

# Interest Groups

*“We are a nation of communities, of tens and tens of thousands of ethnic, religious, social, business, labor union, neighborhood, regional and other organizations, all of them varied, voluntary, and unique. . . .”*

—George H.W. Bush (1988)

Do you think that interest groups represent only people with money, power, and influence? On the contrary, many interest groups serve as the voice of ordinary people who care passionately about a cause or policy. They represent the diversity of Americans and their opinions about issues.



◆ Minnesota farmers' protest



## Standards Preview

**H-SS 12.1.2** Discuss the character of American democracy and its promise and perils as articulated by Alexis de Tocqueville.

**H-SS 12.1.5** Describe the systems of separated and shared powers, the role of organized interests (*Federalist Paper Number 10*), checks and balances (*Federalist Paper Number 51*), the importance of an independent judiciary (*Federalist Paper Number 78*), enumerated powers, rule of law, federalism, and civilian control of the military.

**H-SS 12.2.2** Explain how economic rights are secured and their importance to the individual and to society (e.g., the right to acquire, use, transfer, and dispose of property; right to choose one's work; right to join or not join labor unions; copyright and patent).

**H-SS 12.2.4** Understand the obligations of civic-mindedness, including voting, being informed on civic issues, volunteering and performing public service, and serving in the military or alternative service.

**H-SS 12.3.1** Explain how civil society provides opportunities for individuals to associate for social, cultural, religious, economic, and political purposes.

**H-SS 12.3.2** Explain how civil society makes it possible for people, individually or in association with others, to bring their influence to bear on government in ways other than voting and elections.

**H-SS 12.6.4** Describe the means that citizens use to participate in the political process (e.g., voting, campaigning, lobbying, filing a legal challenge, demonstrating, petitioning, picketing, running for political office).

**H-SS 12.7.5** Explain how public policy is formed, including the setting of the public agenda and implementation of it through regulations and executive orders.

**H-SS 12.7.6** Compare the processes of lawmaking at each of the three levels of government, including the role of lobbying and the media.

# Chapter 9 in Brief

## SECTION 1

### *The Nature of Interest Groups* (pp. 236–240)

- ★ Interest groups are private organizations that try to persuade public officials to respond to the shared attitudes of their members.
- ★ Unlike political parties, interest groups do not nominate candidates, focus on winning elections, or concern themselves with a broad range of issues.
- ★ Among their positive benefits, interest groups stimulate interest in public affairs and serve as a vehicle for participation in the political process.
- ★ Interest groups have been criticized for having influence disproportionate to their size and occasionally using unethical tactics.

## SECTION 2

### *Types of Interest Groups* (pp. 242–247)

- ★ Most people belong to several organizations that meet the definition of an interest group.
- ★ Most interest groups represent economic interests such as business, labor, agriculture, and certain professions.
- ★ Some interest groups are devoted to specific political and social causes, religious interests, or the welfare of a certain segment of the population.
- ★ Public-interest groups work for some aspect of the public good.

## SECTION 3

### *Interest Groups at Work* (pp. 249–254)

- ★ Interest groups supply the public with information favorable to the group's cause, work to build a positive image for the group, and promote the group's policies.
- ★ Interest groups frequently use propaganda to achieve their goals.
- ★ While most interest groups take a balanced approach to affecting public policy, single-interest groups focus on an individual issue and fight for this issue aggressively.
- ★ Lobbyists use a variety of techniques to try to persuade policy makers to share an interest group's point of view.

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## 1

# The Nature of Interest Groups

## Section Preview

### OBJECTIVES

1. Describe the role of interest groups in influencing public policy.
2. Compare and Contrast political parties and interest groups.
3. Explain why people see interest groups as both good and bad for American politics.

### WHY IT MATTERS

Aware of it or not, you almost certainly belong to at least one interest group today. And, knowingly or not, you will join several more of these groups over coming years.

### POLITICAL DICTIONARY

- ★ public policy
- ★ public affairs

**A**n interest group is a private organization that tries to persuade public officials to respond to the shared attitudes of its members. You may not think that you belong to any interest groups, but as you read this section, you may well discover that you do. In fact, you might even belong to several of them. You will probably also realize that you will become a part of many more of these organizations in the years to come—because interest groups provide one of

the most effective means by which Americans try to get government to respond to their wants and needs.

## The Role of Interest Groups

Where do you stand on the question of gun control? What about prayer in public schools? Abortion? An increase in the minimum wage? What can you do to lend support to your views on these and other issues? How can you increase the chance that your position on these issues will carry the day?

Joining with others who share your views is both practical and democratic. Organized efforts to protect group interests are a fundamental part of the democratic process. Moreover, the right to do so is protected by the Constitution. Remember that the 1st Amendment guarantees “the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Interest groups are sometimes called “pressure groups” and often “special interests” or “organized interests.” They give themselves a variety of labels: leagues, clubs, federations, unions, committees, associations, and so on. But, whatever they call themselves, every interest group seeks to influence the making and content of public policy. Used in this general sense, public policy includes all of the goals that a government pursues in the many areas of human affairs in which it is involved—everything from seat belts, speed limits, and zoning



▲ Interest groups often send members items such as buttons and bumper stickers to help publicize their causes.



