TENTH EDITION

American Government

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Chapter Fifteen

The Bureaucracy

The United States Bureaucracy

- **Bureaucracy**: a large, complex organization composed of appointed officials

- Political authority over the bureaucracy is shared by president and Congress

- Federal agencies share functions with related state and local government agencies

Growth of the Bureaucracy

- Patronage in the 19th and early 20th centuries rewarded supporters, induced congressional support, and built party organizations

- The Civil War showed the administrative weakness of the federal government and increased demands for civil service reform

Growth of the Bureaucracy

- The post-Civil War period saw industrialization and the emergence of a national economy
- The power of national government to regulate interstate commerce became necessary and controversial

Expansion of the Bureaucracy

- The Depression and World War II led to government activism

- The Supreme Court upheld laws that granted discretion to administrative agencies

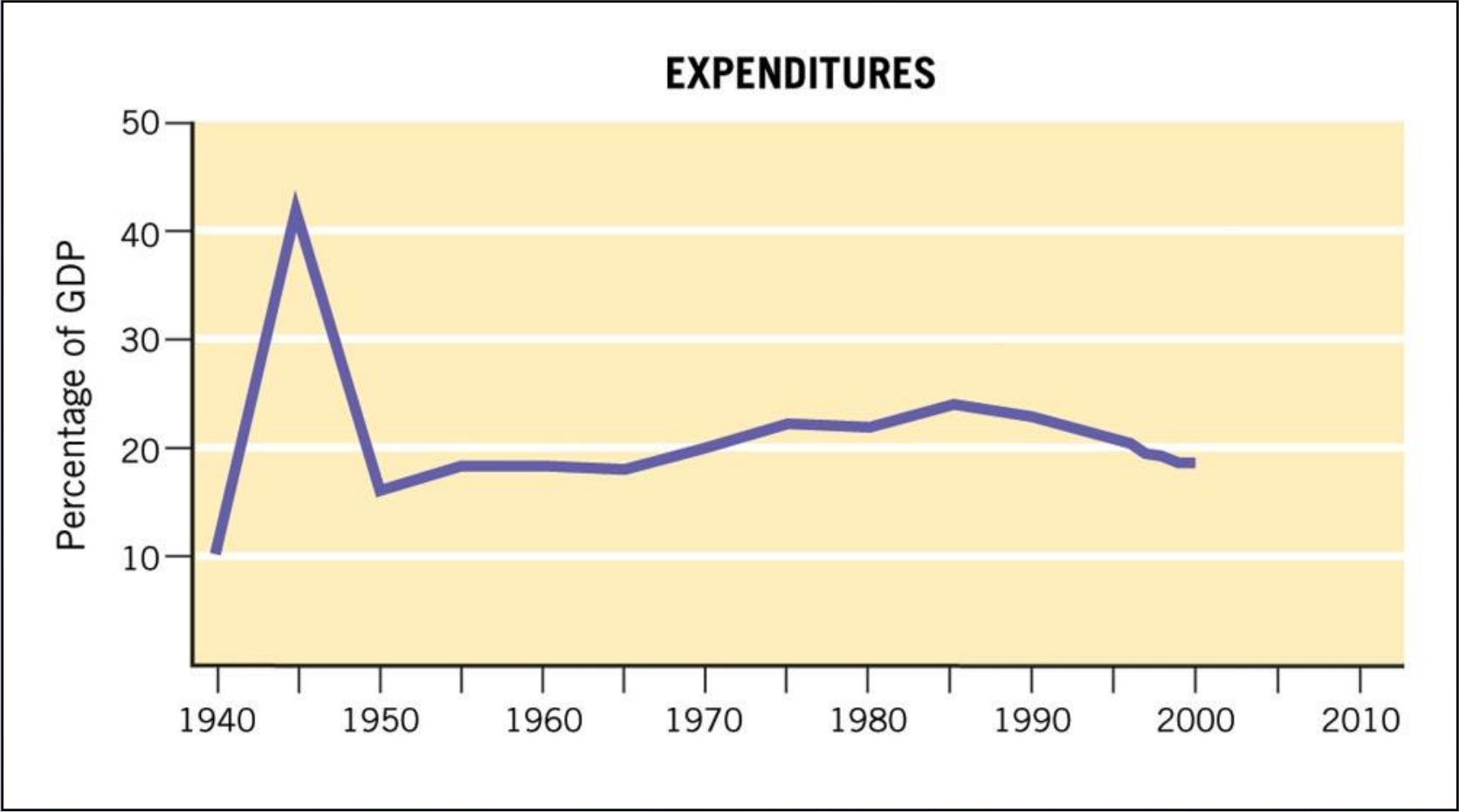- Heavy use of income taxes supported war effort and a large bureaucracy

