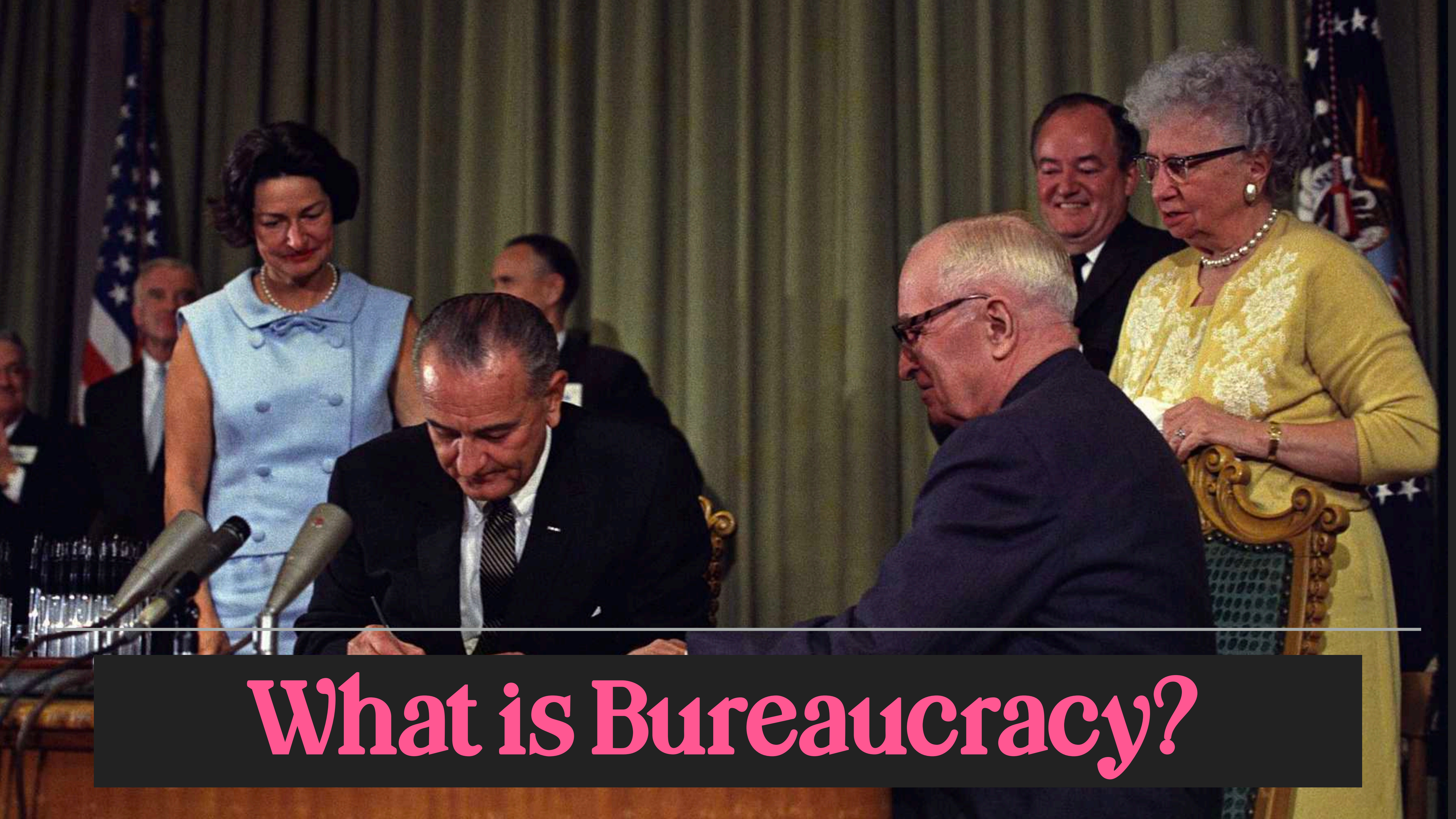




**MR. POGREBA, PARKER SCHOOL**

# Unit 5: The Bureaucracy



**What is Bureaucracy?**

## WHAT IS THE BUREAUCRACY?

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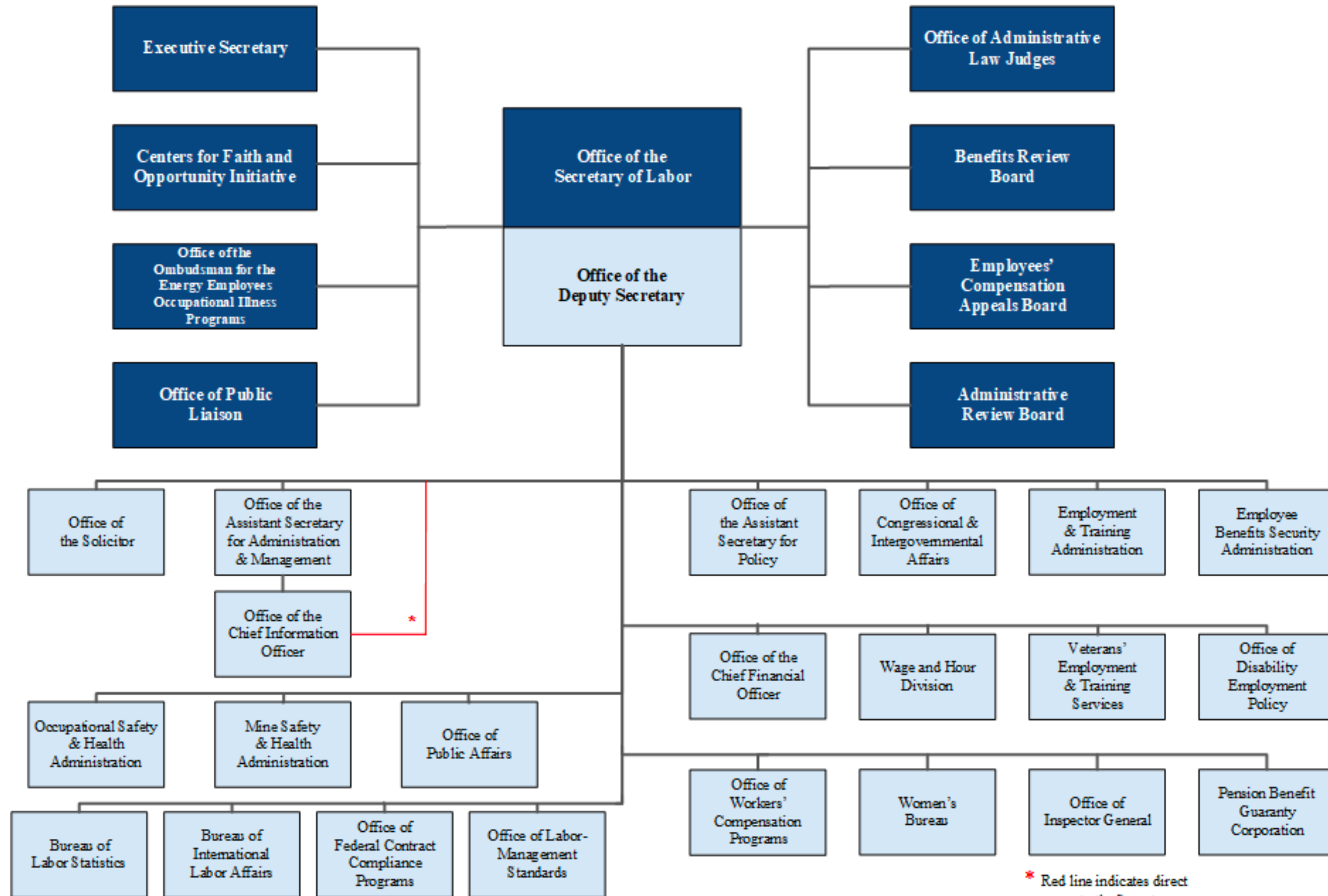
### WHAT IS A BUREAUCRACY?

