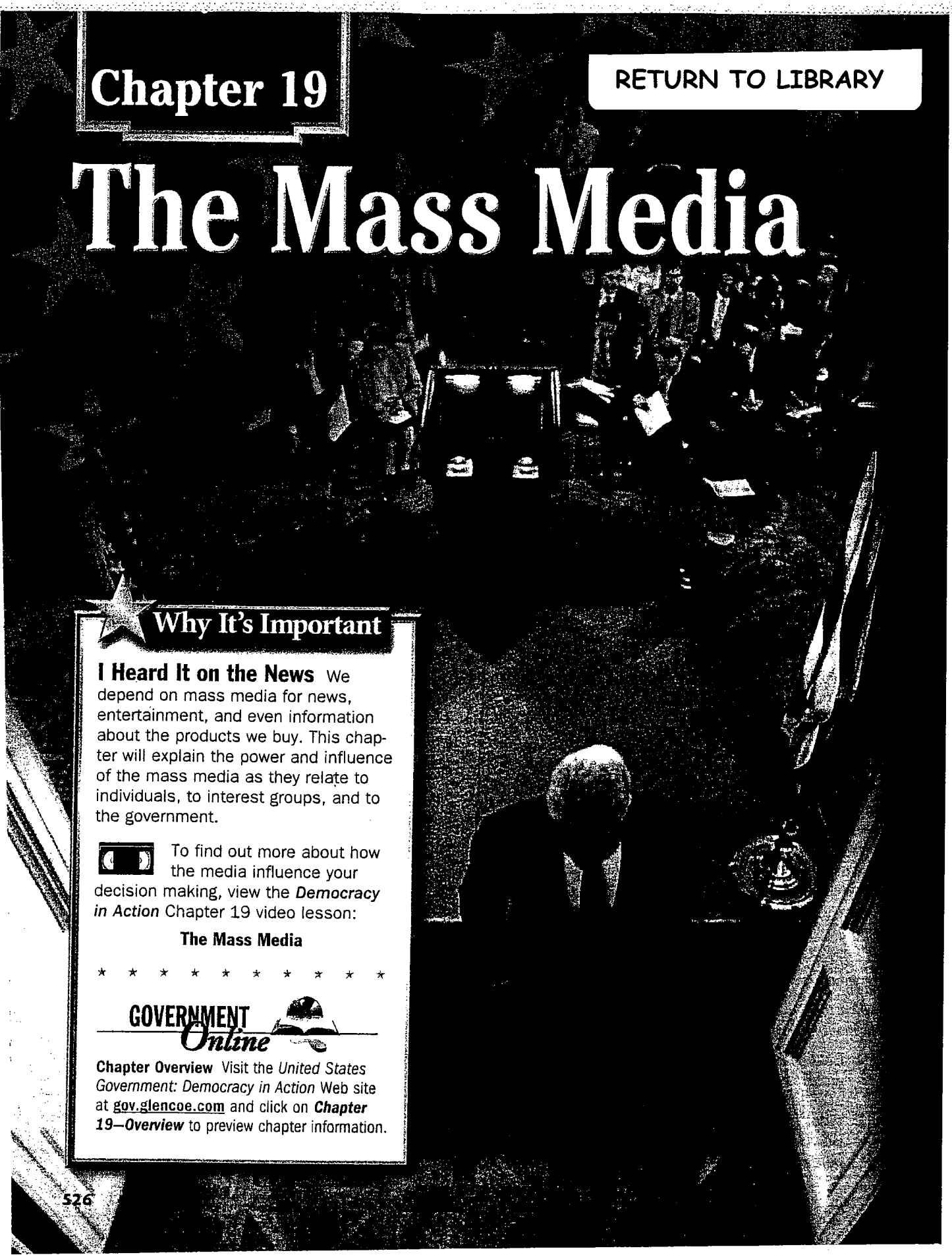
Chapter 19

The Mass Media



Why It's Important

I Heard It on the News We depend on mass media for news, entertainment, and even information about the products we buy. This chapter will explain the power and influence of the mass media as they relate to individuals, to interest groups, and to the government.

To find out more about how the media influence your decision making, view the ***Democracy in Action*** Chapter 19 video lesson:

The Mass Media

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GOVERNMENT Online

Chapter Overview Visit the *United States Government: Democracy in Action* Web site at gov.glencoe.com and click on ***Chapter 19—Overview*** to preview chapter information.

Section 1

How Media Impact Government

Reader's Guide

Key Terms

mass media, news release, news briefing, leak, media event, front-runner, spot advertising

Find Out

- What are the major forms of print and broadcast media?
- What is news? What is the major purpose of news reporting?

Understanding Concepts

Political Processes Television has become a very important part of modern politics, but not without consequences. How has television's role weakened the traditional role played by political parties?

COVER STORY

Talk Show Power

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, FEBRUARY 8, 1993

A man on a CNN talk show states that cellular phones cause cancer. The government announces a study of the issue, while the stock of cellphone maker Motorola drops 20 percent. At the urging of a local radio host, 2,000 Bostonians gather to protest taxes. These events illustrate the growing popularity—and power—of TV and radio talk shows. As audiences call in their opinions, government officials are listening. They know that audiences tend to be voters. For example, an amazing 98 percent of C-SPAN viewers voted in 1992. "It's a political early-warning sign," says pollster Harrison Hickman of the shows, "like radar in Greenland."

C-SPAN

C-SPAN logo

The mass media include all the means for communicating information to the general public. Traditionally there have been two types of mass media: print media such as daily newspapers and popular magazines, and the broadcast media of radio and television. The Internet has recently emerged as a powerful new interactive media for transmitting words, sounds, and images.

Supreme Court justice Lewis F. Powell explained the vital contribution of media to a democratic society:

> *"An informed public depends upon accurate and effective reporting by the news media. No individual can obtain for himself the information needed for the intelligent discharge of his political responsibilities. For most citizens the prospect of personal familiarity with newsworthy events is hopelessly unrealistic. In seeking out the news the press therefore acts as an agent of the public at large. It is the means by which the people receive that free flow of information and ideas essential to intelligent self-government."*
>
> —Lewis F. Powell, 1974

The relationship between the media and U.S. government officials, however, is complex. They need to work together, but their jobs often place them in adversarial positions. Politicians want to use the mass media to help them reach their goals, such as convincing the public that their policies are worthwhile and getting reelected. Politicians also want the media to pass on their messages just as the politicians present them.

The President and the Media

The president and the mass media, especially television, have a mutually beneficial relationship. As one of the most powerful

President Clinton leaves a press conference.

Political Processes Bill Clinton and Al Gore have fun with the media as the real television crew looks on. ***How valuable is a presidential media event?***

government officials in the world, the president is a great source of news. Almost 80 percent of all U.S. television coverage of government officials focuses on the president. The mass media, in turn, offer presidents the best way to "sell" their ideas and policies to the public.

Franklin D. Roosevelt was the first president to master the broadcast media. Broadcast television did not exist at the time of his presidency, and most newspaper owners did not support him. Therefore, FDR presented his ideas directly to the people with "fireside chats" over the radio. FDR had an excellent speaking voice. Journalist David Halberstam later described the impact of an FDR fireside chat:

> *"He was the first great American radio voice. For most Americans of this generation, their first memory of politics would be of sitting by a radio and hearing that voice, strong, confident, totally at ease. . . . Most Americans in the previous 160 years had never even seen a President; now almost all of them were hearing him, in their own homes. It was . . . electrifying."*
>
> —David Halberstam, 1980

The era of television politics really began with the 1960 presidential debate between Nixon and Kennedy. All presidents since that time have paid great attention to their television image and their use of that medium. In 1970 Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas told Congress:

> *"Television has done as much to expand the powers of the President as would a constitutional amendment formally abolishing the co-equality of the three branches of government."*
>
> —J. William Fulbright, 1970

The White House staff media advisers try to manage relations with the mass media by controlling the daily flow of information about the president. To do so, they use news releases and briefings, press conferences, background stories, leaks, and media events.

News Releases and Briefings A government news release is a ready-made story prepared by officials for members of the press. It can be printed or broadcast word for word or used as background information. A news release usually has a dateline that states the earliest time it can be published.

During a news briefing, a government official makes an announcement or explains a policy, decision, or action. Briefings give reporters the chance to ask officials about news releases. The president's press secretary meets daily with the press to answer questions and provide information on the president's activities.

Press Conferences A press conference involves the news media's questioning of a high-level government official. Presidents have held press conferences since the days of Theodore Roosevelt.

Over the years most presidential press conferences have been carefully planned events. In preparation for a press conference, the president often studies briefing books that identify potential questions. In addition, the White House may limit questions to certain topics, and aides may have friendly reporters ask specific questions they want the president to have the chance to address.

