Chapter 6 Review: Public Choice

Readings: Rosen: Chapter 6, all

Outline

I. Introduction: Consequences of the U.S. Voting System
   A. Describing the U.S. system (other than primaries)
   B. Questions about outcomes in the U.S. System
   C. The Median Voter Theorem

II. Other Voting Rules
   A. Unanimity
      1. Benefits
      2. Drawbacks
   B. Proportional Representation
   C. Other aspects explaining voting patterns

III. Dimensionality, Peakedness in Voting, and Agenda Manipulation
   A. Peakedness
      1. What is it?
      2. How does it affect voting?
   B. Dimensionality in voting (I often skip this)

IV. Logrolling & vote trading: It’s not just for Olympic figure skating.
   A. What is it?
   B. Welfare effects

Problems

1. The region known as Babiland was, until recently, just one of 12 districts (i.e. states) in the country of Mamastan. Babilanders successfully broke away to form their own country, the Little People’s Republic of Babistan. At large elections are to be held for the legislature of Babistan. Two methods are being considered:

Method A consists of dividing the country into 25 districts and having each district elect one member to the legislature in a winner take all election. Whichever single party in a district gets the most votes wins the seat for that district.

Method B consists of electing all 25 legislatures in single, country-wide election. Seats in the legislature are then distributed according to the proportion of votes a party wins in this election.

There is very little variation in Babistan from region to region. Within each region, however, there is a good bit of variation. Some Babistanis hold very right beliefs, some very
left wing, and some centrist. The right wingers, however, are not concentrated in one area. Instead, they are spread uniformly throughout the country. The same is true of left wingers and centrists. In other words, there is a lot of variation in Babistan, but it is not based on different regions (i.e. districts if Babistan is divided into districts).

• Which method do you think will lead to more political parties arising in Babistan? Explain your answer as thoroughly as possible.

• Which method do you think will lead to a greater number of centrist candidates in the legislature? Explain your answer as thoroughly as possible.

• Assume the method leading to a greater number of centrist candidates is chosen. Does this mean that voter on the ends of the spectrum (far right or far left) have little influence on the political process? Why or why not?

2. See discussion question 1 on page 134 of the text.

3. Explain peakedness of preferences, cyclical voting, and agenda manipulation with an example. In your example assume the following:

• There are three possible outcomes to be voted on.

• There are three legislatures (i.e. voters).

• Winner take all voting is used on each vote.

• Anything else you need to answer this question well.

4. • What the heck is log-rolling and why are members of congress doing it?

• Is log-rolling just a macho election year stunt?

• Describe an example of log-rolling in which it increases society’s welfare. Use numbers in your example and clearly explain who is doing what and why.

• Describe an example of log-rolling in which it decreases society’s welfare. Use numbers in your example and clearly explain who is doing what and why.

5. See discussion question 2 on page 134 of the text.

6. See discussion question 4 on page 135 of the text.

7. See discussion question 5 on page 135 of the text.

8. See discussion question 6 on page 135 of the text.