- ▶ A **bureaucracy** is “a large, complex organization composed of appointed officials.”
- ▶ In Greek, the word means “rule by desks,” a suggestion that bureaucrats are somehow less than and more powerful than humans.
- ▶ Bureaucracies are complex structures that:
  - ▶ Exist in almost every large organization.
  - ▶ Diffuse and complicate responsibility for decision-making
- ▶ Politicians regularly unfairly villanize bureaucracy for inefficiency and waste to score political points.



**THE BUREAUCRACY IN ACTION**

# US Department of Labor Organizational Chart





**Unique Features of American Bureaucracy**

# THE UNIQUE AMERICAN BUREAUCRACY

The American bureaucracy is distinct for four reasons:

- ▶ Both the **executive and legislative branches exercise authority** over the bureaucracy.
- ▶ **Federalism** means that the **federal government shares bureaucratic function with state/local govt.**
- ▶ The **adversarial legal system** in the US means that the bureaucracy is challenged in courts far more than in other countries.
- ▶ There are **far more public entities** (like phone companies, transportation, etc.) **in European countries.**



# GOVERNMENT BY PROXY

- ✓ Much of American government runs on **government by proxy**, in which legislators make the laws while bureaucrats do the work or pay others to do so.
  - ▶ For instance, in the recent Iraq War, there were as many private contractors as soldiers.
  - ▶ FEMA used partners because it only had 2600 employees when Hurricane Katrina hit.
- ✓ Proponents argue this system is **efficient and maximizes the skills of private and non-profit agencies**.
- ✓ Critics argue that undermines public oversight, leading to **waste, fraud and abuse**.



**FEMA WORKERS AFTER KATRINA**

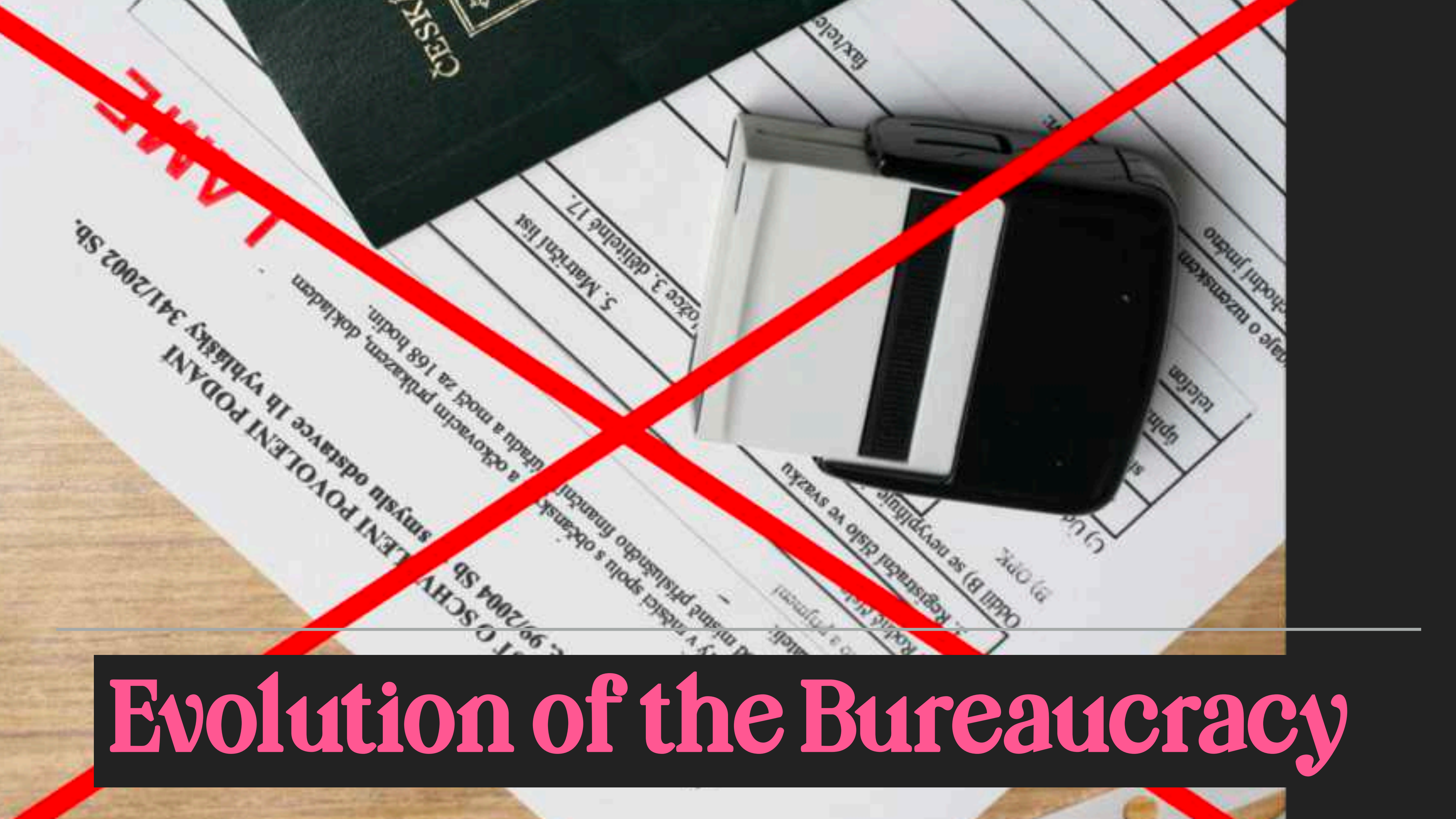
**Bureaucracies are inherently antidemocratic.  
Bureaucrats derive their power from their position  
in the structure, not from their relations with the  
people they are supposed to serve. The people are  
not masters of the bureaucracy, but its clients.**

Alan Keyes



Bureaucracy is not an obstacle to democracy but an inevitable complement to it.