▲ Americans participate in a wide variety of interest groups. Families USA advocates for family health care (left). Students from the Texas School for the Deaf acted as members of an interest group when they marched on their State capitol to protest funding cuts that affected their school (right). **Critical Thinking** What do these groups have in common?

to flood control, old-age pensions, and the use of military force in international affairs.

Because interest groups exist to shape public policy, they operate wherever those policies are made or can be influenced. They also function at every level of government—on Capitol Hill and elsewhere in Washington, D.C., in every one of the 50 State capitals, in thousands of city halls and county courthouses, and in many other places at the local level all across the country. In short, as diplomat and historian Lord Bryce put it somewhat indelicately more than a century ago: “Where the body is, there will the vultures be gathered.”

Remember, our society is a pluralistic one. It is not dominated by any single elite. It is, instead, composed of a number of distinct cultures and groups. Increasingly, the members of various ethnic, racial, religious, and other groups compete for and share in the exercise of political power in this country.

## Political Parties and Interest Groups

Interest groups are made up of people who unite for some political purpose. So, too, are political parties. These two types of political organizations necessarily overlap in a number of ways.

However, they differ from one another in three striking respects: (1) in the making of nominations, (2) in their primary focus, and (3) in the scope of their interests.

First, parties nominate candidates for public office; interest groups do not. Remember, making nominations is a major function of political parties. If an interest group were to nominate candidates, it would, in effect, become a political party.

Interest groups do, of course, try to affect the outcomes of primaries and other nominating contests. However, interest groups do not themselves pick candidates who then run under their labels. It may be widely known that a particular interest group actively supports a candidate, but that candidate seeks votes as a Republican or Democrat.<sup>1</sup>

Second, political parties are chiefly interested in winning elections and controlling government. Interest groups are chiefly concerned with controlling or influencing the *policies* of government. Unlike parties, interest groups do not face the problems involved in trying to appeal to the largest possible number of people. In short, political parties are mostly interested in the *who*,

<sup>1</sup>Note that this discussion centers on the differences between interest groups and major parties. There are some striking parallels between interest groups and most minor parties—for example, in terms of their scope of interest.

and interest groups are mostly concerned with the *what*, of government. To put it another way, political parties focus mostly on the candidate, while interest groups focus mostly on an issue such as environmental protection or gun control.

Third, political parties are necessarily concerned with the whole range of public affairs, with everything of concern to voters. Interest groups almost always concentrate only on those issues that most directly affect the interests of their members.

In addition, interest groups are private organizations. Unlike political parties, they are not accountable to the public. Their members, not the voters, pass judgment on their performance.

## Interest Groups: Good or Bad?

Do interest groups pose a threat to the well-being of the American political system? Or, on the contrary, are they a valuable part of that system? The argument over the merit of interest groups goes back to the beginnings of the Republic.

### Two Early Views

Many people have long viewed interest groups with deep suspicion. In 1787, James Madison warned the new nation against the dangers of what he called “factions.” He made his view of those groups clear when he defined a faction as

#### PRIMARY Sources

“a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.”<sup>2</sup>

— *The Federalist* No. 10<sup>2</sup>

Despite his mistrust, Madison thought that factions were inevitable in human society, and he was opposed to any attempt to abolish them. A society could only eliminate factions, he said, by eliminating freedom. Instead, wrote Madison, it was necessary to moderate the potential extremism of factions with a balance of powers; that is, with the governmental system set out in the proposed Constitution. The separations of power in that system would mean, said Madison, that factions would tend to counteract and balance each others’ power. Thus, none could become a dominating influence.

Nearly fifty years later, Alexis de Tocqueville was deeply impressed by the vast number of organizations he found in the United States. Tocqueville was a Frenchman who toured much

<sup>2</sup>The text of *The Federalist* No. 10 appears in the historic documents section that begins on page 780.

► These photos show a vacant lot in Berkeley, California, being turned into a park by community activists. Many such activists belong to interest groups that work to persuade local governments to clean up and improve unused land in towns and cities throughout the United States. **Critical Thinking** *What are the advantages to an individual citizen of joining an interest group?*  
**H-SS 12.2.4, 12.3.2**



of this country in the early 1830s. In *Democracy in America* he wrote that

PRIMARY  
Sources

*“In no country in the world has the principle of association been more successfully used, or more unsparingly applied to a multitude of different objects, than in America.”*

— Alexis de Tocqueville

In a similar vein, he also observed that

*“Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions, constantly form associations . . . not only commercial and manufacturing . . . but . . . of a thousand other kinds—religious, moral, serious, futile, extensive or restricted, enormous or diminutive.”*

Are interest groups “good” or “bad”? To determine the answer, you must weigh, on the one hand, the functions those groups perform in American politics and, on the other, the various criticisms that are often leveled at them.

### Valuable Functions of Interest Groups

First, among their several valuable functions, interest groups help to stimulate interest in **public affairs**. Public affairs are those issues and events that concern the people at large. Interest groups raise awareness of public affairs mostly by developing and promoting those policies they



favor and by opposing those policies they see as threats to their interests.

Second, interest groups represent their members on the basis of shared attitudes rather than on the basis of geography—by what their members think as opposed to where they happen to live. Public officials are elected from districts drawn on maps. But many of the issues that concern and unite people today have less to do with *where* they live than with, say, *how* they make a living. A labor union member who lives in Chicago may have much more in common with someone who does the same kind of work in Seattle than he or she does with someone who owns a business in Chicago or runs a farm in another part of Illinois.