Other Means of Sharing Information Sometimes the president or another top official, such as the secretary of state, will give reporters important pieces of information called **backgrounders**. Reporters can

use the information in a story, but they cannot reveal their source. Reporters will make this kind of information public by saying, "Government sources said. . . ." or "A senior White House official said. . . ."

Backgrounders give government officials the opportunity to test new ideas or to send unofficial messages to other policy makers or even foreign governments. The media can, in this manner, make information public without making it official.

When officials give the media information totally off the record, reporters cannot print or broadcast the information. Off-the-record meetings can still be useful, however. Officials often establish valuable connections with newspapers in this way, and journalists may receive some tips to assist them with their news coverage.

Another way top officials try to influence the flow of information to the press is through a **leak**, or the release of secret information by anonymous government officials to the media. These officials may be seeking public support for a policy that others in the government do not like. Sometimes low-level officials may leak information to expose corruption or to get top officials to pay attention to a problem.

Media Events Modern presidents often stage a **media event**, a visually interesting event designed to reinforce a politician's position on some issue. A president who takes a strong stand against pollution, for example, makes a stronger statement by standing in front of a state-of-the-art, administration-supported manufacturing plant than by remaining in the Oval Office.

Media and Presidential Campaigns

Television impacts presidential campaigns. The first televised political advertisements appeared in the 1952 presidential campaign between Dwight Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson. Since then, television has greatly influenced who runs for office, how candidates are nominated, how election campaigns are conducted, and how political parties fit into the election process.

Identifying Candidates Television has influenced the types of candidates who run for office in several ways. First, candidates for major offices must be telegenic—that is, they must project a pleasing appearance and performance on camera. John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan were good examples of candidates for the television age. They

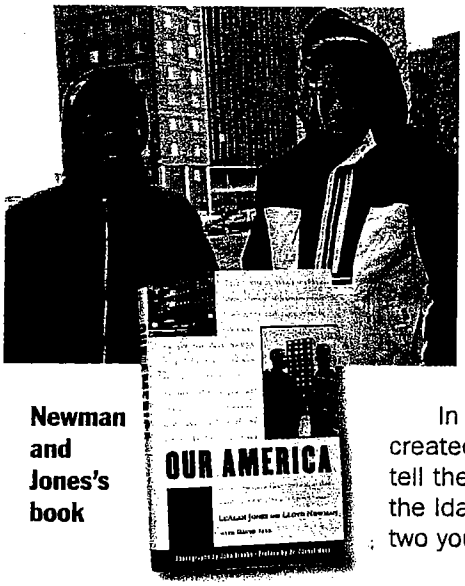
Convention Coverage

Civic Responsibility The major political parties carefully craft exciting convention programs to attract the media and the American public's attention. Here reporter Peter Jennings talks with Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) at the Democratic National Convention in 2004.

Why does each citizen have a responsibility to look beyond the images of candidates presented by the media?

We the People
Making a Difference

Lloyd Newman and LeAlan Jones



Newman and Jones's book

When LeAlan Jones and Lloyd Newman were both 13 years old, a producer approached them from National Public Radio (NPR) and asked them to document what it was like to live among the poverty and violence of Chicago's South Side. Armed with tape recorders, the two friends interviewed people who lived in and around the Ida B. Wells housing project, and also recorded their own experiences. The result was a 30-minute radio documentary titled "Ghetto Life 101." The documentary won many national and international awards.

In 1994 Lloyd and LeAlan created another documentary to tell the tragic story of a murder in the Ida B. Wells housing project: two young boys threw Eric Morse, a 5-year-old boy, out of a 14-story window when he refused to steal candy for them. LeAlan said their goal was "to expose how violence has spread to younger age groups and to find ways to prevent this kind of crime from recurring." In the documentary, titled "Remorse: The 14 Stories of Eric Morse," the two teens interviewed friends and neighbors who knew the victim and the suspects. They also recorded an interview with Eric Morse's mother, who refused to talk to anyone in the media except them. Their second documentary won another series of awards, including the prestigious Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award and the Peabody Award.

The two teens have given a voice to the people of Chicago's projects. In 1997 they published their first book, *Our America: Life and Death on the South Side of Chicago.*

had strong features and good speaking voices, and they projected the cool, low-key style that goes over well on television.

Second, television has made it much easier for people who are political unknowns to gain exposure and quickly become serious candidates for major offices. Bill Clinton was not well known when he addressed a national television audience at the Democratic convention in 1988. Four years later, as governor of Arkansas, he ran successfully for the Democratic nomination. In 1992 his campaign organization made skillful use of television. By the time the nominating convention met, Clinton had won enough primary elections to capture his party's nomination.

Third, television has encouraged celebrities from a wide variety of fields to enter politics. In recent years, actors, astronauts, professional athletes, and television commentators all have run successfully for Congress and for governorships. Since voters are familiar with such people from seeing them on television, these candidates have instant name recognition, which oftentimes aids them greatly in getting elected.

The Presidential Nominating Process

The mass media have fundamentally changed nominations for president through **horse-race coverage** of elections, especially primaries. This approach focuses on "winners" and "losers," and on "who's ahead," nearly as much as on issues or policy positions.

Early presidential primaries are critically important to a candidate's chances, even though the voters in these primaries represent only a small fraction of the national electorate. The media declare a candidate who wins an early primary, even if by a very small margin, a **front-runner,** or early leader. The press largely determines the weight attached to being a front-runner. The label

carries great significance, however. It is generally only the front-runners who are able to attract the millions of dollars in loans and campaign contributions as well as the volunteer help needed to succeed in the long, grueling nominating process.

The last time a party gathered for its nominating convention without knowing for certain who its nominee would be was in 1976, when Republican incumbent president Gerald Ford narrowly won a first-ballot nomination over Ronald Reagan. In 2004 the presidential contenders were identified by April. President George W. Bush ran for a second term in office. Massachusetts senator John Kerry had no serious challenger for the Democratic nomination after John Edwards withdrew from the race in March. Kerry later chose Edwards to serve as his running mate.

With the nominees in place, convention planners have time to produce a huge made-for-television production. Both Democrats and Republicans run carefully scripted convention programs with celebrities, music, and video presentations. Because the drama of choosing a nominee is missing, however, television audience ratings have fallen. As a result, the networks have decided to carry less convention coverage because the conventions are not "news."

Campaign Advertising Television has also affected how candidates communicate with the voters. The first candidates in American history did little campaigning; they left such work to political supporters. Andrew Jackson's election started the "torchlight era," in which candidates gave stump speeches and provided parades and expensive entertainment for voters and supporters. Around 1900, candidates began using advertisements in newspapers and magazines and mass mailings of campaign literature. In 1924 candidates began radio campaigning, and in 1952 television campaigning began with Eisenhower.

Television campaigns use **spot advertising,** the same basic technique that television uses to sell other products. Spot advertisements are brief (30 seconds to 2 minutes), frequent, positive descriptions of the candidate or the candidate's major themes. Advertisements may also present negative images of the opposing candidate.

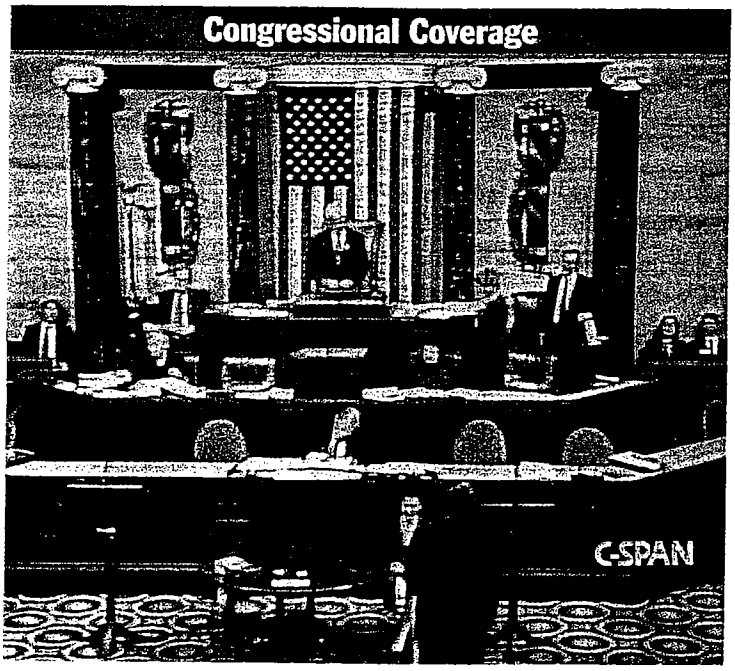
Financing TV Advertising The television advertising that has become such a necessary part of a political campaign is not cheap. Candidates rely on extensive fundraising efforts to afford the huge fees that pay for sophisticated television advertising campaigns. One 30-second commercial in a medium-size market can cost several thousand dollars. It has been estimated that a senator must raise more than $7,500 per week for 6 years to pay for a reelection campaign. Most of the money goes to television ads. Reed Hundt, Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, summed up the problem:

> *"The cost of TV time-buys makes fundraising an enormous entry barrier for candidates for public office, an oppressive burden for incumbents who seek reelection, a continuous threat to the integrity of our political institutions, and a principal cause of the erosion of public respect for public service."*
>
> —Reed Hundt, 1995

Political Parties Television has weakened the role of political parties as the key link between politicians and the voters in national politics. It has also made candidates less dependent on their political party organization. Today it is television rather than political parties that provides most of the political news for people interested in politics. Voters can get the information they need to decide how to vote without depending on the party organization. Television also lets candidates appeal directly to the people, bypassing party leadership. Should a candidate do well in the primary elections, the political party has little choice but to nominate him or her even if party leaders would rather nominate someone else. Finally, television advertising requires so much money that candidates cannot depend solely on their party to provide needed campaign funds. They must approach other donors if they are to run a competitive campaign and win an election.

