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Learning Goals Explain some factors that may affect public policy, including public opinion, economic conditions, technological change and interest groups. Determine how different stakeholders can influence the operating context of a sustainable business. Public policy is a complex and multifaceted process. It includes the interaction of many parties. This includes many businesses, interest groups and individuals competing and collaborating to influence policymakers to act in a specific way and on a variety of policies. These individuals and groups use numerous tactics to advance their interests. Tactics include lobbying, publicly defending their positions, trying to train supporters and opponents, and mobilizing allies on a specific issue. Excellent policies rarely come out of the political process. Often policy outcomes include compromises between interested parties. When a business considers which policy to support and defend, what needs to be considered includes what is best for its own interests, meaning which policy can help the business make the biggest profit. Other considerations include the political feasibility of politics, whether the majority of others will support the policy, and how cost-effective and efficient the policy will be in achieving the desired outcome. For example, the cost of the zero carbon emissions policy would be prohibitive. While the benefits of zero carbon emissions are high, it would be impossible to achieve without a very high economic cost. In contrast, a phase, for example, 5 percent to 10 percent over five to ten years, a reduction in carbon emissions from motor vehicles would be a more reasonable and cost effective policy. Equality is another matter; is the policy fair, the benefits from the policy distributed fairly, and are the costs of the policy fairly shared? Public policies are influenced by various factors. These factors include public opinion, economic conditions, new scientific discoveries, technological change, interest groups Associations of individuals or organizations shaped to advance a common political, economic or social agenda, non-governmental organizations An organization that is not a private company and has no formal relationship or representation with the government. These groups often try to directly or indirectly influence private business behavior effectively in shaping public policy. (NGOs), business lobbying Tries to use information, research or stakeholder opinion to influence a person or organization's government policy and other political activities. As a result of a wide range of affecting factors that tend to draw and push policy in different directions, public policy change often happens gradually. Without a crisis, and sometimes even during a crisis, factors may tend to be Against control and, new policy development and implementation tend to lead to slowing and radical changes in public policy rather than incremental. And often, influencing agents are more effective at blocking policy change than new policies have been implemented-as is the case with comprehensive climate change policy at the U.S. federal level and resistance from some major energy companies. Public opinion and priorities have a strong influence on public policy over time. Sustainable businesses are concerned about the environment, volatile energy prices and growing public concern about global climate change. This affects public policy through electoral politics, citizen rallies and actions affecting government decision ers. New scientific findings and information affecting relevant public policy for sustainable businesses, such as new findings on human and business impact on climate change and climate change (see Chapter 2 Sustainability Science for more information). Economic conditions also significantly affect the policy environment and working context of businesses. The Great Recession is one of the most severe recessions or contractions of the U.S. economy. It officially began in December 2007 and lasted eighteen months, ending in June 2009. Almost nine million jobs were lost in this recession. At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century improved interest and support for public investments and incentives (including energy efficiency and renewable energy) can help create this employment. Technology developments, often caused by market and business opportunities, also affect public policy. Technology is constantly changing, which directly and indirectly affects the business environment, as public policies change with technological breakthroughs. New, lower-cost and easy-to-use technologies can increase public support for policies that promote renewable energy and energy efficiency and reduce environmental damage. As an example, new designs and materials for packaging that reduce environmental costs, new technology that enables mass production of full-spectrum solar batteries that reduce the cost of solar powerEless, common solar panels in production now use only a small percentage of light hitting the surface, because the semiconduton materials in them only respond to certain segments of the solar spectrum. While high-efficiency solar panels have been created in the past that respond to the full spectrum of light, they are difficult to produce massively olmustur.ve programmable thermostats integrated with mobile communications (see Business and commerce among interest groups professional organizations, labor unions, environmental advocacy organizations and cause-oriented citizen groups and lobbies. Individuals and businesses also organize into associations and interest groups for other reasons other than to try to influence the government. This includes promotional and training efforts to support specific activities related to members (such as cleaning and maintaining hiking trails by the Appalachian Mountain Club) and to provide members with specific benefits (such as access to cleared trails). Interest groups defend public policies that serve the wishes of their members and the mission of their organizations even further (for example, environmental interest groups that support legislation to improve air quality by reducing carbon emissions). Business efforts to influence public policy and government include not only individual corporate efforts, but also business associations. These associations act collectively to promote public policies in general and also for the benefit of certain sectors and regions. Examples of business associations participating in efforts to influence public policy include the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Union of Manufacturers, state-level business and industrial associations, and local chambers of commerce. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is the world's largest business organization representing the interests of more than three million businesses of all sizes, sectors and regions. Since the Toxic Substances Control Act came into force in 1976, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has tested only two hundred of the thousand chemicals in the trade and regulated only five. In 2011, the American Academy of Pediatrics called for an overhaul of thirty-five years of federal law regulating toxic chemicals in the surrounding area, saying the protection of children and pregnant women had failed. It is widely accepted that it is ineffective in protecting children, pregnant women and the general population from dangerous chemicals in the market. Among the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics were: The consequences of chemical use on children and their families should be a key component of the new chemical policy. Chemicals must meet standards similar to those required for new drugs or pesticides. Decisions to ban chemicals should be based on a reasonable level of anxiety rather than harm. The health effects of chemicals should be monitored after release, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency should have the authority to remove a chemical from the market if it is considered dangerous. Currently, a company produces a chemical and puts it on the market and reaps the economic reward, said Dr. Jerome Paulson, lead author of the policy statement. And then The public is responsible for trying to figure out if there is any harm related to the use of this chemical. And then it's almost a sentencing procedure, requiring evidence beyond a reasonable doubt. Individual businesses and different business groups differ in many public policy. For example, revisions to the American Academy of Pediatrics Toxic Substances and Control Act are different from those of the Http://www.americanchemistry.com/Membership/MemberCompanies Chemistry Council (U.S.). And in the fall of 2009, Nike, Apple, and two major utilities-California's largest utility, Pacific Gas and Electricity (PG&E) and New Mexico's largest utility, the New Mexico Utility Company - left the U.S. Chamber of Commerce because of the organization's stance against climate change-fighting policies. An excerpt from PG&E CEO Peter Darbee's resignation letter to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce reads: We are appalled that the Chamber has ignored the indisputable fact that the absolute majority of experts say that data on global warming is compelling and points to a threat that cannot be ignored. In our view, an intellectually honest argument over the best policy response to the challenges of climate change is one thing; Hypocritical attempts to reduce or distort the reality of these challenges are also quite different... I'm afraid he's lost the chance to play a constructive leadership role on one of the most important issues our country can face. Unlike the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the United States Climate Action Partnership (USCAP) was a group of businesses and leading environmental organizations that came together to call on the federal government to enact strong national legislation that would require a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. THE USCAP had published a series of principles and recommendations to underline the urgent need for a policy framework on climate change. USCAP members included some of the largest, most recognized and most respected companies in the United States, including Alcoa, Chrysler, Dow Chemical Company, Duke Energy, DuPont, Exelon Corporation, Ford Motor Company, General Electric, General Motors Company, Honeywell, Johnson & Johnson, PepsiCo, PG&E Corporation, Shell, Siemens Corporation and Weyerhaeuser. Members believed that a quick legislative action based on the 2009 USCAP solution-based Call for Action proposal would encourage innovation, boost America's energy security, promote economic growth, improve our trade balance and provide critically needed U.S. leadership in this vital global issue. On the other side are those who deny that there is significant climate change. Climate change denial, the scope, importance and human behavior. Climate change denial has mostly been associated with the energy lobby and free market think tanks, often in the United States. A non-governmental organization (NGO) is an organization that is not a private company and has no official ties or representation to the government. These are interest groups (see previous recognition) and often try to influence private business behavior directly by persuading or protesting or indirectly shaping public policy. There are currently between 30,000 and 40,000 NGOs worldwide, and the number continues to grow as groups gained support and legitimacy. This includes many environmental organizations. There are many NGOs that influence the working context of sustainable enterprises. Table 3.1 Examples of NGOs Affecting Sustainable Business list some of the active NGOs that support sustainable business activities in the United States. Table 3.1 Examples of NGOs Affecting Sustainable Business Description Ceres Ceres collaborates with investors and environmental and public interest groups to change the market that consumers and businesses buy from companies that include sustainability in their business practices. Ceres developed the Global Reporting Initiative to help companies report sustainability performance in the same way as financial information. Ceres' reporting efforts are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, Responsibility for Sustainability. Founded in 1951, Nature Cont conservation is one of the oldest and largest environmental NGOs in the world. It focuses on using science and protection to help businesses mitigate their environmental impact, particularly in biodiversity, freshwater, forestry and land management. The Sustainable Apparel Coalition Coalition includes companies like Walmart, JCPenney, H&M and Hanes, as well as more traditional environmentally minded manufacturers of rugged outerwear such as Patagonia and Timberland. The Coalition is currently developing a comprehensive database of the environmental impact of each manufacturer, component and environmental impact of the process in clothing production, and is using this information to eventually give each garment a sustainability score. Key Takeaways Public policies are influenced by various factors such as public opinion, economic conditions, new scientific findings, technological change, interest groups, NGOs, business lobbying and political activity. NGOs are doing a wide range of activities to support sustainable jobs to fill gaps missed by the local, state and federal governments and missed by the private sector. Exercise Search the Internet and identify NGOs that are currently trying to influence public policies on sustainable business. Business.

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