Joseph Schumpeter



# Evolution of the Bureaucracy

### EARLY BUREAUCRACY WAS SMALL

- The Constitution made no provision for a bureaucracy. It, a group of people appointed by the President, was approved during the Washington Administration.
- Because Congress dominated through the 19th century, though, a system of **patronage** meant they appointed many local bureaucrats.
- The Civil War and the era of massive industrialization (and regulation of commerce) dramatically increased the bureaucracy.
- Most bureaucrats existed to **serve, not regulate**, through the Progressive Era.



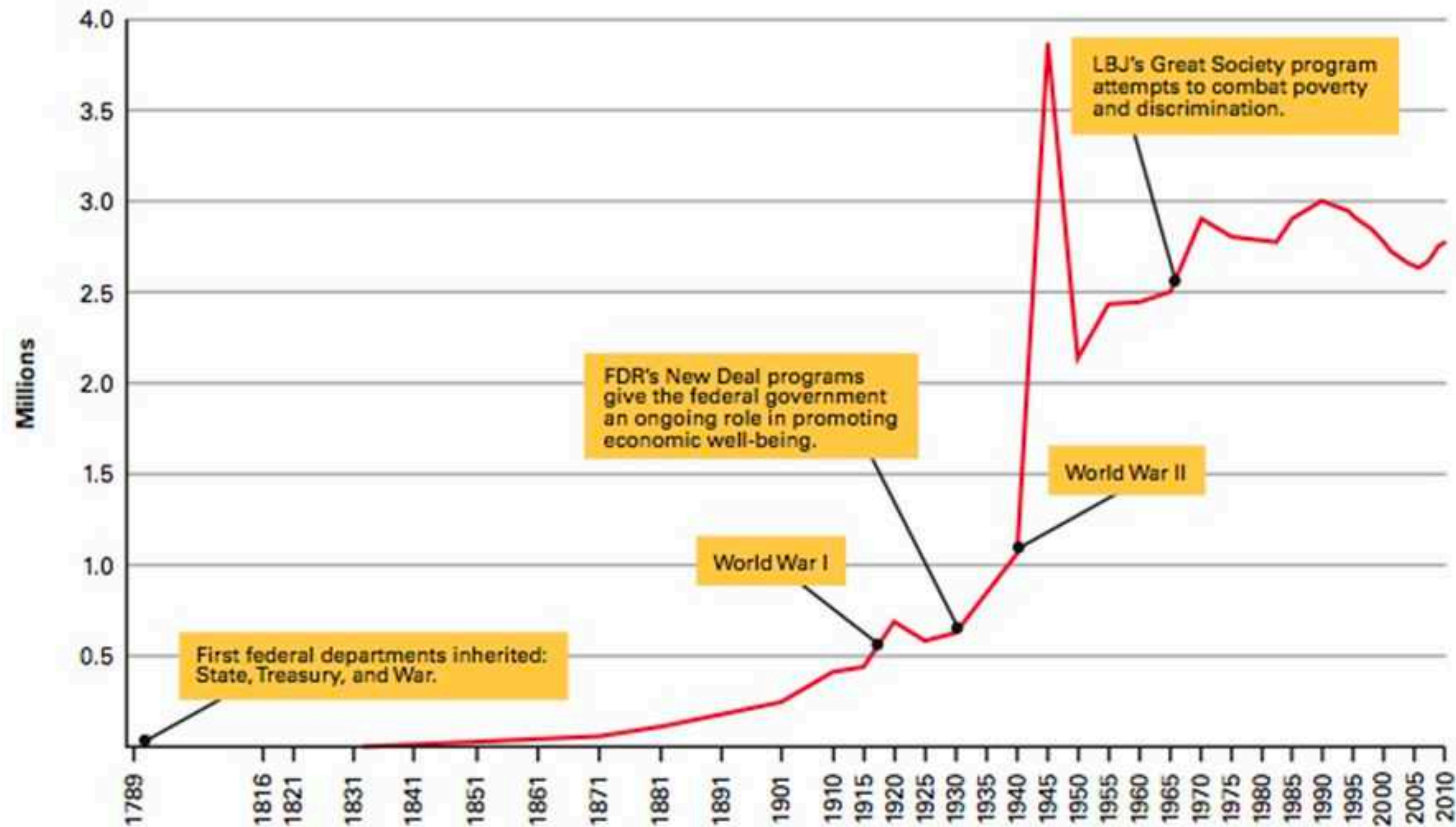
FDA CENTER FOR DRUG RESEARCH

### 20TH CENTURY EXPLOSION

- ▶ Two events—the **New Deal and World War II**—dramatically expanded the size of the federal bureaucracy.
- ▶ The Supreme Court gave the federal government expanded powers, and income taxes led to government that provided service and regulated more.
- ▶ The War on Poverty in the 1960s and the 9/11 Attacks also expanded the size of the federal bureaucracy.
- ▶ Much federal work today is **outsourced** to contractors and grant employees.