Third, organized interests often provide useful, specialized, and detailed information to government—for example, on employment, price levels, or the sales of new and existing homes. These data are important to the making of public policy, and government officials often cannot obtain them from any other source. This flow of information works both ways, as well. Interest groups frequently get information from public agencies and pass it along to their members.

Fourth, interest groups are vehicles for political participation. They are a means through which like-minded citizens can pool their resources and channel their energies into collective political action. One mother concerned about drunk driving cannot accomplish very much acting alone. Thousands of people joined in an organization like MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) certainly can.

Fifth, interest groups add another element to the checks-and-balances feature of the political process. Many of them keep close tabs on the work of various public agencies and officials and thus help to make sure that they perform their tasks in responsible and effective ways.

Finally, interest groups regularly compete with one another in the public arena. That competition places a very real limit on the lengths to which some groups might otherwise go as they seek to advance their own interests. For example, the automotive industry may work to weaken or postpone auto emission standards imposed under the Clean Air Act. Their efforts may be opposed—and to some



**Interpreting Political Cartoons** What does the cartoon suggest about the relationship between interest groups and Congress? **H-SS 12.1.5**

extent counterbalanced—by environmental and health-related organizations.

### Criticisms

All of what has just been said is not meant to suggest that interest groups are above reproach. On the contrary, they can be, and often are, criticized on several counts.

The potential “bad” side of interest groups is sometimes all too apparent. Many of them push

their own special interests which, despite their claims to the contrary, are not always in the best interests of other Americans. Their critics often make these more specific charges:

1. Some interest groups have an influence far out of proportion to their size, or, for that matter, to their importance or contribution to the public good. Thus, the contest over “who gets what, when, and how” is not always a fair fight. The more highly organized and better-financed groups often have a decided advantage in that struggle.

2. It is sometimes hard to tell just who or how many people a group really represents. Many groups have titles that suggest that they have thousands—even millions—of dedicated members. Some organizations that call themselves such things as “The American Citizens Committee for . . .” or “People United Against . . .” are, in fact, only “fronts” for a very few people with very narrow interests.

3. Many groups do not in fact represent the views of all of the people for whom they claim to speak. Very often, both in and out of politics, an organization is dominated by an active minority who conduct the group’s affairs and make its policy decisions.

4. Finally, some groups use tactics that, if they were to become widespread, would undermine the whole political system. These practices include bribery and other heavy-handed uses of money, overt threats of revenge, and so on. They are not altogether common, but the danger is certainly there.

## Section 1 Assessment

### Key Terms and Main Ideas

1. What is **public policy**?
2. List and describe the three main areas in which political parties and interest groups differ.
3. (a) How do interest groups stimulate interest in **public affairs**?  
(b) Name at least three additional functions of interest groups.
4. On what bases are interest groups often criticized?

### Critical Thinking

5. **Demonstrating Reasoned Judgment** Suppose that you want to form a group in your school to combat racial discrimination. Which of the functions of interest groups described in this section would your group most likely fulfill? Explain your answer.



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6. **Making Decisions** Suppose that you are asked to contribute money to an interest group that calls itself “Citizens for Better Schools.” What information would you want to find out about this group before making a contribution?

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# Skills for Life

## Using the Internet for Research



Analysis Skill HR4

**T**he Internet is a network of computers that links governments, organizations, and individuals around the world. The World Wide Web is one part of the Internet. Since the Internet has no central organization, finding the information you need can be difficult. To focus your search you can use search engines, the databases that track thousands of Web pages by subject.

Congress uses the Internet to communicate with the public. Congressional Web sites provide general information about legislators, committees, and hearings. These sites also provide information on proposed legislation. Use the steps below to locate and track the progress of a bill in Congress.

**1. Plan the scope of your search.** Choose a research topic that is not too vague. Searching for a broad subject can yield thousands of results that would be impossible to sift through. Try to state your research topic as a specific question. Then think of search terms that might return answers to your question. For example, rather than searching for broad terms such as *Congress* or *legislation*, identify a public issue that Congress is working on, such as *funding for disaster relief*. Then do a search on that topic.

**2. Refine your search.** Your first set of results usually includes Web sites that do not contain the information you need. Many search engines offer an advanced search option that allows you to narrow your search. You might decide to make your search terms more specific; for instance, *disaster relief AND earthquakes*. Or you might exclude unwanted information, as in *disaster relief NOT hurricanes*.

**3. Navigate the sites.** Once you find a site that meets your needs, explore its home page to determine how to find the information you need. Does the information in the site fully answer your question? Does the site have its own search tool to explore information contained in the site? Does it provide links to other Web sites that might better aid your research? To whom does the site belong, and is it a reliable source? (The Social Studies area at the following Web site has many useful research links: [www.phschool.com](http://www.phschool.com))

For example, if your search led you to the Web site of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), you might search within the site for *budget AND earthquakes* to find out how much funding FEMA has requested to cover damage from a particular earthquake. Then you might go to a congressional site to find out the status of the budget request for FEMA.

