## Discussion Questions

# Chapter 13 Politics, Analysis, and Policy Choice

1. Discuss: (Option: assign student groups to take the pro or con position and develop arguments.) Should U.S. citizens be required to show identification (ID) before voting? What reasons do proponents give for requiring an ID, and what evidence is there to support their case? What about the same for opponents? What other policy options exist for addressing the issue?
2. Pair-Share: Identify some government programs that are effective, that is, are improving our quality of life or doing what they were intended to do. Discuss that government does have some successes.
3. Discuss: To many countries around the world, the United States is a shining example of a stable and effective government that enacts just laws to protect the well-being of its citizens. In other words, not everyone has such a low opinion of the U.S. government as we do. Think about public safety, economic development, the infrastructure, rights of women, freedom, and other examples. What is special about the U.S. government that is not the case in many other countries?
4. Discuss: What effect does lack of public confidence in government have on our government’s policy capacity? What could be done to restore public confidence? How can our government’s policy capacity be improved?
5. One-minute writing: In what ways have you been involved in the policy-making process in your life? Think about the various forms of public participation in policy making reviewed in the chapter. List some promising opportunities you see for becoming involved in policy making in the future. Consider informal involvement as well as formal roles.
6. Discuss in small groups: Why do you think most citizens do not take more interest in politics and public policy? What might increase their level of interest and participation? What would motivate you to become more active?
7. Discuss: How much potential do you see in political mobilization of citizens via the Internet, either during election campaigns or for specific advocacy campaigns between elections? What particular kinds of actions are most likely to be successful in reaching voters, especially younger ones? Based on the examples and discussion offered in this chapter, what concerns, if any, do you have?
8. Discuss: Consider this chapter’s discussion of California’s Proposition 8 banning same-sex marriage in the state. Also consider the case of Utah, where the legislature banned same-sex marriage. Should these kinds of highly controversial questions be placed on the ballot for citizens to vote on directly, or should they be decided instead by state legislators?
9. Discuss: Consider one or more major policy challenges, such as reforming health care, reforming the major federal entitlement programs (Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid), redesigning the tax code, or developing a national energy or climate change policy. What are the advantages and disadvantages of incremental policy change with these large, complicated issues? Similarly, what are the major advantages and disadvantages of pursuing policy change that is more far reaching or radical, whether the ideas are endorsed by the left or right side of the political spectrum?