**Task: Agenda Strategy Paper**

File name: `lastname_agenda.doc` or `.docx` or `.rtf`. **Please follow this convention. Please also indicate PA 507 in the email subject line.**

Format: Strategy paper, 750 to 2000 words. The word count will depend on how much you rely on charts and graphs to tell the story, and how much text you use to amplify your points. A concise paper is better than a lengthy one, but the goal is to cover enough information that the reader understands the environment in which policy will be made.

**Task description**

In this paper you will outline a strategy for how you will induce Congress and the news media to pay attention to your problem, given that there are many other problems to which Congress and the media can pay attention. While the economy and health care reform are front and center on the agenda now, do not invoke these issues as a barrier to agenda setting, except to acknowledge, if you like, that these are primary issues. But there is room for your issue if you make an effective case for its being on the agenda. Indeed, some of you may be able to piggy-back your ideas for policy change on the economic theme.

In writing this, provide two things:

1. Some background on where the issue already stands on the agenda.
   a. Have there been congressional hearings on this matter? How many? When? What were the results? Have the hearings and witnesses tended to favor the status quo, or are they pushing for change? Who is on which side?
   b. Has any legislation been introduced or enacted on this issue? When? How far did proposals get? Why did they fail to advance?
   c. Have major news media, such as the *New York Times*, covered this issue? How much coverage has there been? What is the nature of this coverage—is it pro-change? Or pro-status quo?

2. A strategy that reflects what you’ve learned about problem definition, agenda setting, causal storytelling, and the like. All these ideas can help you make a better strategy. But do not invoke textbooks and theories to make the case; use the theory as a guide to help you write this paper.

**Research Tools**

This is a very short list of possible data sources.

- Lexis-Nexis database for newspapers and for congressional hearings (Lexis-Nexis Congressional)
- For bills and status, try [http://thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov)
Hints and Tips

1. This briefing paper will require considerable research on your part, so it’s good to start work on this as early as possible.

2. You may want to show a statistical information, for which charts and graphs will be appropriate. Remember to use simple, informative and clear graphics. Following these tips is an example of good and poor charts.

3. The THOMAS database is an invaluable source of evidence on legislation. I recommend you become very familiar with it.

4. If you are doing state-level policy, you should find and use parallel state sources of information. For the news media, use Lexis-Nexis to search main papers in North Carolina (Charlotte Observer, Raleigh News & Observer), and use the legislature’s parallel to THOMAS (in NC, that’s http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/Legislation/Legislation.html)