**For Discussion**

1. How has the policy flexibility of TANF affected how states provide welfare benefits? Do methods of distribution differ according to a state’s affluence? How do ideology and demographics influence welfare generosity among states? Does the dominance of one political party or another matter? How does a state’s minority population affect welfare policy and the distribution of funds?

2. Should ads or programs promoting junk food or food be regulated? Recent reports suggest that a significant percentage of all medical expenditures go to treat problems associated with obesity, and the number of obese children in the United States is rising. Should states and localities have the right to remove vending and soda machines in schools? Should government have an active role in dictating individual habits and lifestyles?

3. Should states act to prevent other potentially damaging lifestyle habits? For instance, numerous states view suicide as a public health dilemma. Despite suicidal tendencies being psychological disorders, states are increasingly pursuing strategies aimed at preventing suicides, particularly through educational training and counseling on such mental disorders as depression. Do such preventive measures deflect long-term healthcare costs? Should distinctions be made between state regulation and engagement in mental health issues as opposed to strictly physical health concerns?

4. In 2010, President Obama signed a bill into law mandating individual coverage, subsidizing insurance for low-income Americans, and assessing a tax penalty for those who go without coverage. Should the federal government take this approach to public health? What are the advantages and disadvantages of a universal healthcare program?

5. Should the federal government privatize Social Security? This is frequently debated as a presidential campaign issue. What are advantages and disadvantages of privatizing Social Security?

6. What new challenges might state and local governments face in public healthcare provision? What can localities do to address rising health concerns? Is it appropriate for localities to engage in restrictive policies, such as smoking bans and attempts to control obesity? Why or why not?