

The WonkCast

WonkCast is the premiere policy podcast on The George Washington University campus. This season, host William Somes guides listeners through a range of policy topics past and present. From the chambers of the Constitutional Convention to the steps of the Supreme Court, Somes uses a wide-angle lens to examine contemporary policy challenges and successes in an increasingly partisan, political climate.

Who has the power to make public policy in the United States today? Is it Congress? The president? The courts? There is no single answer to this question. In fact, the story of who wields power in the United States contains many chapters on the tales of the immigrant and the king, of the rich and the poor, and of the freeman and the slave. Together, they tell the common story of us—who we were, who we are, and who we are trying to be.

To fully appreciate how public policy works, one must first understand its history. In part I of this season, titled “How the Government Works,” Somes discusses the changing power balance between the three branches of government over time. He then overlays this thesis with an exploration of the influence political parties, electoral systems, and polarization have had on the policymaking context. Finally, Somes makes the case for individual autonomy in this process by drawing from themes in the late president John F. Kennedy’s book, *Profiles in Courage*.

In parts II and III of this season, Somes confronts some of the gravest environmental and social justice issues facing the United States today. Covering issues from waste management to reparations, he finds that policy often originates from a complex web of history, prejudice, and politics. Throughout the season, special guests offer up their expertise as directors in environmental nonprofit organizations, graduate exchange students, and ambassadors of tribal nations. Subscribe to WonkCast today to join a vibrant discussion of public policy topics and their alternatives.

Sincerely,

William Somes
Host, WonkCast