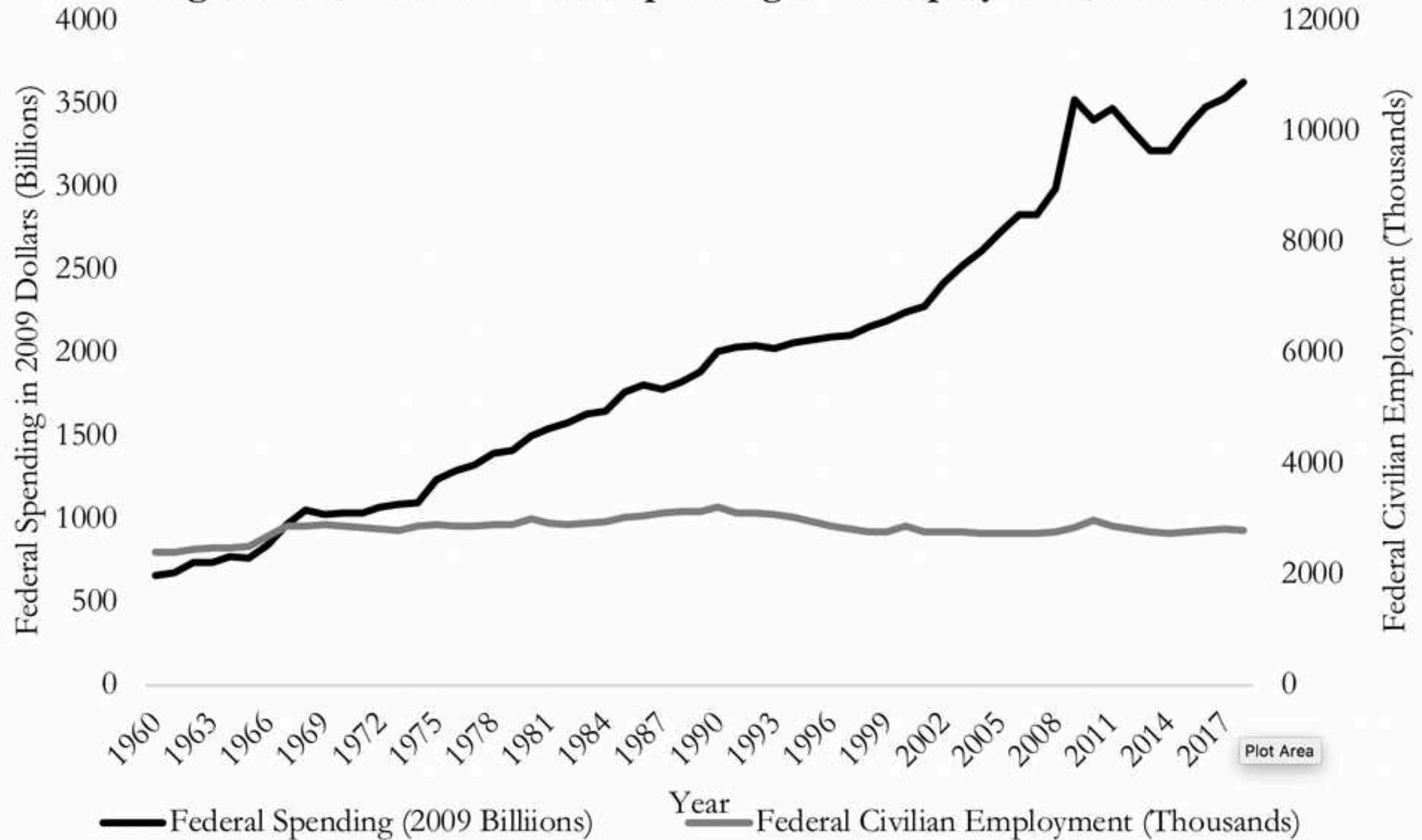


**FIGURE 8.1: How many employees work in the federal executive branch?**



# CHART 2

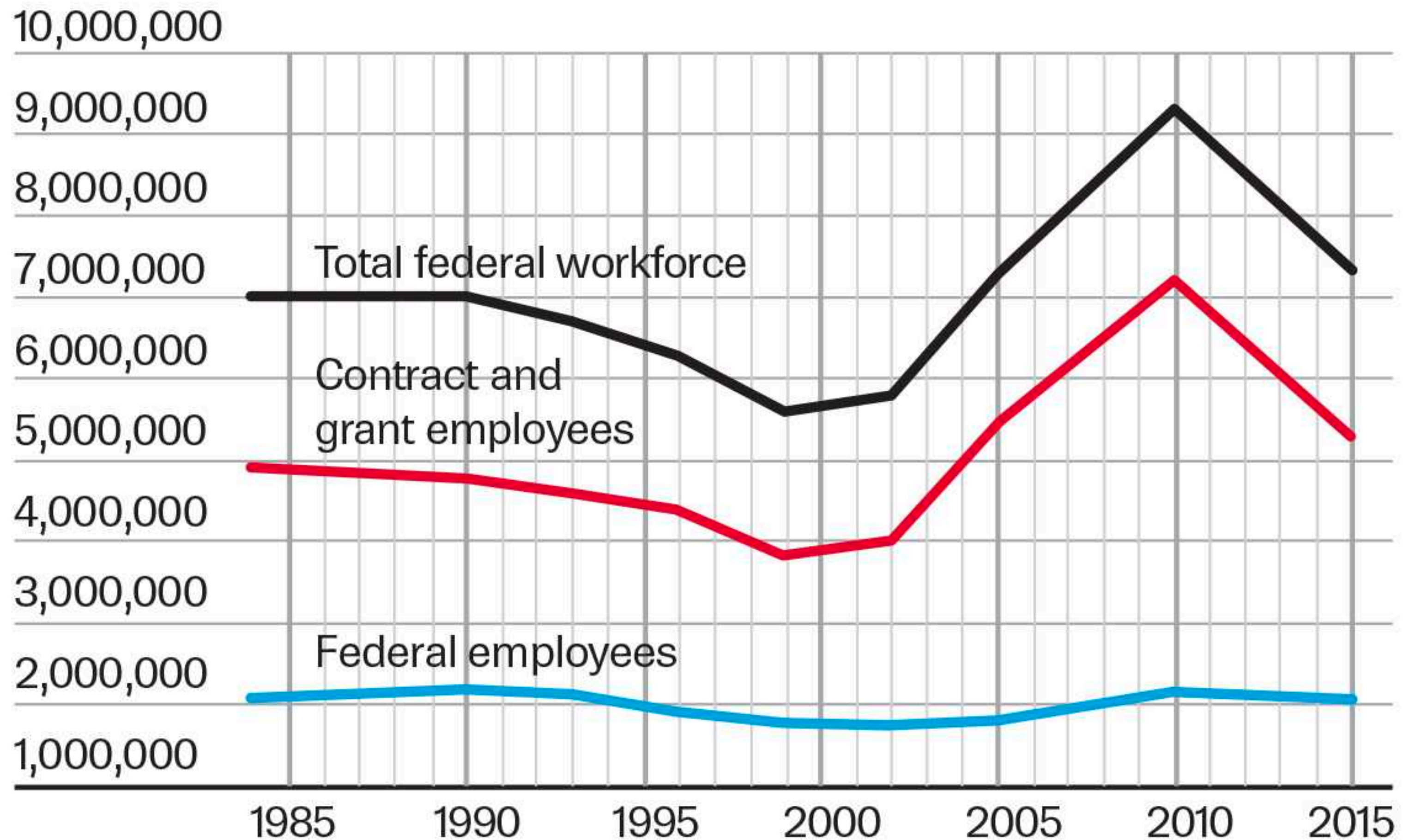
## Figure 1. Growth in Federal Spending and Employment, 1960-2016