### Test for Success

Conduct Internet research on an important public issue that is currently being debated in Congress. Find out what legislation is being proposed on this topic. Check the status of the legislation. Has it been proposed in both houses of Congress? At what stage is the bill in each house?



► Aftermath of the October 1989 earthquake in Oakland, California



## 2

# Types of Interest Groups

## Section Preview

### OBJECTIVES

1. **Explain** how the American tradition of joining organizations has resulted in a wide range of interest groups.
2. **Describe** four categories of groups based on economic interests.
3. **Outline** the reasons why other interest groups have been created.
4. **Identify** the purpose of public-interest groups.

### WHY IT MATTERS

America is “a nation of joiners”—including joiners of interest groups. Some of these groups are based on economic interests, some on other issues. Some are public-interest groups, which seek to benefit all Americans.

### POLITICAL DICTIONARY

- ★ trade association
- ★ labor union
- ★ public-interest group

“**E**verything from A to Z.” That expression can be aptly applied to the many interest groups in this country. These organizations include, among thousands of others, the American Association of Advertising Agencies, the American Legion, Amnesty International, the Association on American Indian Affairs, the Amateur Athletic Union of the United States, the Zionist Organization of America, and the American Zoo and Aquarium Association. All of these thousands of organizations can be more or less readily classified and, so, usefully described, as interest groups.

### Physicians dedicated to the health of America.



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This simple phrase unites physicians from every state and specialty. These words are an oath to uphold the highest principles of medicine. They are a promise we make to our patients. And a pledge of our commitment and cause.

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American Medical Association

Physicians dedicated to the health of America.



▲ **American Medical Association** This interest group represents the concerns of medical doctors to government officials and the public.

## An American Tradition

The United States has often been called “a nation of joiners.” Recall Alexis de Tocqueville’s observations cited in the previous section. Tocqueville’s comments, true when he made them, have become even more accurate over time.

No one really knows how many associations exist in the United States today. There are thousands upon thousands of them, however, and at every level in society. Each one is an interest group whenever it tries to influence the actions of government in order to promote its own goals and special interests.

Interest groups come in all shapes and sizes. They may have thousands or even millions of members, or only a handful. They may be well- or little-known, long-established or new and even temporary, highly structured or quite loose and informal, wealthy or with few resources. No matter what their characteristics, they are found in every field of human activity in this country.

The largest number of interest groups have been founded on the basis of an economic interest, especially on the bases of business, labor, agricultural, and professional interests. Some groups are grounded in a geographic area, such as the South, the Columbia River Basin, or the State of Indiana.

Other groups have been born out of a cause or an idea, such as prohibition of alcohol, environmental protection, or gun control. Still other

interest groups exist to promote the welfare of certain groups of people—veterans, senior citizens, a racial minority, the homeless, women, people with disabilities and so on.

Many people belong to a number of interest groups. A car dealer, for example, may belong to the local Chamber of Commerce, a car dealers' association, the American Legion, a local taxpayers' league, a garden club, a church, the PTA, the American Cancer Society, the National Wildlife Federation, and several other local, regional, or national groups. All of these are, to one degree or another, interest groups—including the church and the garden club, even though the car dealer may never think of these groups in that light.<sup>3</sup>

Many people may belong to groups that take conflicting stands on political issues. For example, a program to improve the city's streets may be supported by the local Chamber of Commerce and the car dealers' association but opposed by the taxpayers' league. The taxpayers' league may endorse a plan to eliminate plantings in traffic islands while the garden club wants to keep the plantings.

## Groups Based on Economic Interests

Most interest groups are formed on the basis of economic interests. That is, they are based on the manner in which people make their living. Among these groups, the most active—and certainly the most effective—are those representing business, labor, agriculture, and certain professions.

### Business Groups

Business has long looked to government to promote and protect its interests. Recall that merchants, creditors, and property owners were the people most responsible for calling the Constitutional Convention in 1787. In the early years of the Republic, business interests fought

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<sup>3</sup>Churches often take stands on such public issues as drinking, curfew ordinances, and legalized gambling, and they often try to influence public policy in those matters. Garden clubs often try to persuade cities to do such things as improve public parks and beautify downtown areas. Not every group to which people belong can properly be called an interest group, of course. But the point is that many groups that are not often thought to be interest groups in fact are.



▲ Like Chambers of Commerce throughout the country, this Santa Monica, California, Chamber of Commerce supports local businesses. **Critical Thinking** Why do most small businesses join not just one, but several, interest groups? **H-SS 12.3.1**

for and won the protective tariff. Along with organized labor, many of them continue to work to maintain it, even now.

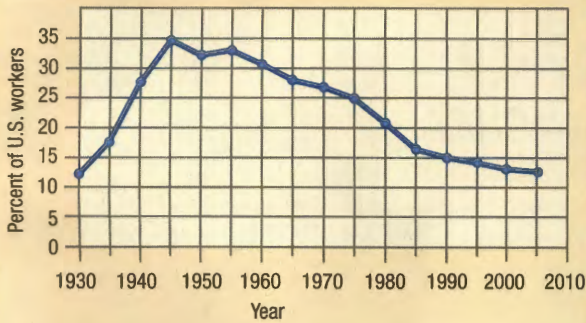
The United States Brewers' Association, the oldest organized interest group at work in national politics today, was born in 1862 when Congress first levied a tax on beer. The association's purpose was to assure the brewing trade that its interests would be "vigorously prosecuted before the legislative and executive departments."