GOVERNMENT Online

Student Web Activity Visit the *United States Government: Democracy in Action* Web site at **gov.glencoe.com** and click on ***Chapter 19—Student Web Activities*** for an activity about how media impact government.



Political Processes C-SPAN presents live and taped coverage of a broad range of events, including major floor debates and committee hearings in Congress, presidential and other news conferences, and speeches by political figures. ***How do you think C-SPAN coverage has impacted Congress?***

Congress and the Media

Thousands of reporters have press credentials to cover the House and Senate. Several hundred spend all their time on Congress. Most congressional coverage focuses on individual lawmakers and is published mainly in their home states. The news stories usually feature the local angle of national news stories.

Nearly every member of Congress has a press secretary to prepare press releases, arrange interviews, and give out television tapes. Congress, however, gets less media coverage than the president because of the nature of its work. Most important congressional work takes place in committees and subcommittees over long periods of time. Congress's slow, complicated work rarely meets television's requirements for dramatic, entertaining news.

Additionally, no single congressional leader can speak for all 535 members of Congress. Nationally known lawmakers often are seen as spokespersons for their own political parties rather than for Congress.

When the legislature is in the news, the mass media tend to report on the most controversial aspects of Congress, such as confirmation hearings, oversight activities, and the personal business of members.

Confirmation Hearings The Constitution requires Congress to confirm presidential appointments to high government posts. The Senate usually holds hearings to review such nominations. The most controversial hearings attract wide media coverage. Sometimes the media uncover damaging information about an appointee. In 1989, for example, President George H.W. Bush nominated former senator John Tower to be his secretary of defense. Media investigations contributed to harsh criticism of Tower's alleged alcoholism and marital problems. Despite having a solid legislative record, Tower became the first cabinet nominee to be rejected by the Senate in 30 years.

Oversight Activities In its role of legislative oversight, Congress has the power to review how the executive branch enforces laws and carries out programs. Oversight is handled through routine hearings, but sometimes lawmakers uncover a major scandal. Such investigations have become some of the biggest stories in American politics. In 1987, for example, Congress created a committee to investigate the secret sale of arms to Iran by Reagan White House aides and the use of money from the arms sale to support a rebel group in Nicaragua called the *contras*. Millions of viewers watched the nationally televised hearings.

Personal Business The media also look for scandal in the personal lives of members of Congress. Until recently the media usually overlooked personal problems of lawmakers. Now, however, even powerful lawmakers may not escape media attention. For example, under media scrutiny, in 1994 future Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich returned to the publisher a large cash advance on a book he was writing.

C-SPAN Television By the late 1970s, congressional leaders realized that they were losing to presidents in the never-ending struggle for more media coverage, especially on television. In 1979 the House began allowing closed-circuit television coverage of floor debates, and in 1986 the Senate began allowing television coverage of Senate debates. The floor proceedings of the House and Senate are now regularly broadcast to lawmakers' offices and to cable television subscribers across the nation via C-SPAN (Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network).

Congressional Recording Studios Both the House and Senate have extensive recording studios, where lawmakers prepare radio and television messages for the voters in their home districts. The tapes they make are then mailed to hometown stations for use in local news or public affairs programs.

The Court and the Media

Most Americans depend upon the mass media to learn about Supreme Court decisions. Yet the Supreme Court and lower federal courts receive much less media coverage than Congress or the president. During a recent Supreme Court term, for example, the *New York Times* reported on only three-fourths of the Court's decisions. Other newspapers covered less than half of the Court's cases.

Major newspapers and television and radio networks do assign reporters to cover the Supreme Court. However, the judicial branch gets less coverage because of the remoteness of judges and the technical nature of the issues with which the Court deals. Broadcast media are even less likely to report court decisions than newspapers because broadcast news does not allow time to explain issues in depth, and television news must be highly visual. Furthermore, since no broadcast cameras or microphones are allowed inside the Supreme Court, the broadcast media are unable to obtain images and footage of proceedings to show their audience.

Remoteness of Judges Since they are appointed officials, Supreme Court justices and other federal judges do not need publicity like elected politicians do. Judges must remain unbiased, and they may fear that publicity might interfere with their ability to decide cases fairly. They rarely appear on radio or television, although Justice Clarence Thomas often appears on C-SPAN talking about how the Court works.

Technical Issues Another reason that the Supreme Court receives less coverage than other government agencies is that the Court handles complex issues, many of which interest only a small number of people. In addition, the Court maintains the tradition that its opinions must speak for themselves. Thus, justices do not hold news conferences to explain major decisions or to answer questions.

Setting the Public Agenda

The mass media play an important role in setting the public agenda, a list of societal problems that both political leaders and citizens agree need government attention. Aid to the homeless, long-term health care for children and the elderly, teenage substance abuse, and high crime rates are all problems that are part of the public agenda.

The media's role in setting the public agenda is not to determine how these social problems will be solved but to bring these issues to the attention of the public and the government. The media highlight the importance of some problems over others. In this way, the media help determine which political issues the American people and their leaders will be discussing.

Issue Awareness and Network Competition Decisions about which issues the media should cover is influenced, in part, by competition with other media networks. This is especially true in television. Each television network is competing with other networks to attract the largest number of viewers. A larger viewing audience allows networks to charge more for the commercial advertising featured during their programming.

To try to attract the largest audience share possible, network news organizations may prioritize their news coverage according to what stories they believe will interest the largest number of viewers. For example, the nightly news may choose

to provide coverage about high-profile political scandals or stories on individual politicians rather than report on the exact accounting details of the federal budget. This is because broadcasters feel that many people would find such coverage dull and would not tune in. Likewise, complicated or highly technical news stories may not appeal to the broad television audience that national networks are attempting to attract.

The fact that the media cover some issues more thoroughly than others affects how people rank an issue's importance. As one noted foreign policy expert explains:

> *"The mass media may not be successful in telling their audience what to think, but the media are stunningly successful in telling their audience what to think about."*
>
> —Bernard Cohen, 1963

A study of media coverage of the Vietnam War, for example, found that the content of news stories about war-related events had less impact on people than the total amount of attention given to the war. The study indicated that the American people's opinion on the war was not based on a complete understanding of the issues and decisions shaping the war, but rather on the media's focus on the war itself. Thus, issues or problems that get the greatest attention in the media are often perceived by the viewing public to be the most important issues facing the nation.

Attitudes and Values The media also have an impact on public opinion toward government and issues of the day by influencing people's attitudes and values. The media play a role in political socialization, the learning process through which children and adults form their basic attitudes and values toward politics. While the majority of an individual's political socialization comes from that person's family and socioeconomic values, the way in which one views and filters information in books, magazines, radio, television and the Internet is also shaped by one's peers and school and by the groups to which one belongs. The media play a role in this process of socialization. The media, especially television, convey messages about war and peace, crime, environmental problems, voting, elections, foreign countries, and many other topics. The media may also affect people's general attitude about politics and the state of the world.

Sometimes the media can have a positive impact and reassure people that all is going well. More often, however, the media focus on bad news such as scandals, violence, or power struggles between Congress and the president. This focus on the negative has led to what some observers call "television malaise," a general feeling of distrust and cynicism among media watchers. Studies have shown, in fact, that people who rely on television as their main source of news generally have more negative feelings towards government and the political system.

Section 1 Assessment

Checking for Understanding

1. **Main Idea** Use a graphic organizer like the one below to identify how media impact government.

	Impact of Media
1. President	
2. Congress	
3. Courts	

2. **Define** mass media, news release, news briefing, leak, media event, front-runner, spot advertising
3. **Identify** press conference, backgrounder, horse-race coverage.
4. Why are television networks reducing coverage of nominating conventions?

