

## 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 2003 randomly assigned from the following list:**

Since 1975 Wisconsin local governments have been allowed to use "tax incremental financing," which allows property taxes to be diverted to subsidies for development. It now applies to some \$6 billion dollars in property. Should tax incremental financing be eliminate, modified, or expanded? *Client: Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Commerce*

Wisconsin wineries do not pay sales tax on wine shipped to buyers in 13 states with which Wisconsin has tax reciprocity laws. Does this arrangement require any modifications? *Client: Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Revenue*

Should Wisconsin laws governing minimum markups for retail gasoline be changed? *Client: Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection*

Should Wisconsin take any steps to encourage the generation of electricity from manure? *Client: Secretary, Department of Natural Resources*

During the 2000 season approximately 953 thousand hunters harvested over 618 thousand deer in Wisconsin. Nevertheless, there were over 20 thousand car crashes involving deer and the Department of Natural Resources asserts that the estimated deer population of 1,818,000 is too large. Should the DNR adopted policies to reduce the size of the herd? *Client: Secretary, Department of Natural Resources*

Several states have taken steps to make marijuana available to people suffering from specific diseases. A Wisconsin group, Is My Medicine Legal Yet?, has been advocating the legalization of medical marijuana in Wisconsin. Should Wisconsin change its laws to make marijuana available for medical purposes? *Client: Chairperson, Assembly Committee on Health*

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 Wisconsin. *Client: Chairperson, Assembly Committee on Public Health*

Airborne pollution has been increasing the amount of mercury in lakes around the world. Game fish often have high concentrations of mercury. Although these levels of mercury usually do not pose a health risk to adults, they can harm fetuses. Wisconsin residents consume more than the national average of game fish. Some ethnic groups in Wisconsin have very high rates of game fish consumption. Should the current system of fish consumption advisories be changed? *Client: Secretary, Department of Natural Resources*

Breast feeding is generally considered superior to bottle feeding in terms of the health of the child. Although a majority of women begin breast feeding, only a small fraction continue beyond a few months. Should Wisconsin adopt any policies to encourage the prevalence or duration of breast feeding? *Client: Administrator, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Family Services*

Should Wisconsin create a contractual arrangement that would allow same-sex couples to have some or all of the legal benefits of marriage? *Client: President, Action Wisconsin*

The Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services publishes a consumer guide for nursing homes. How effective is this report card? Is there a more useful design for providing Wisconsin residents useful information about the quality of nursing homes? *Client: Secretary, Department of Health and Family Services*

Beginning in 1993, Wisconsin legislature authorized school boards to establish charter schools. In 1997, the legislature authorized the City of Milwaukee, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and the Milwaukee Area Technical College to create charter schools. Should the legislature further expand the number of organizations that are authorized to establish charter schools? *Client: Chairperson, Senate Committee on Education*

Some Wisconsin school districts have considered moving to a year-round calendar as an alternative to building new facilities to handle increased enrollments. Should the legislature take any steps to encourage or discourage year-round schooling? *Client: Chairperson, Assembly Committee on Education*

Although one elk herd now appears established in Wisconsin, elk hunting is currently not allowed. Consider alternatives for introducing elk hunting in Wisconsin. *Client: Secretary, Department of Natural Resources*

Since 1987 the number of inmates in Wisconsin prisons has quadrupled. The corrections budget has also increased greatly. Consider alternatives, including revision of the "truth in sentencing" law, for reducing the growth in the size of the prison population. *Client: Chairperson, Senate Committee on Economic Development and Corrections*

Vaccination guidelines currently call for children to receive the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine once between the ages of 12 and 15 months (primary vaccination), and again between the ages of 4 and 6 years (secondary vaccination). The current goal of the Department of Health and Family Services is to increase the proportion of children in Wisconsin receiving a primary vaccination by age 2 years to 90 percent. Develop alternatives for making progress

toward this goal. *Client: Director, Bureau of Communicable Diseases, Department of Health and Family Services*

The U.S. Department of Energy recently issued and then withdrew new efficiency standards for residential air conditioners. Should the current standards, issued in 1992, be modified? *Client: Secretary, Department of Energy.*

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations recently issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provide protections to some kinds of health-related information. However, the rules only apply to Web sites that are run by health care providers, health insurance plans, or health care clearinghouses that process health insurance claims. Yet most health Web sites do not fall under the regulations. Thus, data generated by Web use, such as seeking information about particular medical conditions, may not be covered by the regulations. Should policy be changed to extend protections to information generated from the use of such Web sites? *Client: Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services*

The Environmental Policy and Conservation Act of 1975 established the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) Standards. Should Congress direct the Department of Transportation to change any of the major provisions of the CAFE Standards? In particular, should sport utility vehicles be treated as passenger vehicles rather than as light duty trucks? *Client: Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources*

An increasing number of kidney donations come from live, rather than cadaveric, donors. Until recently, most live kidney donations were made by relatives or friends of the recipients, though this could occur only if there were sufficiently close antigen matches. Consider options for allowing donors, whose organs do not sufficiently match their intended recipients, to make unrestricted donations in return for giving priority to their intended recipients for cadaveric organs. *Client: United Network for Organ Sharing*

Should the antitrust exemption currently enjoyed by professional baseball be modified? *Client: Chairman, Senate Committee on the Judiciary*

Although commercial whaling has been banned since 1986, Norway and Japan continue to harvest substantial numbers of whales. Should the ban be modified or supplemented with regional sanctuaries as proposed by Australia and Brazil? *Client: International Whaling Commission*

Should the federal government alter its policies concerning the ownership of fossils found on federal lands? *Client: Secretary, Department of the Interior*

In 1999, the United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species allowed a one-time sale of stockpiled ivory from selected countries. Should the United States support further sales of ivory as a way of subsidizing elephant reserves? *Client: Chair, President's Council on Environmental Quality*

Current federal law and regulations restrict the importation of pharmaceuticals for use by individuals. Should these restrictions be modified? *Client: Chairman, Subcommittee on Health, House Committee on Energy and Commerce*