Hundreds of business groups now operate in Washington, D.C., in the 50 State capitals, and at the local level across the country. The two best-known business organizations are the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) and the Chamber of Commerce of the United States.

Formed in 1895, NAM now represents some 14,000 firms. It generally speaks for "big business" in public affairs. The Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1912. Over the years, it has become a major voice for the nation's thousands of smaller businesses. It has some 2,800 local chambers and now counts more than 3 million business and professional firms and some 5 million individuals among its members.

Another major group, the Business Roundtable, has also taken a large role in promoting and defending the business community in recent years. Begun in 1972, the Roundtable is composed of the chief executive officers of 150 of the nation's largest, most prestigious, and most influential corporations.

## Membership in Labor Unions



Note: Statistics are for nonfarm employees. Released Jan. 2004.

SOURCE: AFL-CIO, U.S. Department of Labor



**Interpreting Graphs** Although membership in labor unions has declined, organized labor remains a powerful force. (a) *In what years did union membership peak?* (b) *What factors might account for this peak and subsequent decline?* **H-SS 12.2.2**

Most segments of the business community also have their own interest groups, often called **trade associations**. They number in the hundreds and include the American Trucking Association, the Association of American Railroads, the American Bankers Association, the National Restaurant Association, and many more.

Despite their common goal of promoting business interests, business groups do not always present a solid front. In fact, they often disagree, and sometimes fight, among themselves. The trucking industry, for example, does its best to get as much federal aid as possible for highway construction. The railroads, however, are unhappy with what they see as “special favors” for their competition. At the same time, the railroads see federal taxes on gasoline, oil, tires, and other “highway users fees” as legitimate and necessary sources of federal income. The truckers take quite another view.

### Labor Groups

A **labor union** is an organization of workers who share the same type of job or who work in the same industry. Labor unions press for government policies that will benefit their members.

The strength and clout of organized labor have ebbed over the past several years. Some 16 million Americans, less than 13.5 percent of the nation’s labor force, belong to labor unions today. In the 1940s and 1950s, as many as a

third of all working Americans were union members; and as recently as 1975, union membership accounted for fully a fourth of the labor force. In spite of recent declines in union membership, however, labor unions remain a powerful force in American politics.

A host of groups represent the interests of organized labor. The largest, in both size and political power, is the AFL-CIO (the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations). It is now made up of some 100 separate unions, such as the Retail Clerks International Union, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, and the American Federation of

State, County, and Municipal Employees. With all its unions, the AFL-CIO has about 13 million members. Each union, like the AFL-CIO itself, is organized on a national, State, and local basis.<sup>4</sup>

There are also a number of independent unions, that is, unions not affiliated with the AFL-CIO. The largest and most powerful of them include such groups as the Fraternal Order of Police, the National Treasury Employees Union, and the International Longshore and Warehouse Union.

Organized labor generally speaks with one voice on such social welfare and job-related matters as Social Security programs, minimum wages, and unemployment. Labor sometimes opposes labor, however. White-collar and blue-collar workers, for example, do not always share the same economic interests. Then, too, such factors as sectional interests (East-West, North-South, urban-rural, and so on) sometimes divide labor’s forces. Production and transportation

<sup>4</sup>The AFL was formed in 1886 as a federation of craft unions. A craft union is made up of those workers who have the same craft or skill—for example, carpenters, plumbers, or electricians. The growth of mass-production industries created a large class of workers not skilled in any particular craft, however. The AFL found it difficult to organize these workers. Many of its craft unions opposed the admission of unions of unskilled workers to the AFL. In 1935, after years of bitter fighting, a group led by John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers was expelled from the AFL. That group formed the CIO in 1938. The rivalries between these two major national unions eased to the point where a merger took place in 1955, creating the AFL-CIO.

interests (trucks versus railroads versus airplanes, for example) may create divisions, as well.

## Agricultural Groups

For much of our history, most Americans lived in the country, and most of them lived on farms. The First Census, taken in 1790, set the nation's population at 3,929,214 persons. It found that nearly all the Americans of that day—94.9 percent of them—lived outside any city or town.

The nation's population has increased dramatically since 1790, of course—to more than 290 million today. Over that period the nation's farm population has plummeted. Fewer than five million people—less than two percent of the population—live on farms in this country today. Still, farmers' influence on the government's agricultural policies is and has been enormous. Several powerful associations serve the interests of agriculture. They include several broad-based farm groups and a larger number of groups that represent farmers who raise particular commodities.

The most prominent farm groups are the National Grange, the American Farm Bureau Federation, and the National Farmers Union. The Grange, established in 1867, is the oldest and generally the most conservative of these groups. Over the years, it has been as much a social as a political organization, concerned about the welfare of farm families. Some 300,000 farm families are now members, and much of the Grange's strength is centered in the Northeast and the Mid-Atlantic States.

The Farm Bureau is the largest and generally most effective of the three agricultural groups. Formed in 1919, it now claims over five million farm-family members and is especially strong in the Midwest. The Farm Bureau generally supports federal programs to promote agriculture. However, it opposes most government regulation and favors the free market economy.

