## Discussion Questions

# Chapter 3 Understanding Public Policy Making

1. Discuss: Can you think of policies made in the past that now seem obsolete? What might have to happen to change an obsolete policy? (introduction)
2. Small-group work: Assign a theory to each group. All use same current issue. With a current public policy example, such as gun control, use the theories of policy making to help explain how a policy to address gun violence would be developed (theories). Use video resource on Chicago gun violence.
3. Discuss: What issues are currently “on the agenda”? What public problems or issues are not on the agenda but could be if conditions were right?
4. Discuss: Why isn’t climate change being addressed by our federal government? (Or choose a different public problem that is not being addressed.) What factors influence which problems get addressed by our legislatures at state or federal levels? What role do interest groups play in these discussions and decisions? In the end, what most influences members of Congress in making these decisions? Their own political ideologies, media, constituency views, the stance of business and other interest groups, their sense of how their votes might affect their reelection chances, or the broader public opinion in the nation? (policy agenda)
5. Discuss. Listen to the PBS audio about immigration policy listed below. What reasons did you hear for President Obama’s immigration bill failing to be placed on the House of Representatives’ agenda prior to breaking for summer vacation?
6. Small-group work/discuss: Identify interest groups and advocacy coalitions that were for and against legislation to legalize marijuana at the state level. (illustrate group theory)
7. Small-group work/discuss. Think of a few policies made at either your state or the federal government level and identify at which point in the cycle these policies are found today. Where do those policies fit in the Policy Process Model? Try to come up with a policy that is found at each stage of the model. Small groups list policies on the board under headings for each stage of the policy cycle. (policy cycle)
8. Discuss: Which steps within the policy process does the general public hear about most often? Why do you think that is? Why might it be a good idea for the public to know about and pay attention to the other steps?