The Impact of 9/11

- 9/11 attacks could also affect the bureaucracy as profoundly as WWII and the Depression
- A new cabinet agency (Department of Homeland Security) was created
- Intelligence-gathering activities were consolidated under a National Intelligence Director

Growth of the Bureaucracy Today

- Modest increase in the number of government employees
- Significant indirect increase in number of employees through use of private contractors, state and local government employees
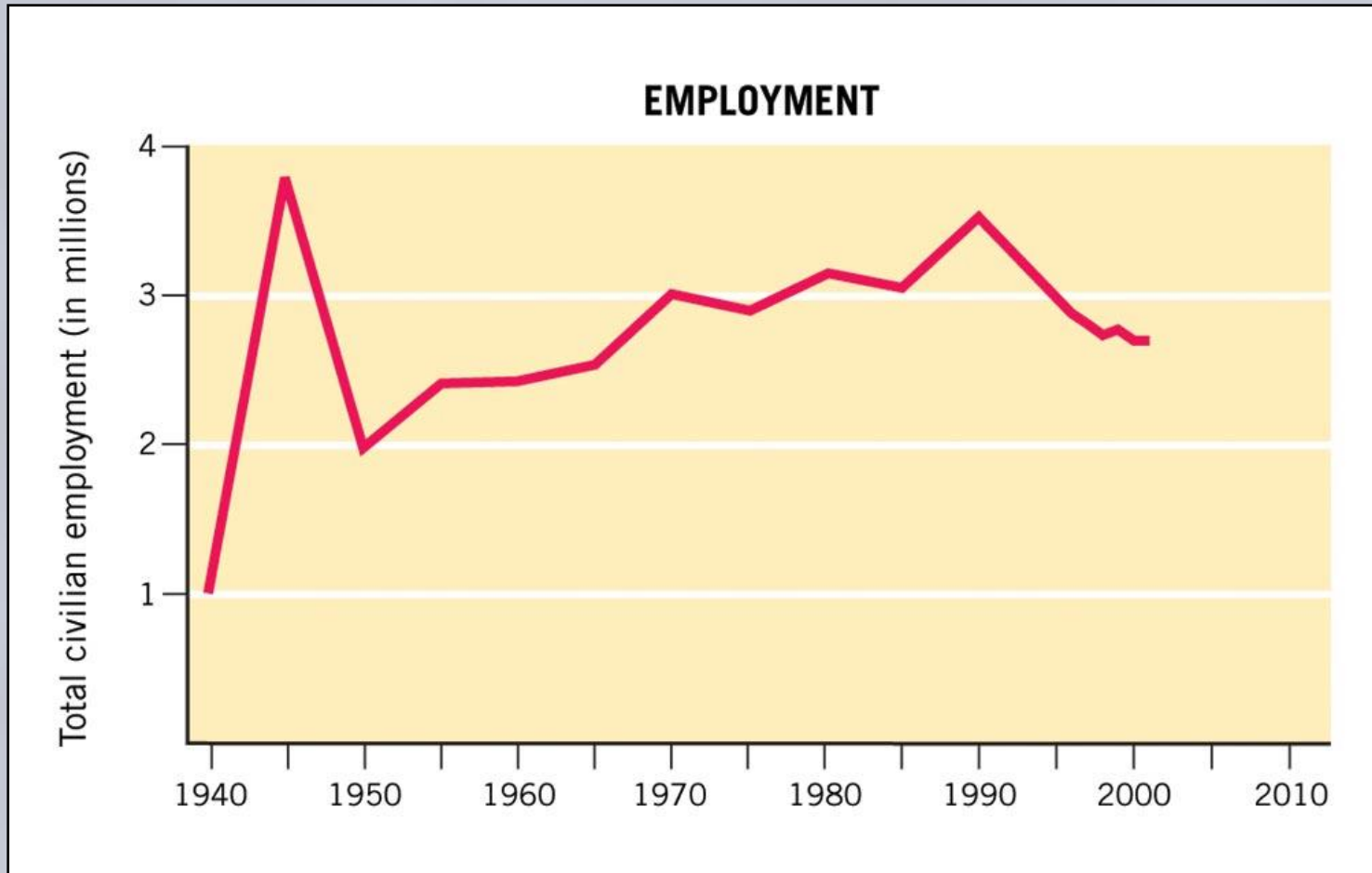- Growth in discretionary authority