Critical Thinking

5. **Formulating Questions** Write three questions that should be asked in order to determine whether the media challenges government actions effectively.

Concepts IN ACTION

Political Process Create a political cartoon that describes the role of the mass media in forming your basic ideas about government, politicians, and national and international events. Consider broadcast, print, and Internet media.

ISSUES to Debate

SHOULD NEWS ALSO BE PART ENTERTAINMENT?

Today it is sometimes difficult to tell the difference between news and entertainment. Some journalists are even paying for dramatic stories. "Checkbook journalism" is what some journalists are calling stories like that of convicted sex offender Mary Kay Letourneau, who was released from prison in 2004 after serving seven and a half years. In April 2000 a Washington court had ruled that Letourneau can keep earnings from television movies or other media that tell her story.

THE ROLE OF THE PRESS

Historically, the role of the press has been to inform the public to help them govern themselves intelligently. Framers of our government believed a responsible press and an informed public were necessary to protect democracy. In general, "checkbook journalism" and news as entertainment have been frowned upon by the mainstream press.

Today, even the local nightly television news may be driven by the ratings game to cover stories that entertain more than they inform. News organizations may not be as blatant as "checkbook journalists," but they may pay travel expenses, "consulting" fees, or promote a person's book or movie in exchange for a story.

The increase in media outlets, such as cable television and online computer services, creates greater competition for a share of the audience. Those outlets with the highest ratings earn the most money because advertisers pay more to reach a larger share of the audience.

ENTERTAINMENT VERSUS INFORMATION

Drama, violence, and celebrity coverage attract a larger audience than discussions of city government problems or foreign policy debates. However, some people think that the scramble for ratings compromises the role of the press, and that fairness and accuracy are sacrificed in the process.

Some members of the media point out that they are only giving the people what they demand. The media argue that people are free to choose the kind of news they want. Critics of this attitude respond that the press sets the public agenda. These critics believe the news publishers and broadcasters decide what is important for the public to think about. Because of this, critics believe the publishers and broadcasters should act responsibly.

Debating the Issue

SHOULD THE NEWS MEDIA'S ROLE INCLUDE ENTERTAINMENT?

Assume that you are a news producer at a local television station. How would you instruct your news team on this issue? Would you be concerned about ratings and advertising dollars that support your station?

KEY ISSUES

✔ How can paying for a story affect news quality?

✔ In today's society, does the press still have a responsibility to keep the public informed?

Debate Choose volunteers to represent station owners and serious journalists in debating the issue.

Vote After the debate, all class members should vote on the issue and discuss the results.

Section 2

Regulating Print and Broadcast Media

Reader's Guide

Key Terms

prior restraint, libel, shield law, fairness doctrine

Find Out

- Why does the federal government have more power to regulate the broadcast media than the print media?
- What issues did the Telecommunications Act of 1996 address?

Understanding Concepts

Civil Liberties Should all the liberties that are extended to the print media also be extended to the broadcast media? Explain your answer.

COVER STORY

Radio Pirates Shut Down

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA, APRIL 12, 1996

The Federal Communications Commission hauled Stephen Dunifer into court today for operating Free Radio Berkeley, an unlicensed station. Like many "guerrilla" broadcasters, Dunifer began by transmitting music and radical messages from various secret locations. "Pirate radio" has grown steadily since 1988, when the FCC shut down a station transmitting from a boat off Long Island. FCC officials charge that pirate broadcasts interfere with the signals of licensed stations. Many pirates claim their politics is the real reason for their troubles.

Headquarters of Free Radio Berkeley

Despite the limitations on radio pirates, the mass media in the United States have more freedom than anywhere else in the world. Such freedom has given rise to many diverse avenues of expression. Internet communications and cable television are among the fastest-growing forums. Government regulations are aimed at providing order, fairness, and access to media.

Protecting the Media

The First Amendment says in part that "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom . . . of the press." The guarantee of this freedom is fundamental to democracy. Thomas Jefferson described the importance of a free press when he argued:

> *"The people are the only censors of their governors. . . . The only safeguard of the public liberty . . . is to give them full information of their affairs through the channel of the public papers & to contrive that those papers should penetrate the whole mass of the people."*
>
> —Thomas Jefferson, 1787

Free Press Guaranteed In the United States, the First Amendment means that print media are free from **prior restraint**, or government censorship of information before it is published. Over the years the Supreme Court has struck down attempts to give government prior restraint powers. These decisions mean that editors and reporters have freedom to decide what goes in or stays out of their publications.

Libel Freedom of the press, however, is not absolute. False written statements intended to damage a person's reputation are called **libel**.

People who believe that falsehoods in a published story have damaged their careers or reputations may sue for libel. However, it is almost impossible for a public official to win a libel suit. The reason, in part, is because there is no law against criticizing government officials.

Public figures who believe they have been libeled may file a libel suit to discourage the press from continuing to do stories about them. If taken to court, publishers must prove that they intended to tell the truth. Defending against a libel suit can be very expensive. Also, public officials who file libel suits may win sympathy from the public who resent the way reporters report the news.

The Right to Gather Information

Freedom for the media to publish whatever they want means little if they cannot collect information about government actions and decisions. If government officials tell lies, hold secret meetings, or try to limit reporters' access to information in other ways, the media may not be able to provide the information citizens need. Does the First Amendment give the media special rights of access to courtrooms or government offices? Further, does it give reporters special protection for their news sources—the people they consult to get information?

The Right of Access The press has gone to court many times to fight for its **right of access** to information on the decisions of government. The results have been mixed. Generally the Supreme Court has rejected the idea that the media have special rights of access. In 1965, for example, in *Zemel* v. *Rusk*,[1] the Court ruled that "the right to speak and publish does not carry with it the unrestrained right to gather information." A similar ruling came down in 1972 in *Branzburg* v. *Hayes*[2] when the Court decided that "the First Amendment does not guarantee the press a constitutional right of special access to information not available to the public generally."

The lower courts have been more supportive of the right of access. In the last decade the media filed more than 200 right-of-access lawsuits. They won access in about 60 percent of these cases.

Despite such victories in the lower courts, authorities do not have to give the media special right of access to crime or disaster sites if the general public is excluded, although they usually do. Reporters may be kept out of legislative sessions that are closed to the general public. Neither do reporters have special access to grand jury proceedings.

Protection of Sources Reporters often need secret informants when investigating government officials, political radicals, or criminals. Success in gathering news may depend on getting information from people who do not want their names made public. If the courts, the police, or legislatures force reporters to name their sources, these sources of information may vanish. On the other hand, criminals may go unpunished if reporters do not give police information about them.

The press and the United States government have fought many battles over the media's right to keep sources secret. More than half the states have passed **shield laws** to protect reporters from having to reveal their sources. While no federal shield law exists, the Privacy Protection Act of 1980 prevents all levels of government from searching for and seizing source documentation, except in a few special circumstances.

Regulating Broadcast Media

In the United States most mass media are private, money-making businesses. Like other businesses, they are subject to some government regulation. The federal government has more power to regulate the broadcast media than the print media largely because broadcast media must share public airwaves.

The Federal Communications Commission

In 1934 Congress created the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The FCC is a government agency with authority to regulate interstate and international communications by radio, television, telephone, telegraph, cable, and satellite. The FCC has five commissioners appointed by the president with Senate approval. Each commissioner serves a five-year term.

See the following footnoted materials in the Reference Handbook:
1. *Zemel* v. *Rusk* case summary, page 768.
2. *Branzburg* v. *Hayes* case summary, page 755.

Massive Media The CEOs of America Online and Time Warner announce their companies' plans to merge. Such large business reorganizations require approval by federal regulators. This merger involved ownership of publishing, music, Internet, and film assets. ***Analyze the powers and regulatory activities of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).***

The FCC has broad powers to make rules that require stations to operate in the public interest. The most important power is to grant licenses to all radio and television stations in the country. The FCC's two major regulatory activities deal with the content of broadcasts and with ownership of the media.

Content Regulation The FCC cannot censor broadcasts. It can, however, influence the content of broadcasts by fining stations that violate rules and by threatening not to renew a station's license. Over the years the extent of FCC content regulation has varied in response to developments in technology, court rulings, and changes in political ideas about the proper role of government.

For example, during Ronald Reagan's presidency in the 1980s, the FCC took many steps to deregulate broadcasting by cutting hundreds of content rules. Rules limiting the amount of advertising were ended, and bans on commercials during children's shows were removed. Requirements that stations devote 10 percent of programming to news and public affairs were also eliminated.