The National Farmers Union draws its strength from smaller and less prosperous farmers. It now has some 250,000 farm-family members, most of them in the upper Midwest and West. The National Farmers Union often calls itself the champion of the dirt farmer, and frequently disagrees with the other two major

organizations. It regularly argues for increased federal aid to the nation's family-sized farms.

Many other groups speak for the producers of specific farm commodities, such as dairy products, grain, fruit, peanuts, livestock, cotton, wool, corn, and soybeans. They include the National Association of Wheat Growers, the American Meat Institute, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, the National Cotton Council, and many others.

Like business and labor groups, farm organizations sometimes find themselves at odds with one another. Thus, dairy, corn, soybean, and cotton groups compete as each of them tries to influence State laws regulating the production and sale of such products as margarine and yogurt. California and Florida citrus growers, each with their own groups, are sometimes pitted against one another, and so on.

## Professional Groups

The professions are generally defined as those occupations that require extensive and specialized training, such as medicine, law, and teaching. These groups also maintain organizations to protect and promote their interests. Most professional groups are not nearly as large, well-organized, well-financed, or effective as most business, labor, and farm groups.

Three major professional groups are exceptions to the rule, however: the American



▲ **Farming of the Future** The potential risks and benefits of biotechnology are of keen interest to agricultural groups. This scientist is studying bioengineered sunflowers.

# Voices on Government

**General Colin Powell** retired from the Army in 1993 after 35 years of service. The son of Jamaican immigrants, he rose through the military ranks, and headed the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the Gulf War. He served as Secretary of State from 2001 to 2005. Before that, he led America's Promise—The Alliance for Youth, a national organization whose mission is to build the character and competence of our nation's youth. Of the group's mission, he stated:



*“ Reclaiming the next generation of Americans is a national challenge that requires a national response. That response is America's Promise. It calls on all Americans to scale up their investment in our youth; to challenge young people by having high expectations of them; and to engage youth with opportunities to realize those expectations through constructive, character-building activities. ”*

## Evaluating the Quotation

**Based on what you have read in this chapter, how do the ideals of a group like America's Promise compare with the goals of other types of interest groups?**

Medical Association (the AMA, to which some 250,000 physicians belong), the American Bar Association (the ABA, with more than 400,000 lawyers as members), and the National Education Association (the NEA, with more than 2.7 million teachers on its membership rolls). Each of these organizations has a very real impact on public policies, and at every level of government.

There are hundreds of less well-known and less politically active professional organizations: the American Society of Civil Engineers, the American Library Association, the American Political Science Association, and many more. Much of their effort centers on such matters as the standards of the profession, the holding of professional meetings, and the publication of scholarly journals. Still, each acts in some ways as an interest group, bent on influencing government policies for the welfare of the profession and its members.

## Other Interest Groups

Most interest groups are based on economic concerns, but hundreds have been formed for other reasons. Many of these other groups have a good deal of political clout.

### Groups That Promote Causes

A large number of groups exist to promote a cause or an idea. It would take several pages just to list them here, and so what follows is only a sampling of the more important ones.

The American Civil Liberties Union was born in 1920. The ACLU now has some 400,000 members. It fights in and out of court to protect civil and political rights. Common Cause dates from 1970, and its membership now exceeds 210,000. It calls itself “the citizen's lobby” and works for major reforms in the political process. The League of Women Voters of the United States and its many local leagues have been dedicated to stimulating participation in and greater knowledge about public affairs since 1920. The League now has more than 130,000 members.

The list of groups devoted to causes goes on and on. Many groups—such as the National Women's Political Caucus and several others—carry the women's rights banner. Many other groups, including the National Wildlife Federation, the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, the Audubon Society, and Friends of the Earth, are pledged to conservation and environmental protection.

Some groups are devoted to opposing certain causes. Others support those same causes. The National Right-to-Life Committee, Women Exploited by Abortion, and other groups oppose abortion. They are countered by the National Abortion and Reproduction Rights Action League, Planned Parenthood, and their allies. Similarly, the National Rifle Association fights most forms of gun control; Handgun Control, Inc. works for it.

### Organizations That Promote the Welfare of Certain Groups

A number of interest groups seek to promote the welfare of certain segments of the population. Among the best known and most powerful are the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, which work to advance the interests of the

country's veterans. Groups like Older Americans, Inc. and AARP are very active in such areas as pensions and medical care for senior citizens.

Several organizations—notably the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Urban League, and People United to Save Humanity (PUSH)—are concerned with public policies affecting African Americans. Other organizations, such as the Japanese American Citizens League, the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund, and the National Association of Arab Americans, support the country's many ethnic groups.

## Religious Organizations

Religious organizations also try to influence public policy in several important areas. Many Protestants and their local and national churches do so through the National Council of Churches. Other Protestants belong to such groups as Christian Voice and the Christian Coalition.

The National Catholic Welfare Council represents the interests of Roman Catholics. The American Jewish Congress and B'nai B'rith's Anti-Defamation League represent the interests of the Jewish community.

## Public-Interest Groups

Recall that interest groups seek public policies of special benefit to their members—business, labor,

agriculture, veterans, teachers, environmentalists and so on—and they work against policies that threaten their members' interests. Some groups, often called public-interest groups, have a broader goal. They work for the “public good.” That is, a **public-interest group** is an interest group that seeks to institute certain public policies of benefit to all or most people in this country, whether or not they belong to or support that organization.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike most interest groups, public-interest groups focus on the roles that all Americans share. That is, they represent people as citizens, as consumers, as breathers of air, as drinkers of water, and so on.