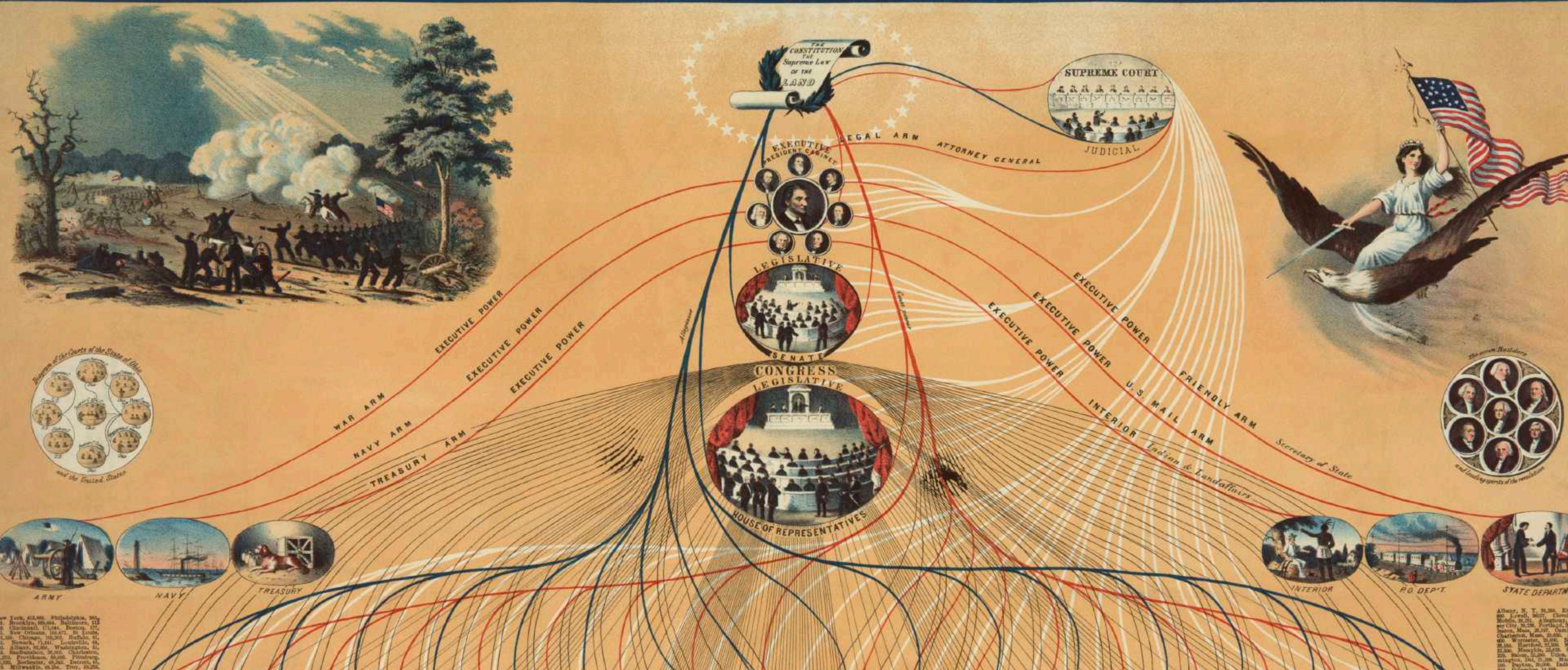
## CHART 3

### Outsourcing the work

Federal employees vs. federal contract and grant workers



Source: The Volcker Alliance



# The Bureaucracy Today

New York, 3,000,000. Philadelphia, 200,000. Boston, 100,000. Baltimore, 110,000. Cincinnati, 115,000. Boston, 170,000. New Orleans, 100,000. St. Louis, 100,000. Chicago, 100,000. Buffalo, 80,000. Newark, 70,000. Louisville, 60,000. Albany, 50,000. Washington, 50,000. San Francisco, 50,000. Charleston, 50,000. Providence, 50,000. Pittsburgh, 50,000. Rochester, 50,000. Detroit, 50,000. Milwaukee, 50,000. Troy, 50,000.

NEBRASKA  
 Pop. 250,000  
 2d March 1854  
 Nev. 1854

NEVADA  
 Pop. 6,000  
 2d March 1854

NEW YORK  
 Pop. 3,000,000  
 2d March 1854

DELAWARE  
 Pop. 100,000  
 2d March 1854

U.S. Pop. 23,000,000  
 2d March 1854



# THE BUREAUCRACY TODAY

- ▶ The size of the **Civil Service**—the federal civilian workforce—(2 million) is about the same as 1960, but that ignores the 13 million who work indirectly at state and local government, private firms.
- ▶ The key to bureaucratic power, though, is **discretionary authority**—the power to choose actions and make policy not spelled out in law. The three main applications are:
  - ▶ Paying subsidies to particular groups
  - ▶ Transferring money in **grants** to states and local government
  - ▶ Devising regulations.