Perhaps the most controversial change was removal of the **fairness doctrine.** This rule was established in 1949. It required broadcasters to provide airtime to both sides of a controversial issue. The doctrine was supposed to discourage one-sided coverage of issues and encourage stations to present a range of views.

The Supreme Court had upheld the doctrine in 1969 in *Red Lion Broadcasting Co.* v. *FCC.*[1] The Court stated that the doctrine protected a "[free] marketplace of ideas in which truth will ultimately prevail." The Court added that this type of regulation was justified in the broadcast media because the airwaves are scarce. If print media such as newspapers presented one-sided coverage, the Court said, anyone could start another paper.

Some broadcasters and political activists claimed the fairness doctrine was actually censorship. They argued it caused stations to avoid reporting on any type of controversy. In 1987 the FCC wanted to drop the fairness doctrine. Congress passed a law requiring the FCC to keep it, but Reagan vetoed the bill, saying:

> *"This type of content-based regulation by the Federal Government is, in my judgment, antagonistic to the freedom of expression guaranteed by the First Amendment."*
>
> —President Ronald Reagan

Reagan said the growth of cable television had added so many new outlets for different ideas that the scarcity argument no longer mattered.

Ownership Regulation The federal government is also concerned with setting rules for media ownership. Since owners can influence the messages their media present, the question of ownership is especially important for television, radio, and newspapers.

Shortly after its creation in 1934, the FCC began creating a complex set of rules aimed mainly at preventing the concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few people or large companies. For

See the following footnoted materials in the Reference Handbook: **1.** *Red Lion Broadcasting Co.* v. *FCC* case summary, page 764.

example, in 1941 the FCC said a company could not own more than eight radio stations in a single large market like Chicago or New York. In 1975 the FCC limited cross-ownership of media by stating that companies could no longer own both a newspaper and a television or radio station in the same market.

The idea behind such rules was to prevent a few owners from gaining control of the news and entertainment that reached people in the largest American cities. Supporters of ownership limits argued that democracy requires citizens to be exposed to a wide array of ideas. Further, they claimed that these limits promoted competition.

By the mid-1990s, however, attitudes about media ownership were changing dramatically. Emerging technologies had made new business relationships in telecommunications possible. Telephone lines could carry the same signals that cable companies carried, and cable companies might eventually offer phone service. Both could offer Internet hookups, videoconferencing, and other services. Voice, data, video, and images could be transmitted via broadcast, narrowcast, or point-to-point services. Phone companies realized that if government policy permitted, their lines could carry many additional information services. Broadcasters had already invested in cable and wanted to expand.

Broadcast owners and many other communications interests pressured Congress to review media communications policy. Congress agreed that the time had come to review telecommunications regulations, and in 1996, it passed the Telecommunications Act.

Telecommunications Act of 1996 This law ended or greatly relaxed many of the FCC's limits on media ownership. For instance, the law removed any national limits for the ownership of radio stations. It also removed any limits on the number of television stations one company might own as long as the company controlled no more than 35 percent of the national market. It allowed cross-ownership of cable and broadcast stations. Further, it dropped some of the old rate regulations for cable systems and permitted telephone companies to sell television services. Finally, Congress required the FCC to review media ownership rules every two years. Since then the FCC has been regularly conducting studies on ownership issues.

COMPARING *Governments*

Media Access, 2000

Country	Televisions: Total number*	Televisions: Number per 1,000 people	Radios: Total number*	Radios: Number per 1,000 people	Personal Computers: Total number*	Personal Computers: Number per 1,000 people
China	408,669	321	426,492	335	20,370	16
Iraq	1,854	83	5,114	229	NA	NA
Israel	1,710	288	3,112	524	1,508	254
Mexico	27,711	272	33,518	329	5,196	51
Russia	59,643	410	60,661	417	6,255	43
United States	226,826	806	595,489	2,116	164,632	585
Thailand	15,697	254	14,461	234	1,483	24
United Kingdom	31,076	521	86,072	1,443	20,161	338

* *Total in thousands* *NA = not available*

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2002*; *The New York Times 2000 Almanac.*

Critical Thinking **The United States leads the world in the number of media available for one country.** ***Which country has the largest number of televisions? Which country has the largest number of televisions per 1,000 people?***

Empowerment vs. Censorship

Parental Rights Supporters and opponents of the V-chip met at the White House to discuss its implications. In February 1996, President Clinton signed into law the requirement that all new television sets be equipped with the V-chip device by 1998. ***Do you think the V-chip constitutes a governmental intrusion into Americans' homes, or is it an empowerment of the television viewer?***

It is often difficult to accurately predict the consequences years down the road of major new laws. This is especially true for laws dealing with complicated issues like communications technology. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 is a good example. A key objective was to increase competition and loosen media monopolies. Contrary to what many predicted, the Act appears to have actually led to an even greater concentration of media ownership.

Since passage of the Act, media companies have been merging to create powerful new communications giants. In 2000, for example, America Online (AOL), the nation's largest Internet service provider, merged with Time-Warner, the nation's second largest cable system. At the time this gave the new company nearly half the U.S. Internet market and more than 12 million cable subscribers. Even greater concentration has taken place in radio. A few companies now dominate radio formats and key markets. Four companies now claim two-thirds of all the listeners of news radio stations.

Policymakers and interest groups will often disagree about whether the consequences of a new law are good or bad. For example, has consolidation in the radio broadcasting given listeners more variety in music? Some argue yes. They point out that companies that buy several stations eliminate duplication in an effort to reach many different audiences. Others claim listeners have fewer choices. They note that today's pop music radio formats overlap. For example, stations that claim to be "rock," "pop," or "alternative" actually play many of the same songs.

Finally, the Telecommunications Act also tried to combat the growth of violent and obscene content in the mass media. It prohibited obscene or harassing conversation on any telecommunications facility. The law also ordered the broadcast industry to establish ratings for objectionable programming. Parents could use the "V-chip" to program their televisions to block programs with objectionable content. All new televisions sold in the United States were to include the V-chip by 1998. The Telecommunications Act also amended the federal criminal code to apply current obscenity laws to Internet users. However, this portion of the Act was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1997 as an undue limitation on free speech.

Media and National Security

Tension between the need for the government to keep secrets to protect national security and the citizens' need for information will always exist in a free society. Tensions are especially evident in foreign affairs where intelligence information and military secrets are involved. The government attempts to control information about national security by classifying some information as secret and by limiting press coverage of military actions.

The federal government gives a "secret" security classification to many government documents. During the Vietnam War, the *New York Times* published a secret Defense Department study describing how the United States became involved in the war. The government tried to stop the publication. In *New York Times Co. v. United States*[1] (1971), the Supreme Court ruled that the publication did not harm national security.

Government restriction on media coverage of military actions has been varied. During the Vietnam War, there were few limits on the press. Reporters in Vietnam roamed freely across combat zones, sometimes hitching rides on Army helicopters or jeeps to get to the heart of a battle. Pictures and stories on the war were broadcast daily on television news. During the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the Defense Department limited the media to a small group of reporters who were permitted to visit battlefields. Most reporters had to depend upon official briefings to gain information about military progress. In the 2003 Iraq War, the Pentagon allowed 500 reporters to accompany troops into battle. These "embedded" journalists used portable cameras, satellites, and cell phones to report live on encounters with the enemy as well as on the daily life of the troops. The reporters did not, however, have complete freedom. For instance, they could not announce their exact location or the direction they were traveling. If they did so, the military removed their embedded status.

Controlling War Coverage

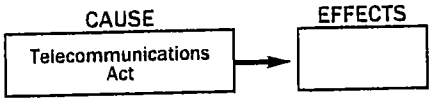
Freedom of the Press General Colin Powell briefs the media during the Persian Gulf War. The government controlled access to both the area of active combat and military personnel. ***Do you think the government should have the right to limit information during times of war?***

See the following footnoted materials in the Reference Handbook: 1. *New York Times Co. v. United States*, case summary, page 762.

Section 2 Assessment

Checking for Understanding

1. **Main Idea** Use a graphic organizer like the one below to show how the Telecommunications Act of 1996 affected the FCC.



2. **Define** prior restraint, libel, shield law, fairness doctrine.
3. **Identify** right of access.
4. Explain why the federal government regulates broadcast media more than print media.
5. Why have regulations on media ownership been loosened in recent decades?

Critical Thinking

6. **Synthesizing Information** Why might the need for national security conflict with the First Amendment protections that are usually given to the media?

Concepts IN ACTION

Civil Liberties Interview, write, or e-mail a local newspaper editor to find out what precautions the newspaper takes to prevent libel suits. Share the information you obtain with your classmates.

