the election laws be changed to require "real\_time" posting of contributions on Internet web\_pages? Client: President, Common Cause

Only about 20 percent of prescription drugs currently on the market in the United States have been tested on children. The Clinton Administration is currently considering regulations that would require more extensive pediatric testing of new drugs. Develop and analyze alternatives for providing doctors with better information about dosages, safety, and effectiveness of drugs potentially beneficial to children. Client: Director of Research, Children's Defense Fund

Should the Indian Regulatory Gaming Act of 1988 be amended to discourage, encourage, or regulate Internet gambling operations based on tribal lands? Client: Chair, U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs

The federal government has established regulations concerning the crash protection provided by bumpers on motor vehicles. Light trucks and recreational vehicles often have bumpers much higher from the ground than automobile bumpers so that collisions tend not to be bumper to bumper. Should the federal government adopt regulations that would result in a larger fraction of vehicles having bumpers at the same height? Client: Administrator, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

The current policy toward combatants in the former Yugoslavia requires the arrest and prosecution of war criminals. As the indictments are often secret, however, many Bosnian Serb officials refuse to cooperate with the peace process because they fear they will be arrested if they

meet with international officials. Should the war criminal policy be modified or abandoned?  
Client: U.S. Department of State