



# Local Policymaking



# History of Local Governance in the U.S.

- Constitution preserved power of smaller units of government
- As states gained in power throughout 1800s, so too did localities
- New Deal and, especially, War on Poverty saw additional resources and, therefore, power, funneled directly to localities
- Local governments besieged in 1970s-1980s: takeovers of school systems, police departments, rising poverty- “end of the city”



# Local Structures

- Elected officials at-large and/or by district
- Types of Municipal Government:
  - Weak Mayor—Council (mayor chosen from among council members)
  - Commission
  - Strong Mayor—Council (modeled on state/federal governments; appoints city heads)
  - City/Council Manager



# Entities in Local Government

- City councils
- County commissions
- Consolidated local/county government
- School boards
- Library boards
- Planning and zoning boards
- Election commissions
- Water, sewage, other utility districts
- Executives



# Types of Localities

- Incorporated municipalities (municipal charter similar to constitution):
  - Inner cities
  - First-ring suburbs
  - Suburbs
  - “Exurbs”
  - Rural communities
- Federations of municipalities
- Unincorporated areas under direct state statute jurisdiction



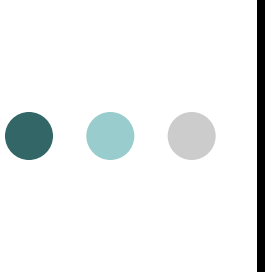
# Financing Local Government

- Property taxes
  - State and federal abatements (along with incentive packages) have eroded this power
- Sales taxes
- Special use taxes
  - Example: JOCO tax for education
- User fees
  - Parks and recreation, developers, commuters
- Earnings taxes
- Recession in 1990 saw end of revenue sharing in most states



# Functions of Local Policy

- Technically, local governments only control those areas specifically delegated by the state
- Local policymaking is complicated by overlapping jurisdiction and ambiguous scope
- Localities responsible for most:
  - Land use
  - Education
  - Housing
  - Emergency response
  - Parks and recreation



# Localities & Social Policy

- Area Agencies on Aging locally administered
- Many localities administer mental health mill levies
- Public housing authorities
- Special education and in-school services
- CDBG and county welfare programs
- Jail system, public defender
- County hospitals (in some cases)
- Administration of block grant programs and other incentives, particularly for housing and CED





# Local Government Reform

- Consolidation to increase efficiency
  - Layering of government can dilute tax base and lead to turf disputes
- Reform to break up political machines
- Privatization in provision of ‘public’ services—trash, utilities, even safety
  - Impacts quality, responsiveness, job creation
- Restrictions on tax increment financing



# Advocacy in Local Policymaking

- Diffuse power
- Blurred lines between paid and elected officials
- Policy decisions often made informally
- Can be more difficult to intervene as an 'outsider'
- Sometimes find advocacy more controversial because of dual relationships with policymakers



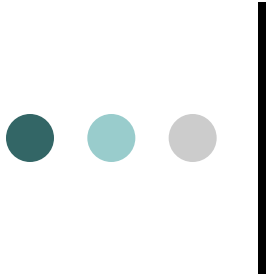
# Making a Difference in Local Policymaking

- Serving on boards or commissions
  - How to position yourself, where to interject
- Running for elected office
- Testifying at hearings
- Monitoring budget and policy processes
- Working directly with policymakers



# Intersections Among Localities, States, and Federal

- Some local areas very dependent on federal or state economic activity (military bases, research centers, government agencies, universities)
- Assistance often dependent on population estimates—block grants, especially
- Local officials take policy stances on state and federal issues—eminent domain, immigration, welfare reform, etc...



Questions/Discussion?