Skills

Study and Writing

Conducting Interviews

Interviews allow you to gather information about interesting people such as Kay Bailey Hutchison, United States Senator from Texas. Kay Bailey Hutchison was the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate from Texas. By 2002, she had become one of the top five leaders of Senate Republicans. She has helped draft bills reforming the tax code, the educational system, and airline security. She also serves on Senate subcommittees dealing with defense issues.

Learning the Skill

To interview Kay Bailey Hutchison or anyone else, you would want to follow these steps.

a. Make an appointment Contact the person, and explain why you want the interview, what kinds of things you hope to learn, and how you will use the information. Discuss where and when you will conduct the interview, and ask if you may use a tape recorder.

b. Gather background information Find out about the early life, education, career, and other accomplishments of the person you will interview. Familiarize yourself with books or articles that the interviewee has published. Then do research on the topics you will discuss.

c. Prepare questions Group questions into subject categories, beginning each category with general questions and moving toward more specific questions. Formulate each question carefully, phrasing it in a way that encourages a well-developed answer. If the answer could simply be *yes* or *no*, rephrase the question.

d. Conduct the interview Introduce yourself and restate the purpose of the interview. Ask questions and record responses accurately. Ask follow-up questions to fill gaps in information.

e. Transcribe the interview Convert your written or tape-recorded notes into a transcript, a written record of the interview presented in a question-and-answer format.

Kay Bailey Hutchison

Practicing the Skill

Answer the following questions based on an interview you might do with Kay Bailey Hutchison.

1. What kind of background information might you gather?
2. What are some broad categories of questions you might ask?
3. What are some specific questions you might ask?
4. What would you do if you ran out of prepared questions and there was a lull in the interview?
5. How would you deal with keeping an accurate record of direct quotes from Hutchison?

Application Activity

Interview an interesting family member or friend about an important or unique experience. As you transcribe the interview, be aware of common themes and interesting facts. Present your transcription to the class.

Section 3

The Internet and Democracy

Reader's Guide

Key Terms

partisan, electronic mailing list, action alert, electronic petition

Find Out

- What are some of the identifying characteristics of the Internet?
- Name three ways that the Internet has changed how citizens participate in government.

Understanding Concepts

Public Policy Do you agree with the Supreme Court's decision that much of the content on the Internet is protected by the First Amendment? Explain your answer.

COVER STORY

Politicians Online

WASHINGTON, D.C., AUGUST 30, 1996

The Internet is rapidly becoming a hot media tool for political candidates. Among the first to venture into cyberspace was Republican presidential challenger Bob Dole, who established his Web site earlier this year. In 7 weeks, the site had more than 500,000 visitors. Dole strategists know that young people are the most frequent travelers on the information superhighway. They also realize that President Bill Clinton's biggest victory in 1992 was among young voters. Some political experts compare the Internet to TV before candidates fully realized its value for getting a message out. The "Net" is growing like 1950s television, they observe, only at a faster rate.

Bob Dole's Web site

The Internet began in 1969 as a communications device for the Pentagon. Today the Internet is a vast web of computer networks linked all over the world. It is rapidly becoming a new type of global electronic mass media, one that is having a major impact on American government and politics. As one experienced presidential campaign manager explains, "Day-to-day life is happening on the Internet and the political world is catching up."

Key Features of the Internet

The Internet offers several unique benefits for politics and government.

Widespread The Internet is rapidly developing an audience large enough to rival older forms of mass media. Web traffic has been growing by 100 percent per year, as compared to less than 10 percent for phone networks. In 2001 about 60 percent of Americans had home Internet access. By 2005 more than 75 percent of Americans are expected to be using the Net at home. Many of these new users will also be new voters.

Interactivity Traditional mass media are unidirectional. Radio, televison, and newspapers provide a shared experience for huge audiences, but they do so mainly through one-way transmission of images and ideas. In contrast, the Internet supports interactive communications among many people at once. This allows political activists or anyone else to easily find people with similar interests and views and quickly mobilize them in huge numbers to organize activities and contact government officials.

Global Scope The Internet is a world-wide collection of Web sites and computer servers accessible to people all around the world. The Internet's global nature ensures that this medium represents a wide range of content and

opinions, and this diversity is one of the Internet's major strengths. At the same time, the Internet is a decentralized medium with few rules. Since Internet organizations and activities are spread around the world, it is often not clear which national law should govern Internet activities. For example, one music swapping service, KaZaA, distributes its software from the South Pacific island nation of Vanuatu, is managed from Australia, and uses computer servers in Denmark. This makes it very difficult for Hollywood media companies to try to sue KaZaA for violating United States copyright law.

Gathering Information

Every day, more and more Americans are using the Internet for information on political issues and to access government at all levels.

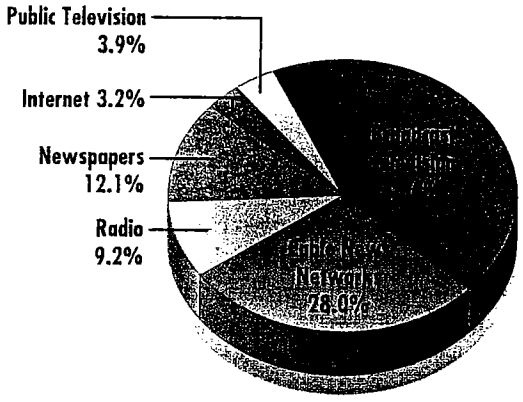
Political Web Sites Web sites devoted to political issues are everywhere on the Internet. All of the major newspapers and newsmagazines, like *Time* and the *New York Times*, have Web sites and maintain **archives,** or files, of older stories. Television and radio networks like NBC, CNN, and National Public Radio (NPR) also have sites.

In addition, there are thousands of Web sites devoted to politics and government. These sites are sponsored by government agencies, Congress, political parties, universities, and various interest groups such as the Sierra Club and the National Rifle Association. Public Agenda (publicagenda.org) is an example of a site offering balanced information on major issues like the economy, foreign policy, and crime. The site presents articles and data on these topics as well as in-depth information on both sides of many other issues.

Keep in mind, however, that many Web sites are **partisan,** meaning they offer information and ideas that support only their own point of view on issues. A good Web site will tell you who owns and maintains it and when it was last updated. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the user to evaluate the information on a Web site and determine whether or not it is reliable, accurate, and up-to-date.

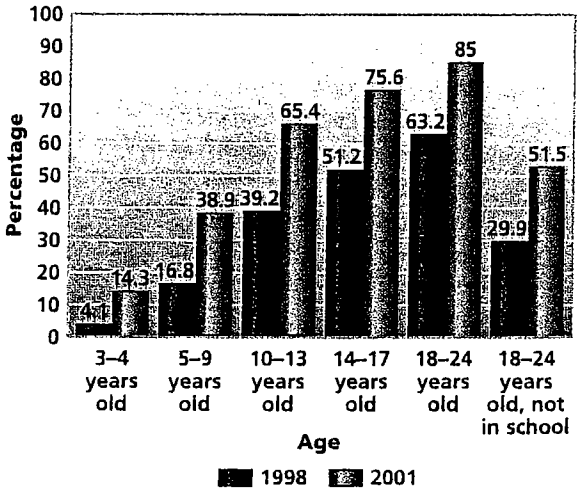
Media in the United States

Primary Source of News, 2003*



* Persons 18 years or older

Internet Use by Young People

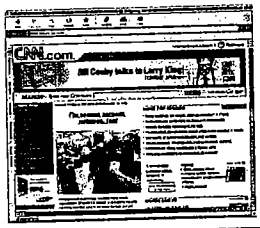


Sources: National Telecommunications and Information Administration and Economics and Statistics Administration, *A Nation Online: How Americans Are Expanding Their Use of the Internet* (Washington, D.C.: 2002); Television Bureau of Advertising, Nielsen Media Research Custom Survey, 2003.

Critical Thinking **Although Internet use has steadily increased over the last decade, television remains the primary source of news for most Americans. *Between 1998 and 2001, which age group saw the largest increase in Internet use?***

Bringing the News to You

Directing Politics
The CNN newsroom is the heart of the organization's news-gathering operation. The network uses modern technology to transmit information around the world almost instantaneously. ***Do networks like CNN maintain too much influence over politicians and public policy? Why or why not?***



Tracking Legislation A Web site named after Thomas Jefferson provides the public access to a great deal of information about the federal legislature and its daily activities. THOMAS (thomas.loc.gov) allows you to search for all versions of House and Senate bills by either bill number or key word. The "Daily Digest" section of the *Congressional Record* is also available online, providing a brief summary of each day's activities during each current congressional session. Reports filed by the committees within the Senate and the House of Representatives are also available on the database. The Library of Congress hosts and updates the Web site on a daily basis with the help of the Government Printing Office. THOMAS is also a useful place to find contact information on members of Congress and other offices that work within the legislative branch.