Figure 15.2: Federal Government: Money, People, and Regulations

EXPENDITURES

Expenditures and employment: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2000, Nos. 483 and 582; regulations; Harold W. Stanley and Richard G. Miemi, Vital Statistics on American Politics (Washington D.C>: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1998), tables 6-12, 6-14. Post-2000 data updated by Marc Siegal.
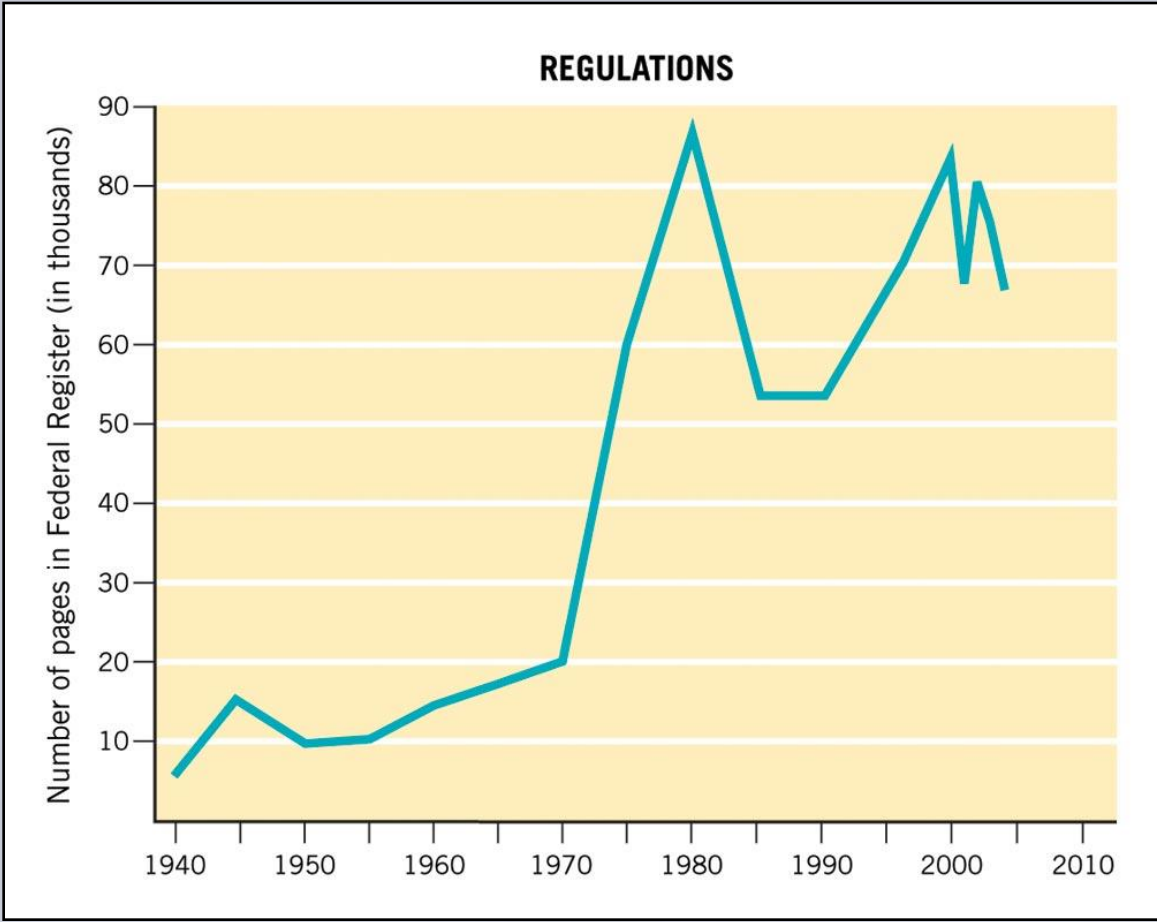
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Recruitment and Retention