**SPECIALITY CROP BLOCK GRANTS**

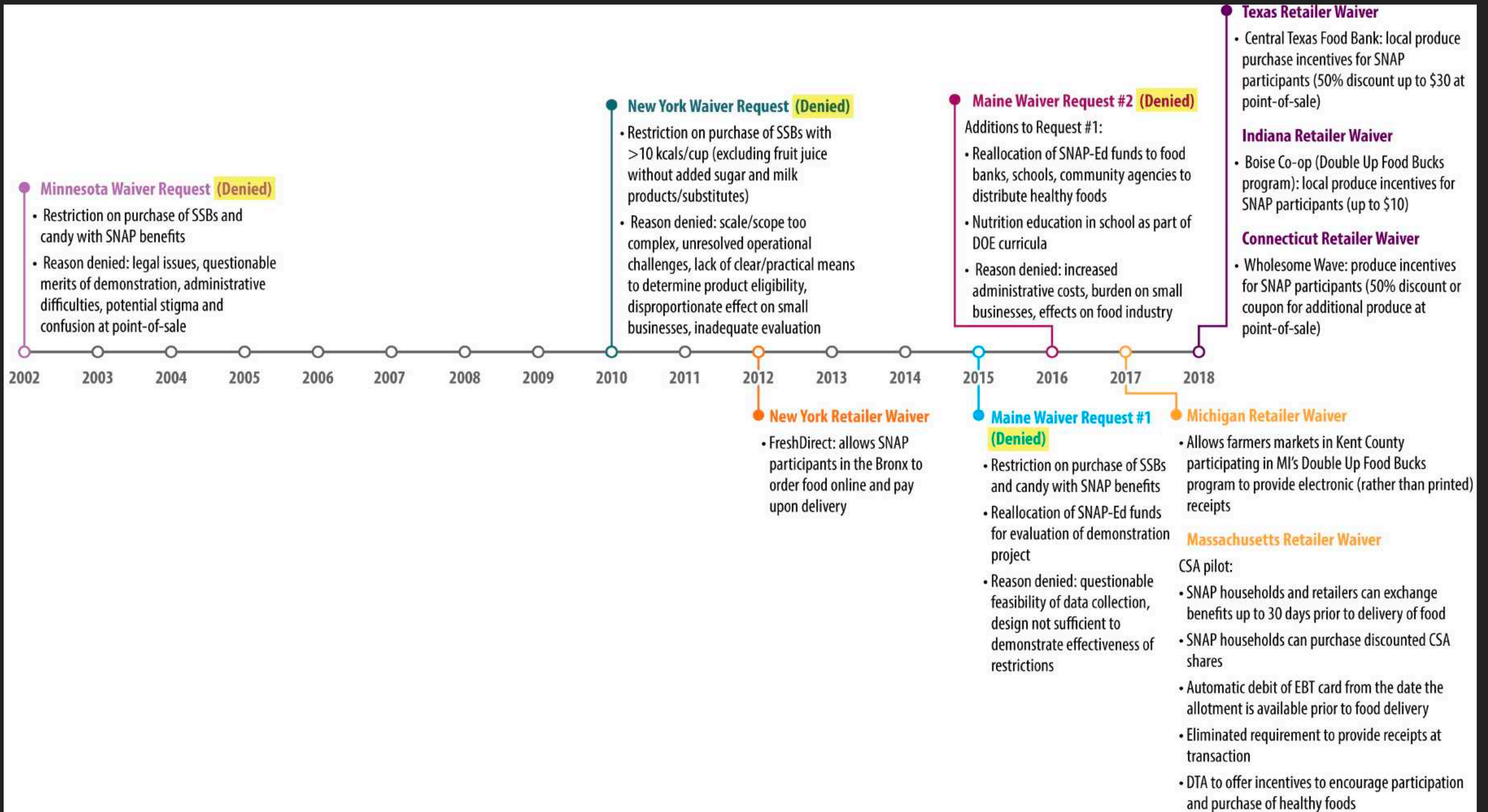
### SNAP EXAMPLE

- ▶ A major anti-poverty program in the US is called the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**.
- ▶ SNAP is administered by the **Department of Agriculture** under the **Food and Nutrition Service**.
- ▶ Benefits, though, are distributed by the individual states, who are overseen by the **Division of Social Services** in the **Department of Health and Human Services**.
- ▶ States can ask for waivers to implement differences in the program.

**Bureaucratic work is important to get people enrolled, prevent fraud and abuse, and ensure funding.**

**BUT**

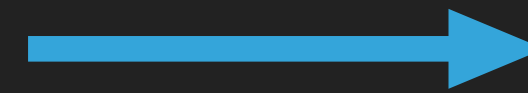
**The multi-layered bureaucracy allows interest groups to influence the process, adds expense, and complexity.**



## WHO IS THE BUREAUCRACY?

In addition to the cabinet-level departments, the bureaucracy includes:

▶ **Government corporations:** businesses created by Congress like the Post Office and Amtrak



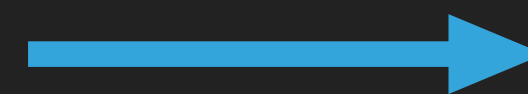
They compete with private industry and charge for their services, but are subject to direct govt. oversight.

▶ **Independent agencies:** small organizations with very narrow agendas, like NASA



Not really independent from Presidential authority, but independent from cabinet agencies.

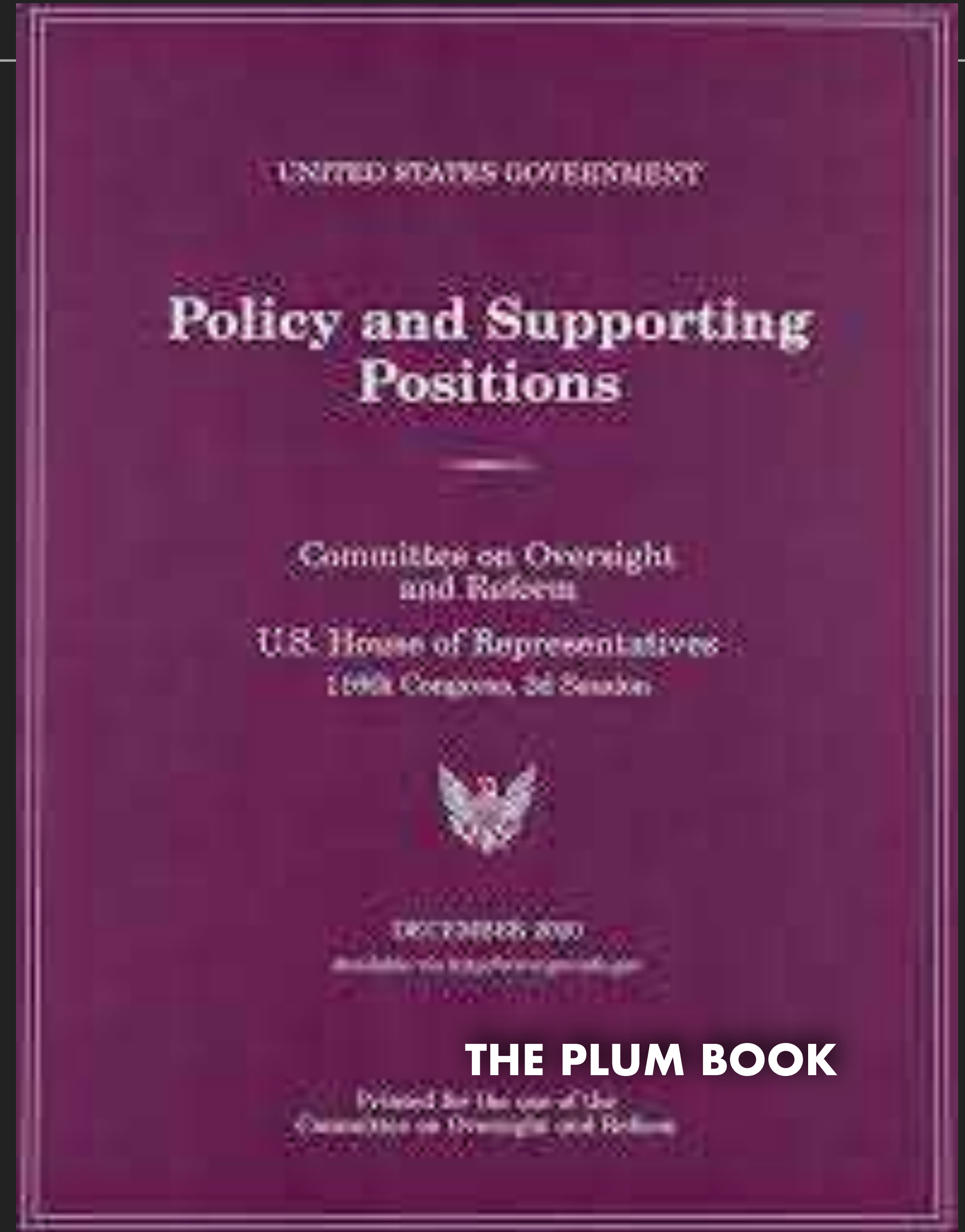
▶ **Regulatory agencies:** watchdog organizations like the Securities Exchange Commission, Federal Elections Commission.