Electronic Mailing Lists Persons interested in political issues can subscribe to electronic mailing lists. These are automated e-mail notifications that provide subscribers with current information on a topic. List owners or operators conduct research on the issue, such as gun control, civil liberties, or copyright laws, upon which their list focuses. Receiving these updates is a good way to keep informed about political issues as they are being discussed in the public or considered by Congress or other government agencies.

To subscribe to an electronic mailing list, you will need to provide an e-mail address. Several Web-based directories can help you find a variety of lists on a great many different kinds of issues. The easiest way to find a Web-based list that suits your interests is to conduct an Internet search using key terms such as "political listservs" or "political discussion groups." In addition, the national offices of the Republican and Democratic Parties operate several mailing lists that provide information about issues, candidates, press briefings, and upcoming events.

E-Government Governments at all levels have begun providing services and information over the Internet. For example, residents of Vilas County, deep in the north woods of Wisconsin, are going online to access property tax bills, get forms for marriage licenses, or find town board meeting times. Across the nation people are using their local and state government Web sites to pay parking tickets, report abandoned cars or illegal dumping, register to vote, get absentee ballots, view the state budget, or obtain a hunting or fishing license, among may other activities. Jane Hague, a city

councilwoman in King County, Washington, put it this way: "The motto for the twenty-first century for government should be 'On line, and not in line'."

Federal government Web sites contain vast amounts of information. However, accessing the federal government electronically can be difficult. Separate federal agencies have different, often poorly organized sites, some of which are not user friendly. In 2002 Congress passed the **E-Government Act** to address such problems. This law established the Office of Electronic Government to help federal agencies work together to provide better online service to the public.

The federal government also provides and maintains an official Web site, firstgov.gov. This site offers access to a wide variety of governmental information, including statistical data, contacts and directories within government agencies, forms and applications for government services, laws and regulations, and historical documents. The site also provides links to information on all 50 states and many local organizations, and it offers an easy and convenient way to contact local, state, and federal representatives by e-mail or telephone. Many of the links in firstgov.gov are available in a variety of languages.

Impact On Citizen Participation

The Internet is fast becoming a powerful tool for citizen activism. It is helping people organize with like-minded individuals, share information, build consensus on issues, and put pressure on government officials.

Communicating With Officials Telling legislators and other government officials what you think is one of the most basic ways individual citizens can participate in representative democracy. E-mail has become the most widely used Internet tool for contacting officials. Congress, for example, receives about 12 e-mail messages every second, adding up to over a million per day. Many Web sites offer interactive message boards and e-mail directories that make it easy to send electronic messages day or night to members of Congress, state legislators, your mayor, or a local school board member. You can even send e-mail messages directly to the president!

Action Alerts and Petitions Political organizers have developed several tools that take advantage of the Internet's power to spread

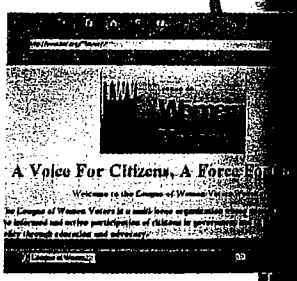
POLITICS *and You*

Becoming an Informed Voter

One responsibility that accompanies your right to vote is that of being an informed voter. To achieve this status, you must get beyond the hype to determine who is worthy of your support.

The media can help you to make these decisions, if you consider what you see and hear in the media carefully. Be aware that candidates' ads and paid political broadcasts do not present an objective look at the issues. They are merely attempts to gain your vote. Rely instead on news stories and interviews of candidates. Also, the print media often provide more information about candidates and issues than the broadcast media do.

Debates between candidates can be informative. In addition, "meet-the-candidates" nights allow you to directly compare opponents in many races that will be on the ballot. Nonpartisan voters' guides, such as those published by the League of Women Voters, are another good source of factual and objective information.



League of Women Voters' Web page

Participating IN GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY

Create a Political Ad Working in groups of four or five, research the background of a political candidate or officeholder. Create a one-minute radio or television advertisement for the person. Groups should present their advertisements. As a class, analyze whether each ad is objective.

information very quickly in many directions. One such tool is an **action alert.** This is a message from an interest group to its members that calls upon each member to immediately respond by telephone, fax, or e-mail to a specific lawmaker, group of lawmakers, or other official. An alert might instruct you, for example, to contact a lawmaker to tell them that you support or oppose a bill on gun control that their committee will be considering. Action alerts usually give background on the issue, a date by which you must send your message, and clear instructions on what to ask for.

Another tool is an **electronic petition.** This is a message that asks you, along with many other people, to "sign" your name electronically to a request that is going to an official. Net users send their electronic signatures via e-mail to a collection point. The petition organizers check the signatures, removing those that seem questionable, and organize and print the results. They then give the results to officials via mail or in person. The goal of an electronic petition drive is to show lawmakers that a large number of people agree on how an issue should be decided.

Grassroots Web Sites The 2000 election saw a new development—individual citizens setting up their own independent Web sites in support of their favorite candidates. More than 6,500 unofficial Web sites had been created by the end of the election in support of either Al Gore or George W. Bush. Creating such sites gives citizens an opportunity to become involved in election politics at many levels of government without ever leaving home. Experts have noted that, for many people, grassroots Web sites are the electronic way of putting a bumper sticker on a car or posting a sign in a front yard. Some campaign Web sites have begun offering instructions on how to set up your own Web site to support a candidate.

Candidates and major political parties are discovering, however, that independent Web sites can also cause problems. These sites may present misleading information about a candidate. They may also have links to extremist groups that the candidate would not want to be associated with. Further, even with new Federal Election Commission disclosure requirements, it can be difficult for visitors to tell the difference between official and unofficial Web sites.

Volunteering Donating your time and effort to an election campaign or political cause can be a highly effective way to participate in politics. Election candidate Web sites usually give you information on how to sign up for such jobs as working on a telephone bank, going door-to-door for the candidate, or mailing brochures. Further, many people have started "cybervolunteering." This process involves volunteer activities that can only be done on the Internet. One popular activity is to send an electronic postcard provided by the candidate you support to a friend, usually with a personalized message from you. Another method is to put a "banner ad" supporting a candidate or issue on your own personal Web site.

Democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean used his campaign Web site very effectively during the months leading up to the 2004 primary election season. Dean used the Internet to gather volunteers, and he registered over 500,000 people to help with his campaign. Dean was also able to use the Web site to raise several million dollars in campaign funds, much of it coming in individual donations averaging less than $80 per person.

Electronic Voting The growth of the Internet has led to calls for online voting in primary and general elections. A number of states are conducting studies of how online voting might work, and a few states have held limited tests of electronic voting. In the 2000 presidential elections, the Department of Defense conducted a pilot program that allowed overseas residents of certain counties in four states to cast ballots online. Proponents of online voting claim that it will make voting easier and more efficient. Others, however, are concerned about sabotage or vote stealing by hackers.

Arizona Democrats used online balloting in their 2000 primary. This was the nation's first official use of the Internet in an election. Voters had a four-day window in which to cast their computer vote at various locations across the state, such as in libraries, at home, at school, or at work. Some older computer models and Macintosh computers had difficulty accessing the official Web site, but organizers claimed that voter turnout was approximately double that of the previous primary and that about 40 percent of the over 80,000 votes were cast online.

Members of the Michigan Democratic Party agreed to allow online voting as an option, along

with in-person and absentee ballot voting, in the state's 2004 caucus. Although some hail this decision as progress in voter services, critics claim that online voting discriminates against underprivileged and minority voters who are less likely to have online access.

Challenges for Public Policy

The rise of a major technology like the Internet creates a need for new laws to deal with the impact of that technology on politics, business, and people's daily lives. Everyone from lawmakers in Congress to local school board officials have been struggling to keep up with the legal implications of the Internet.

Offensive Content The Internet gives anyone with a personal computer the ability to spread their ideas to a global audience. This has led to an explosion of creativity and new opportunities for civic participation. However, it has also allowed anyone, anywhere, to gain access to obscene content in the privacy of their own homes.