- Competitive service: bureaucrats compete for jobs through OPM

- Appointment by merit based on written exam or through selection criteria

# Table 15.1: Minority Employment in the Federal Bureaucracy by Rank, 2000

Table 15.1	Minority Employment in the Federal Bureaucracy by Rank, 2000			
			Percentage of Total	
Grade	Black	Hispanic	Black	Hispanic
GS 1–4	26,895	8,526	29.7%	9.4%
GS 5–8	99,937	31,703	27.0	8.6
GS 9–12	82,809	36,813	16.0	7.0
GS 13–15	31,494	12,869	10.3	4.2
SES	1,180	547	7.3	3.4
Total	298,701	115,247	17.0	6.7

Note: GS stands for "General Service." The higher the number, the higher the rank of people with that number.

Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2001, 482.

Figure 15.3: Characteristics of Federal Civilian Employees, 1960 and 1999
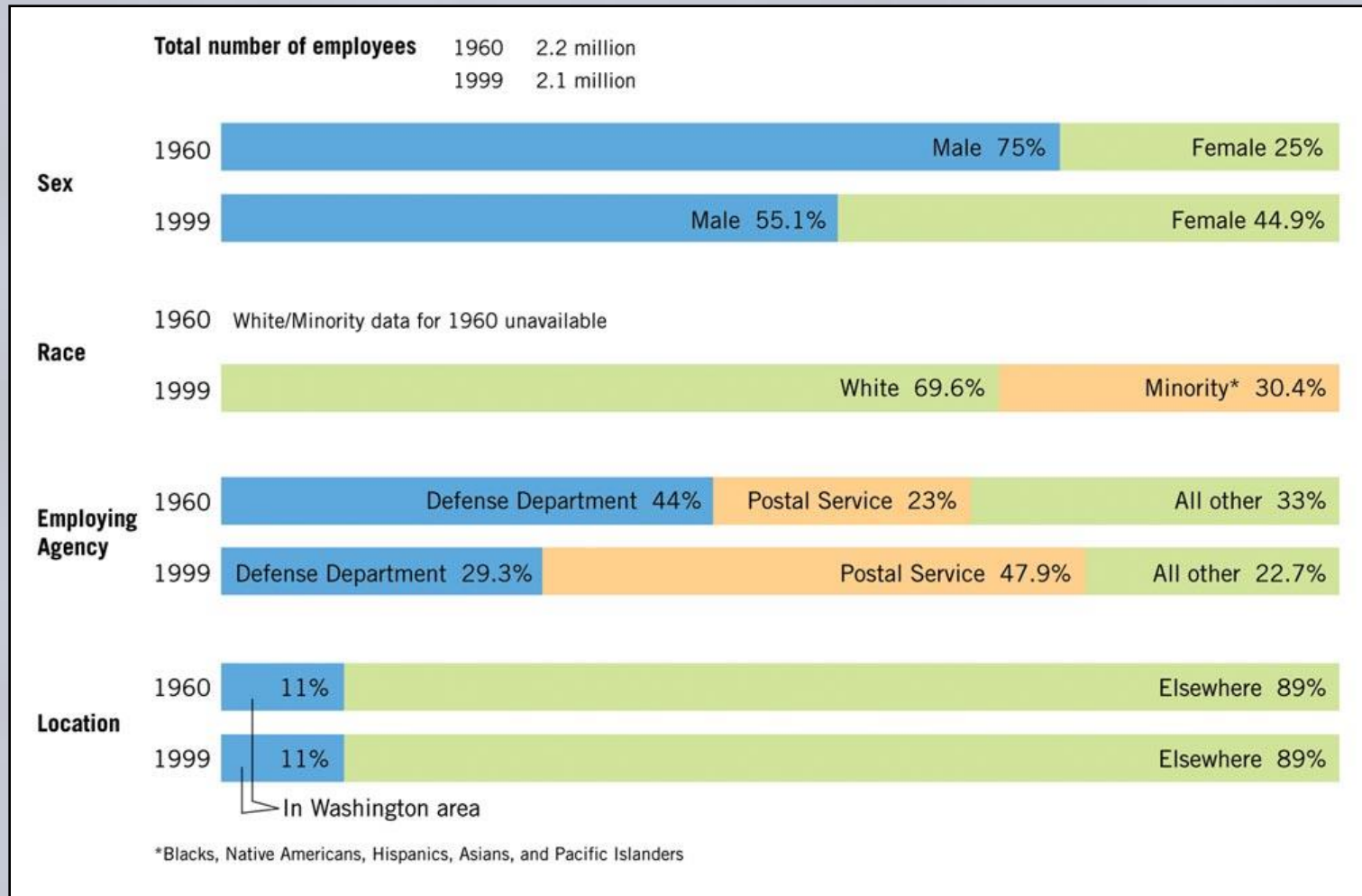
Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1961, 392-394; *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2000,* Nos. 450, 482, 500, 595, 1118.