5-11 members, appointed by President, who cannot remove them before end of term

# WHO IS THE BUREAUCRACY?

- ✓ Despite its origins as a form of **patronage**, today most jobs in the bureaucracy are competitive hires.
- ✓ Many federal positions still require passing a competitive test.
- ✓ **3% of federal jobs are reserved for those who share the President's policy agenda** and exist outside the main hiring structure.
- ✓ President Biden had to fill 1,200 positions. JFK had 451, but Grover Cleveland (in 1885) filled 40,000 postal employee jobs.
- ✓ The composition of the federal workforce has changed over recent years, both a shift to a more professional workforce and a more diverse one.





# Checks, Problems, & Reform

### LIMITS OF BUREAUCRATIC POWER

1. Congress can hold **oversight hearings** and limit the money **appropriated** for a bureaucratic policy.
2. Citizens and states can **challenge bureaucratic rules on constitutional grounds in the courts.**
3. **Competition between different agencies** can also serve as a check on bureaucratic power.



### CONSTRAINTS

- ✓ Because Congress exercises legislative oversight over the bureaucracy, it has serious constraints on its efficacy.
- ✓ For instance, when the DoD buys military supplies it must purchase a “fair proportion” of its contracts from small businesses operated by “disadvantaged individuals.”
- ✓ Specific legislative limits include:
  - ▶ **Freedom of Information Act (1966)**
  - ▶ **National Environmental Policy Act (1969)**
  - ▶ Privacy Act (1974)
  - ▶ Open Meeting Law (1976)