Public-interest groups have become quite visible over the past 30 years or so. Among the best known and most active are Common Cause and the several organizations that make up Ralph Nader's Public Citizen, Inc. Some have existed for a much longer time—for example, the League of Women Voters, which has roots that reach deep into the history of woman suffrage.

<sup>5</sup>Of course, nearly all interest groups claim that they work for the “public good.” Thus, the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) says that lower taxes on business will stimulate the economy and so help everyone. The AFL-CIO says the same thing about spending more public dollars for more public works programs. But, as a general rule, most interest groups support or oppose public policies on a much narrower basis: on what they see to be the best interests of their own members.

## Section 2 Assessment

### Key Terms and Main Ideas

1. At what point does an organization become an interest group?
2. (a) What are the four major types of economically based interest groups? (b) List an example of each major type. (c) How does a **trade association** differ from a **labor union**?
3. For what reasons, other than economic ones, are interest groups created?
4. (a) What is a **public-interest group**? (b) How does it differ from other interest groups?

### Critical Thinking

5. **Predicting Consequences** You have read that interest groups can disagree over certain issues, such as land use or taxes. Choose two groups mentioned in this section and create a scenario in which these groups conflict.



### Standards Monitoring Online

For: Self-quiz with vocabulary practice  
Web Code: mqa-2092

6. **Understanding Point of View** To which of the interest groups mentioned in this section might these persons belong: (a) Maria, an attorney in a city with a large minority population; (b) Bill, a retired midwestern soybean farmer? (c) To which groups might they both belong?

Go Online  
PHSchool.com

For: An activity on labor unions  
Web Code: mqd-2092

## Destination: The American Dream



**Analysis Skills**  
CS3, HR4, HI3

*The National Urban League was founded in 1910 to help African Americans arriving in northern cities from the southeast. Today, the National Urban League continues to represent African Americans with branches in 34 States and the District of Columbia. At a recent national convention, President Hugh B. Price offered a plan to bridge the economic gap between poor Americans of color and the rest of the nation.*

**T**here are regions of America where all that folks know of the economic boom is what they see on the evening news.

Everyone says we should depend less on government largesse and start our own businesses like everybody else. That sounds fine.

But the truth is that even to this day, according to a study just published by the Federal Reserve Board, black entrepreneurs seeking small business loans are rejected twice as much as whites with the same credit rating. . . .

There won't be One America until the gulf that divides minorities from mainstream America disappears once and for all. . . .

The National Urban League is proposing Ten Opportunity Commandments for the 21st Century. . . . I'm not talking about dead-end expenditures that don't pay off. These investments are proven winners. They'll pay handsome dividends to society for generations to come. . . .

1. Offer quality pre-school education to every child whose parents cannot afford it.
2. Provide affordable health care for the 41 million Americans who are uninsured.
3. Ensure that every public school serving poor children equips them for self-reliance.
4. Vastly increase support for proven programs that get the estimated 15 million high school dropouts back on track.
5. Guarantee universal access to affordable higher education.



Hugh B. Price

6. Maintain national economic policies that promote high employment and economic growth in communities that have missed out on the good times.

7. Eliminate the digital divide by making the acquisition of computers and use of the Internet affordable for everyone.

8. Assure full participation of minorities in higher education, employment and contracting. There must be no retreat to tokenism.

9. Eradicate the homeownership gap along ethnic lines by providing 100 percent mortgage guarantees for credit-worthy, working class minority families.

10. Equalize access to capital by totally eliminating discriminatory business loan practices, so that minority entrepreneurs can join the chorus in proclaiming that the business of America is business.

### Analyzing Primary Sources

1. What problem is Price seeking to solve in this speech?
2. (a) How many of Price's proposals are directly related to education? (b) Why might the National Urban League place such a great emphasis on education?
3. Name three institutions that could help solve the problems described by Price, and explain what specific steps they should take.

## 3

# Interest Groups at Work

## Section Preview

### OBJECTIVES

1. **Explain** interest groups' three major goals in influencing public opinion.
2. **Describe** how interest groups use propaganda to persuade people to their point of view.
3. **Analyze** how interest groups try to influence political parties and elections.
4. **Examine** how lobbying brings group pressures to bear on the process of making public policy.

### WHY IT MATTERS

Flip through a newspaper or surf television or the Internet and you will no doubt see examples of interest groups at work—that is, using propaganda aimed at influencing public attitudes. Interest groups also work through political action committees and lobbyists to influence political parties and public policy.

### POLITICAL DICTIONARY

- ★ **propaganda**
- ★ **single-interest group**
- ★ **lobbying**
- ★ **grass roots**

Interest groups exist to influence public policies. That is why they are good illustrations of the saying that politics is all about “who gets what, when, and how.” Today, most interest groups use a wide variety of techniques as they try to influence public opinion, work to affect the outcome of elections, and lobby those who make public policy.

## Influencing Public Opinion

Public opinion is the most significant long-term force in American politics. It is abundantly clear that, over the long run, no public policy can be followed successfully without the support of a sizeable portion of the population—and interest groups know this.