Recruitment and Retention

- Competitive service system has become more decentralized, less reliant on OPM referral
- **Excepted service**: bureaucrats appointed by agencies, typically in a nonpartisan fashion

Firing a Bureaucrat

- Most bureaucrats cannot be easily fired
- The Senior Executive Service (SES) was established to provide the president and cabinet with more control in personnel decisions
- But very few SES members have actually been fired

Carrying Out Policy

- Most bureaucrats try to carry out policy, even those they disagree with
- But bureaucrats do have obstructive powers—Whistleblower Protection Act (1989)
- Most civil servants have highly structured jobs that make their personal attitudes irrelevant

Constraints on the Bureaucracy

- Constraints are much greater on government agencies than on private bureaucracies

- Hiring, firing, pay, and other procedures are established by law, not by the market

- Constraints come from citizens: agencies try to respond to citizen demands for openness, honesty, and fairness

Agency Allies

- Agencies often seek alliances with congressional committees and interest groups

- These alliances are far less common today—politics has become too complicated

- Issue networks: groups that regularly debate government policy on certain issues

Congressional Oversight

- Congress creates agencies
- Congress authorizes funds for programs
- Congressional appropriations provide funds for the agency to spend on its programs
- Congressional investigations

Bureaucratic Pathologies

- **Red tape**: complex, sometimes conflicting rules
- **Conflict**: agencies work at cross-purposes
- **Duplication**: two or more agencies seem to do the same thing
- **Imperialism**: tendency of agencies to grow, irrespective of programs' benefits and costs
- **Waste**: spending more than is necessary to buy some product or service

Reforming the Bureaucracy

- National Performance Review (NPR) in 1993 designed to reinvent government calling for less centralized management, more employee initiatives, fewer detailed rules, and more customer satisfaction

Reforming the Bureaucracy

- Most rules and red tape are due to struggles between the president and Congress or to agencies' efforts to avoid alienating influential voters

- Periods of divided government worsen matters, especially in implementing policy