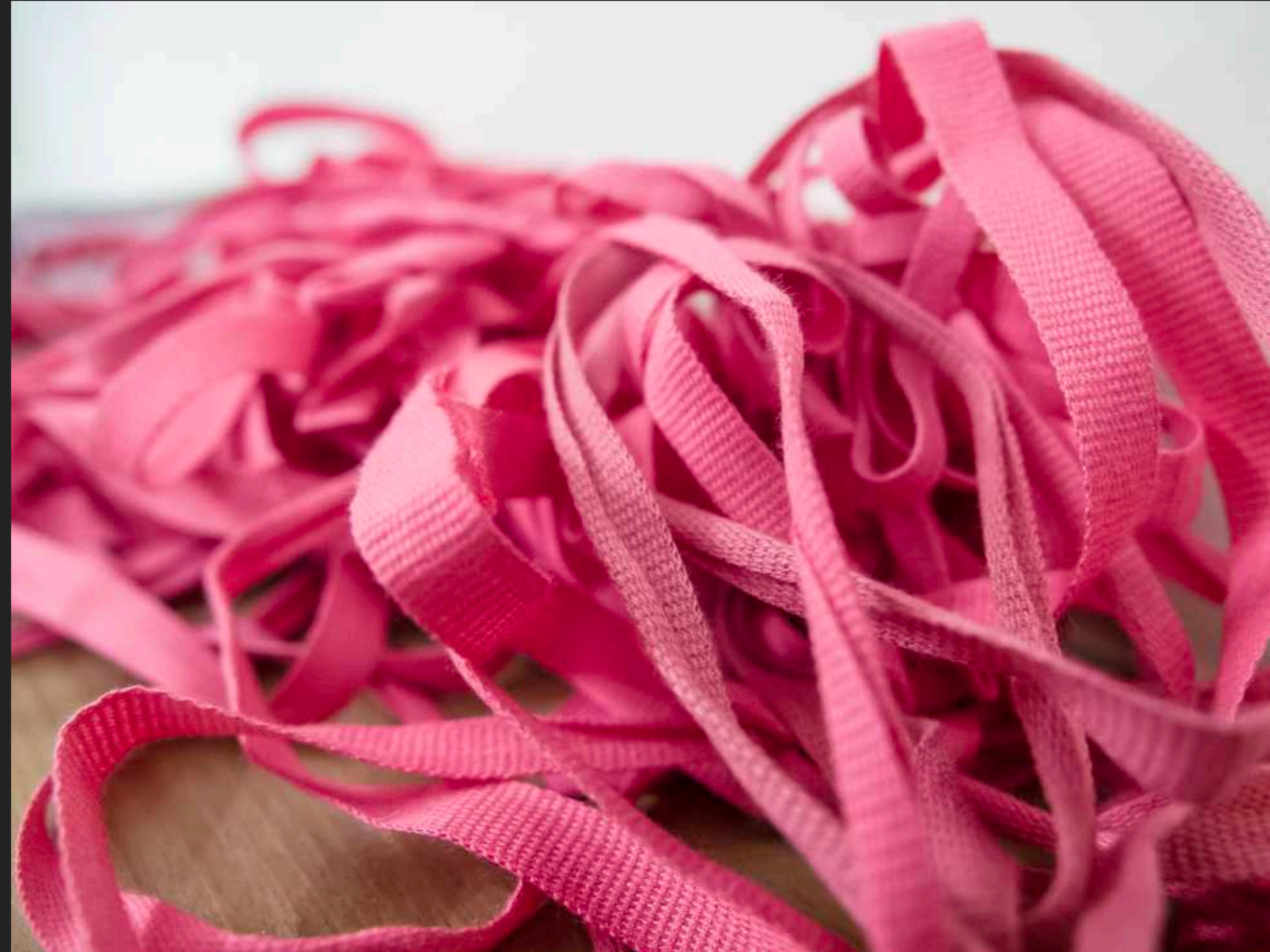




### IMPACT OF CONSTRAINTS

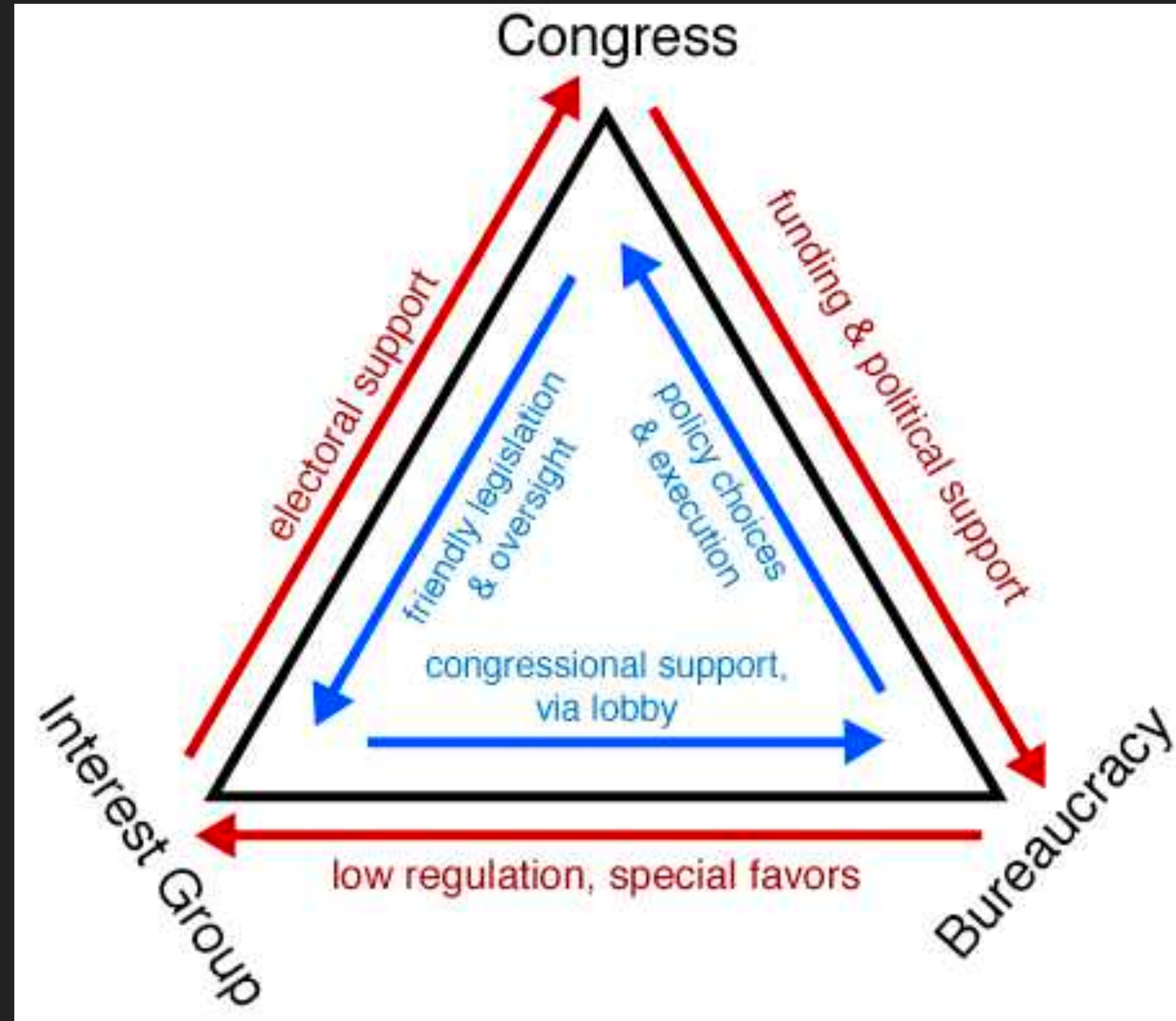
The constraints on the bureaucracy cause:

- ▶ the government to respond slowly.
- ▶ inconsistent government response.
- ▶ stasis. It becomes easier to block action than to take it.
- ▶ complaints about **red tape**.



### THE IRON TRIANGLE/ISSUE NETWORK

- ▶ Scholars used to describe the relationship between an agency, a committee, and an interest group as an **iron triangle**.
- ▶ National Rifle Association
- ▶ Sierra Club
- ▶ Contemporary scholars argue that an **issue network** has replaced the iron triangle. For every issue facing Congress/the bureaucracy, there is a massive array of interest groups, **think tanks**, academics, corporations, and media influencing decision-making.



# WEAKNESSES OF BUREAUCRACY

- ▶ The most common complaint about the bureaucracy is that it generates **red tape**, complex rules and procedures needed to get things done.
- ▶ **Bureaucratic imperialism**—overreach of agencies—most often occurs when Congress fails to define clear parameters.
- ▶ **Conflict** happens when bureaucratic agencies issue conflicting rules.
- ▶ **Duplication** occurs when two agencies require submission of identical forms.
- ▶ **Waste and cost overruns** are often the result of legal requirements to buy American or other restrictions.
  - ▶ The \$91 screw.

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Alan Keyes

### REFORMING BUREAUCRACY

- ▶ Presidents always promise reforms to the bureaucracy.
- ▶ Clinton called for “customer service” mentality in the bureaucracy, Bush and Obama called for cost controls.
- ▶ Much of the complexity of bureaucracy comes from the complex relationship of legislative and executive oversight, though.
- ▶ Some argue that American democracy is better protected through our occasionally disjointed, even chaotic bureaucracy.  
Why?

