



**CHAPTER 19 SUMMARY CONTINUED**

**★ HOW MEDIA IMPACT GOVERNMENT ★★**

The president and the mass media have a mutually beneficial relationship. The president receives far more news coverage than all other government officials combined. The media, in turn, allows presidents the best way to communicate with the public.

Congress and the federal courts receive far less media attention than does the president. Their slow, complicated activities are not dramatic enough for television. Confirmation hearings, oversight activities, or the personal lives of lawmakers may become the focus of media attention if there are allegations of scandal.

Television has had an enormous impact on the political process.

- Candidates for major office must be telegenic—project a pleasing image on camera.
- Political unknowns who skillfully use television can quickly become serious candidates.
- Television allows celebrities, whom voters instantly recognize, to run for office without working their way up through a party's organization.
- The media stresses "horse-race coverage" of presidential primaries. It focuses on "winners," and "losers" rather than on issues. Front-runners, or early winners, can attract financial support for their campaigns. Early "losers" may be forced to drop out.
- Candidates spend huge sums on spot advertising—brief, televised commercials that present positive images of the candidate or negative images of the opposition.
- Television has also made candidates more dependent on financial contributors, some of whom have special interests they want to promote. Many critics contend that this reliance on financial contributors encourages conflicts of interest.
- The issues emphasized by the media play a large role in defining the public agenda—societal problems that both citizens and government agree need attention.

**★ REGULATION OF THE MEDIA ★★**

The Federal Communications Commission, or FCC, grants licenses to radio and television stations. It also has regulatory powers. The FCC cannot censor broadcasts. It can, however, make rules in the public interest. Stations that violate these rules can be fined or have their licenses revoked.

opposing points of view..." Its intent was to discourage one-sided coverage of issues, but opponents said it was unnecessary regulation. The FCC abandoned the fairness doctrine in 1987.

The equal time doctrine requires stations to offer equal air time to candidates running for the same political office. If one candidate is allowed to buy commercial air time, other candidates must be given an equal opportunity. The equal time doctrine does not apply to news stories, but it does apply to interviews and "free time" broadcasts.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 mandated that information should be provided at low cost through competition. It called for updating the broadcast spectrum, or range of frequencies over which electronic signals may be sent. The FCC has the authority to decide how the spectrum will be divided among competing companies. The Telecommunications Act also ordered the broadcast industry to establish ratings for objectionable programming.

The fairness doctrine required stations to provide "reasonable opportunities for the expression of

# CHAPTER SUMMARY *Activity* ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



## The Mass Media

**★ DIRECTIONS** In the space provided, write the word or phrase that best completes each sentence.

1. The \_\_\_\_\_ includes all means of communication that bring messages to the general public.
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ Broadcasting System provides cultural and educational alternatives to commercial programming.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ is a major source of information for individuals with computers.
4. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a meeting at which journalists come prepared to ask questions.
5. Media \_\_\_\_\_ are visually interesting appearances designed to reinforce the president's position on an issue.
6. Political \_\_\_\_\_ who make skillful use of television can quickly become serious candidates for high office.
7. The media stress \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ coverage of presidential primaries, focusing on "winners" and "losers," rather than on issues.
8. The media play a large role in defining the public \_\_\_\_\_ —societal problems that both citizens and government agree need attention.
9. The Federal \_\_\_\_\_ Commission (FCC) licenses radio and television stations and regulates them in the public interest.
10. The \_\_\_\_\_ doctrine required television and radio stations to provide reasonable opportunities for expressing opposing points of view.

**Organizing Information** Imagine you are a television reporter attending a presidential press conference. In the space provided below, list at least three policy areas and formulate questions to ask the president about those areas.

POLICY AREAS	QUESTIONS

**Critical Thinking** Answer the following question on a separate sheet of paper.

11. Why do you think profit-seeking television networks must draw a large audience for their advertisers?