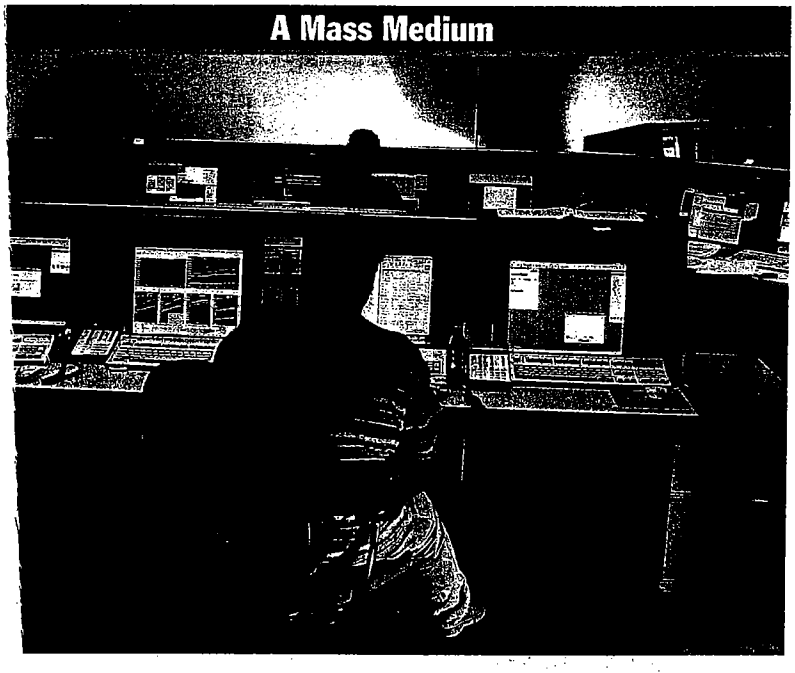
The Supreme Court ruled in *Reno* v. *American Civil Liberties Union*[1] (1997) that the First Amendment guarantees freedom of expression on the Internet. As a result, Congress has struggled with how to protect children from online pornography while at the same time upholding constitutional protections of free speech.

The first attempt of Congress, the 1996 Communications Decency Act, made publishing "indecent" or "patently offensive" material on the Internet a federal offense. The Supreme Court ruled that such limits interfered with the free speech rights of adults. Congress then responded with the 1998 Child Online Protection Act. This law ordered Web site operators to require an adult identification device, such as a credit card, before granting access to material "harmful to minors." So far the Supreme Court has blocked this law from taking effect by sending it back to a lower federal court for more study.

In 2000 Congress passed the Children's Internet Protection Act. This law requires public libraries that accept federal funds to install anti-pornography filters on computers used by the public. The filters block Web sites that present offensive content by using key words or lists. One argument employed against the use of such filtering software was that the filters sometimes block non-obscene sites.

In 2003 the Supreme Court ruled in the case of *United States* v. *American Library Association* that the law's filter requirement does not violate the First Amendment rights of library users. While the Supreme Court justices agreed that the software can make mistakes, they emphasized that adults could ask to have a filter turned off if it prevented them from accessing sites they wished to see. Even though it was argued that library patrons might be too embarrassed to ask for the filter to be turned off, the Court replied that "the Constitution

A Mass Medium



Talking to the World America Online (AOL) technology experts monitor the online connections of AOL's 34 million members 24 hours a day from this control room. ***Does the Internet interfere with the duty of the media to responsibly inform the public? Explain.***

See the following footnoted materials in the Reference Handbook:

1. *Reno* v. *American Civil Liberties Union* case summary, page 764.

A Technological Challenge

Controlling Access
The Internet allows people a great deal of freedom to gather information easily. Congress has struggled to maintain this ease of access while protecting children from offensive Internet content. ***What constitutional right is at the heart of the debate over Internet filtering?***

does not guarantee the right to acquire information at a public library without any risk of embarrassment." The Court also noted that libraries already exclude pornography from their shelves and that Congress can attach conditions to federal funding.

Taxing E-Commerce The expansion of the Internet has been accompanied by the growth of e-commerce, or the sale of goods and services online. Along with this growth, questions have arisen about taxation of this new form of commerce. Because state sales tax laws are so cumbersome, the Supreme Court has blocked attempts by state governments to require online retailers to collect sales taxes. State governments claim that since e-commerce sales are projected to exceed $140 billion by the mid-2000s, they will lose billions of dollars if they cannot impose these taxes. A group of states support a plan to use the same tax rate for all e-commerce sales, but online retailers, technology companies, and Congress all remain resistant to these taxes.

Section 3 Assessment

Checking for Understanding

1. **Main Idea** Use a graphic organizer like the one below to analyze key features of the Internet.

Key Features
1.
2.
3.

2. **Define** partisan, electronic mailing list, action alert, electronic petition.
3. **Identify** E-Government Act.
4. Why has it been difficult for media companies to sue Internet file swapping organizations?

Critical Thinking

5. **Demonstrating Reasoned Judgment** What are some benefits and weaknesses of electronic voting?

Concepts IN ACTION

Public Policy Visit your local library and ask the librarians about their opinions on indecent Internet materials versus the right of free speech. Share the opinions you gather with your classmates.

Chapter 19

Assessment and Activities

GOVERNMENT Online

Self-Check Quiz Visit the *United States Government: Democracy in Action* Web site at **gov.glencoe.com** and click on ***Chapter 19—Self-Check Quizzes*** to prepare for the chapter test.

Reviewing Key Terms

Choose the letter of the correct answer below to complete each sentence.

a. action alerts
b. fairness doctrine
c. prior restraint
d. news releases

1. Government officials prepare ____, ready-made stories for the press.
2. The _____ requires television and radio stations to present both sides of a controversial topic.
3. The First Amendment frees the United States print media from ____.
4. An interest group sends ____ that call on members to respond quickly to a political development.

Chapter Summary

Media and Government

President: Interacts with media through news releases and briefings, press conferences, background stories, leaks, and media events

Congress: Media coverage focuses on confirmation hearings, oversight activities, and the personal business of members

Court: Receives less media attention due to the remoteness of judges and the technical nature of their work

The Internet helps citizens to gather information about political issues and government services and to communicate with legislators and government leaders

Regulation of the Media

First Amendment protects freedom of the press

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulates media content and ownership

Telecommunications Act of 1996 updated regulations on cost, competition, and program content

Debates over regulation of Internet content and e-commerce taxation continue

Recalling Facts

1. What are the two traditional types of mass media?
2. What amendment protects the media?
3. What government agency regulates the number of radio and television stations a single company can own?
4. What steps does the federal government take when attempting to control sensitive national security issues?
5. How does the Internet assist citizen activists?

Understanding Concepts

1. **Political Processes** How has television's role in the political process developed?
2. **Public Policy** Why is the issue of e-commerce taxation difficult to resolve?

Critical Thinking

1. **Demonstrating Reasoned Judgment** Should the media have been limited in its coverage of the 1991 Persian Gulf War? Explain.
2. **Synthesizing Information** Use a graphic organizer like the one below to list two or more arguments for and against this statement: "The media's greatest power is in the way they define reality for the American people." Then explain why you agree or disagree with the statement.

For	Against
1.	1.
2.	2.
Conclusion:	

Chapter 19

Analyzing Primary Sources

Among the most famous campaign debates of the nineteenth century were the 1858 Abraham Lincoln–Stephen Douglas debates for one of Illinois' two seats in the U.S. Senate. Although he lost the election, the debates made Lincoln's a household name. Read the excerpt and answer the questions that follow.

Douglas:
"Ladies and gentlemen: I appear before you to-day for the purpose of discussing the leading political topics which now agitate the public mind. By an arrangement between Mr. Lincoln and myself, we are present here to-day for the purpose of having a joint discussion . . . in regard to the questions dividing us." . . .

Lincoln:
"MY FELLOW-CITIZENS: When a man hears himself somewhat misrepresented, it provokes him—at least, I find it so with myself; but when misrepresentation becomes very gross and palpable, it is more apt to amuse him. The first thing I see fit to notice, is the fact that Judge Douglas alleges . . . that Judge Trumbull and myself made an arrangement in 1854, by which I was to have the place of Gen. Shields in the United States Senate, and Judge Trumbull was to have the place of Judge Douglas. Now, all I have to say upon that subject is, that I think no man—not even Judge Douglas—can prove it, because it is not true. [Cheers.] *I have no doubt he is* 'conscientious' *in saying it.* [Laughter.]"

1. How is the structure of these presidential debates different from those that take place on television today? Why do you think this structure has changed?
2. Based on the excerpt, how do you think the content of presidential debates has changed as a result of changes in the mass media?

Interpreting Political Cartoons Activity

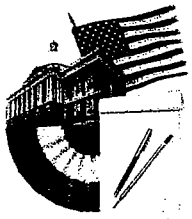
'Okay, bring in the new guy . . .'

1. Who is the "new guy"?
2. According to the cartoon, how is the new guy treated by the press and Congress? Explain.
3. What does the television camera symbolize?

Applying Technology Skills

Using the Internet Search the Internet to find Web sites that provide information about reactions to the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Find out which people or groups opposed the legislation and identify the reasons for their opposition. Write a short report summarizing your findings.

Participating in Local Government



Interview local government officials and find out how and what type of media are involved in your local politics. Also find out how the media influence the public policy of the local government. Design a diagram to present your findings and share it with your classmates.