**For Discussion**

1. Should bureaucracies operate more like the private market? That is, should public bureaucracies, in an attempt to be more accountable for service delivery, be more performance based? For instance, all state employees in Georgia are exempt from the civil service in an attempt to make public service employees more accountable and to provide for more agency flexibility in the hiring and firing processes. Should more public agencies employ these types of reforms to improve the quality of services delivered?

2. The merit system places strong emphasis on maintaining neutral competence. The result of this is a tremendous amount of rules and regulations, that is, red tape. As an employer, what are some potential disadvantages of the merit system? As an employee? What can be done to reform the merit system to reduce the amount of red tape while maintaining a neutral and fair system?

3. Which is more important to a public agency in terms of public service delivery—efficiency or responsiveness? Should public agencies emphasize one more than the other? In order to be efficient, agencies are required to deliver services at the lowest possible cost. To be responsive, agencies are required to extend personnel and financial resources to meet a wide variety of demands. What are the benefits and repercussions of each of these?

4. Look at the grade that the Government Performance Project (GPP) assigned to your state. Do you agree with this assessment? Is this an adequate way to measure bureaucratic performance? Should states make decisions based on these grades? What other categories, if any, should be included in this grading system? Does the GPP improve your view of the bureaucracy?

5. The reinventing government (REGO) approach to public administration and bureaucracy advocates a mission-driven approach to public service delivery as opposed to a rule-driven approach. Why do REGO advocates argue that such an approach would be beneficial to bureaucracies? Do their arguments about improved budgets and greater employee creativity and flexibility make sense? Why or why not? Are there certain types of agencies that may be more open to such ideas?

6. Groupthink is inadvertent conformity within an organization or group. Given the rigid structure and vertical chain of command of most public agencies, do you think bureaucracy increases or decreases the likelihood of groupthink? For example, following the *Columbia* space shuttle disaster, NASA was heavily criticized for an organizational culture that promotes groupthink. Reports following the disaster suggested that while scientists were hesitant about the launch, they remained silent out of fear of violating organizational norms. In other words, street- level bureaucrats placed the agency’s goals ahead of individual beliefs. Given that NASA was facing budget constraints, delaying the launch would have resulted in further reduction in prestige that potentially could have had long-term fiscal effects. What are some ways in which an agency can reduce the likelihood of projecting an organizational culture that discourages whistle-blowers while retaining credibility and legitimacy?