



Chapter 19 Exercises

Self-Check Questions

- Based on the theory of rational ignorance, what should we expect to happen to voter turnout as the internet makes information easier to obtain?
- What is the cost of voting in an election?
- What is the main factor preventing a large community from influencing policy in the same way as a special interest group?
- Why might legislators vote to impose a tariff on Egyptian cotton, when consumers in their districts would benefit from its availability?
- True or false: majority rule can fail to produce a single preferred outcome when there are more than two choices. Explain your answer.
- Anastasia, Emma, and Greta are deciding what to do on a weekend getaway. They each suggest a first choice and then vote on the options. Their first, second, and third preferences are shown in the following table. Explain why they will have a hard time reaching a decision. Does the group prefer mountain biking to canoeing? What about canoeing compared to the beach? What about the beach compared to the original choice of mountain biking?

	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice
Anastasia	Beach	Mountain biking	Canoeing
Emma	Mountain biking	Canoeing	Beach
Greta	Canoeing	Beach	Mountain biking

- Suppose an election is being held for Soft Drink Commissioner. The field consists of one candidate from the Pepsi party and four from the Coca-Cola party. This would seem to indicate a strong preference for Coca-Cola among the voting population, but the Pepsi candidate ends up winning in a landslide. Why does this happen?

Review Questions

- How does rational ignorance discourage voting?
- How can a small special interest group win in a situation of majority voting when the benefits it seeks flow only to a small group?
- How can pork-barrel spending occur in a situation of majority voting when it benefits only a small group?
- Why do legislators vote for spending projects in districts that are not their own?
- Why does a voting cycle make it impossible to decide on a majority-approved choice?
- How does a government agency raise revenue differently from a private company, and how does that affect the way government decisions are made compared to business decisions?

Critical Thinking Questions

14. What are some reasons people might find it rational to acquire information about politics and vote, in contrast to the rational ignorance theory?
15. What are some possible ways to encourage voter participation and overcome rational ignorance?
16. Given that rational ignorance discourages some people from becoming informed about elections, is it necessarily a good idea to encourage greater voter turnout? Why or why not?
17. When Microsoft was founded, the company devoted very few resources to lobbying activities. After a high-profile antitrust case against it, however, the company began to lobby heavily. Why does it make financial sense for companies to invest in lobbyists?
18. Representatives of competing firms often comprise special interest groups. Why are competitors sometimes willing to cooperate in order to form lobbying associations?
19. Special interests do not oppose regulations in all cases. The Marketplace Fairness Act of 2013 would require online merchants to collect sales taxes from their customers in other states. Why might a large online retailer like Amazon support such a measure?
20. To ensure safety and efficacy, the Food and Drug Administration regulates the medicines that are allowed to be sold in the United States. Sometimes, this means a drug must be tested for years before it is allowed to reach the market. The winners in this system are easily identifiable as those who are protected from unsafe drugs that might otherwise harm them. Who are the more anonymous losers who suffer from strict medical regulations?
21. How is it possible to bear a cost without realizing it? What are some examples of policies that affect people in ways they may not even be aware of?
22. Is pork-barrel spending always a bad thing? Can you think of some examples of pork-barrel projects, perhaps from your own district, that have had positive results?
23. The United States currently uses a voting system called “first past the post” (FPTP) in elections, meaning that the candidate with the most votes wins. What are some of the problems with an FPTP system?
24. What are some alternatives to an FPTP system that might reduce the problem of voting cycles?
25. AT&T spent around \$10 million dollars lobbying Congress to block entry of competitors into the telephone market in 1978. Why do you think its efforts failed?
26. Occupy Wall Street was a national (and later global) organized protest against the greed, bank profits, and financial corruption that led to the 2008–2009 recession. The group popularized slogans like, “We are the 99%,” meaning it represented the majority against the wealth of the top 1%. Does the fact that the protests had little to no effect on legislative changes support or contradict this chapter?

Problems

27. Say that the government is considering a ban on smoking in restaurants in Tobaccoville. There are 1 million people living there, and each would benefit by \$200 from this smoking ban. However, there are two large tobacco companies in Tobaccoville, and the ban would cost them \$5 million each. What are the total costs and benefits of this proposed policy? Do you think it will be passed?