



# American Government

Unit 2

Ch. 19

*"The Mass Media"*

# Mass Media

- ◆ Print Media
  - Newspapers, magazines, etc.
- ◆ Broadcast Media
  - Television, radio, etc.
- ◆ Internet (combination of both)
  - Articles, videos, message boards, real-time chat, blogs, etc.

# Role of Media in a Democracy

- ◆ Candidates need the media to campaign and get elected.
- ◆ Elected officials need the media to explain their policies and try to get public support.
- ◆ People depend on the media to give attention and importance to their issues.
- ◆ The media exposes scandal and controversy and acts as the “watch-dog”.



# The President and the Media

- ◆ **Presidential Campaigns**
  - **Identifying Candidates** – the media gives exposure to candidates so that the public can get to know them, identifies the front-runners.
  - **Campaign Advertising** – candidates use the media to get their message (issues, ideas, etc.) to the people.
- ◆ **News Release** – a ready made story prepared by officials for members of the press.
- ◆ **News Briefing** – a government official makes an announcement or explains a policy to the press, press can ask questions.
- ◆ **Press Conference** – planned, controlled events where the press questions a high-ranking official (typically, the President or a member of the Cabinet) usually the questions are known in advance or “friendly” members of the press are called on.

# Media and the Government

- ◆ **Congress** – Media typically covers the controversial aspects like confirmation hearings, debates on major issues, or scandals/personal business of members.
  - C-SPAN – offers coverage of floor proceedings in the House and the Senate.
- ◆ **Supreme Court** – gets much less media coverage than the other branches (no cameras or microphones are allowed inside the chambers) and newspapers only cover a few of the major decisions each year.
- ◆ **Setting the Public Agenda** – the media plays an important role by creating the list of problems that the public and political leaders feel need attention.

# Regulating the Media

- ◆ Free Press – protected by the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment.
  - No *prior restraint* (government censorship)
- ◆ Libel – false statements intended to damage a person's reputation. NOT protected! Can be sued!
- ◆ The Right of Access – members of the media must have access to information in order to fulfill their role.
  - Should the media have special privileges to info?
  - The courts generally say no, but typically reporters do have more access than the general public.
- ◆ Protection of Sources – most states have *shield laws* to protect reporters from having to reveal their sources.
  - Helps get info from sources that want to remain secret, without shield laws many sources would not come forward.



# Regulating the Media

- ◆ **FCC** – created in 1934, government agency with authority to regulate communications (radio, television, telephone, telegraph, cable and satellite).
  - Makes rules for appropriate content, issues licenses.
- ◆ **National Security** – always a debate between the need for information for the public and the need to keep secrets for national security (especially when it comes to foreign affairs).
  - At times the government tries to limit press access by classifying documents as secret or deny access to military actions.

# The Internet and Democracy

- ◆ **Important features** – unique benefits.
  - Widespread – rapidly developing, 2005 75% of Americans had access at home.
  - Interactive – people can connect with others.
  - World-wide – access is global which provides huge diversity.
- ◆ **Gathering Information** – the internet is increasingly used to get political information
  - candidates, issues, legislation, polls, etc.
- ◆ **Impact on Participation** – the internet provides opportunities to participate and become more active.
  - Communication with elected officials, petitions, e-voting, etc.
- ◆ **Challenges** – anyone has access to post anything on the internet and view anything on the internet.
  - False, obscene, and other offensive material is readily available (and sometimes hard to avoid or detect).