Interest groups regularly reach out to the public to accomplish one or all of three major goals:

1. To supply the public with information an organization thinks the people should have. This information is presented to support that group's interests, of course. Thus, Handgun Control, Inc. often runs full-page magazine ads keyed to one fact: the number of Americans who are killed by handguns each year.
2. To build a positive image for a group. Thus, the National Rifle Association frequently runs ads

that feature the NRA's gun-safety programs and the many shooting tournaments it sponsors.

3. To promote a particular public policy. This, of course, is the purpose of most interest groups' efforts.

## Propaganda

Interest groups try to create the public attitudes they want by using **propaganda**.<sup>6</sup> Propaganda is a technique of persuasion aimed at influencing individual or group behaviors. Its goal is to create a particular belief. That belief may be completely true or false, or it may lie somewhere

<sup>6</sup>The term comes from the Latin *propagare*—to propagate, to spread, to disseminate. It has been a part of the American political vocabulary since the 1930s.



▲ Like the advocacy group Friends of the River, many interest groups reach out to supporters on the Internet.



between those extremes. Today, people tend to think of propaganda as a form of lying and deception. As a technique, however, propaganda is neither moral nor immoral; it is, instead, amoral.

Propaganda does not use objective logic. Rather, it begins with a conclusion. Then it brings together any evidence that will support that conclusion and disregards information that will not. Propagandists are advertisers, persuaders—and occasionally even brainwashers—who are interested in influencing others to agree with their point of view.

The development of the mass media in this country encouraged the use of propaganda, first in the field of commercial advertising, and then in politics. To be successful, propaganda must be presented in simple, interesting, and credible terms. Talented propagandists almost never attack the logic of a policy they oppose. Instead, they often attack it with name-calling. That is, they attach such labels as “communist” or “fascist.” Other labels include “ultraliberal,” “ultraconservative,” “pie-in-the-sky,” or “greedy.” Or, they try to discredit a policy or person by card-stacking; that is, presenting only one side of the issue.

Policies that propagandists support receive labels that will produce favorable reactions. They use such glittering generalities as “American,” “sound,” “fair,” and “just.” Symbols are often used to elicit those reactions, too: Uncle Sam and the flag are favorites. So, too, are testimonials—endorsements, or supporting statements, from such well-known personalities as television stars or professional athletes. The bandwagon approach, which urges people to follow the crowd, is another favorite technique. The plain-folks approach, in which the propagandist pretends to be one of the common people, gets heavy use, too.

Propaganda is spread through newspapers, radio, television, the Internet, movies, billboards, books, magazines, pamphlets, posters, speeches—in fact, through every form of mass communication. The more controversial or less popular a group’s position, the more necessary the propaganda campaign becomes.

## Influencing Parties and Elections

As you know, interest groups and political parties are very different creatures. They exist in the same environment, however, and their paths often cross.

For their part, leaders of interest groups know that political parties play a central role in selecting those people who make public-policy decisions. They are quite aware, too, that much of the government’s policy-making machinery is organized by and through political parties.

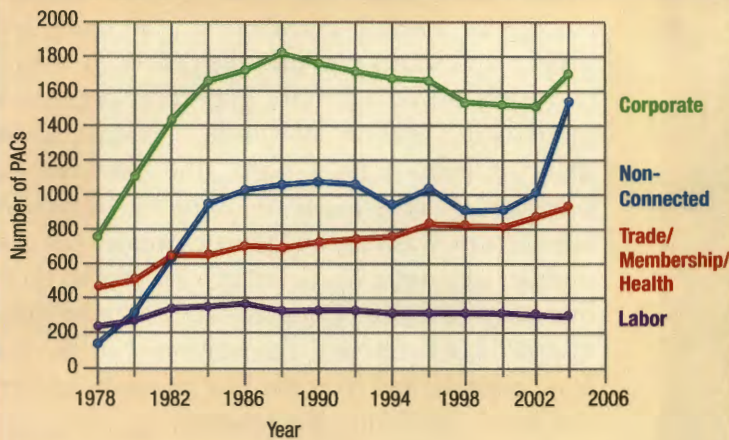
Interest groups thus try to influence the behavior of political parties, and they do so in a number of ways. Some groups keep close ties with one or the other of the major parties. Most hope to secure the support of both of them. Several urge their members to become active in party affairs and try to win posts in party organizations.

An interest group’s election tactics often have to involve some very finely tuned decisions. The group must consider how its actions on behalf of or against a candidate might affect its overall goal of influencing policy.



▲ Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry receives the endorsement of the International Association of Firefighters in 2004. **Critical Thinking** Why are interest group endorsements significant to political candidates?

## Growth of PACs



SOURCE: Federal Election Commission



**Interpreting Graphs** The total number of PACs has increased dramatically since the 1970s. (a) How would you describe the growth of PACs during the 1990s? (b) What does the growth of PACs suggest about the way political campaigns are financed? **H-SS 12.3.2**

If, for example, a group supports the Democratic candidate for a seat in the U.S. Senate, it may not want to help that candidate by attacking the Republican nominee in the race, especially if the Republican has some chance of winning. If the Republican does win the race, the group will not only have failed to advance its cause, but likely will have created an enemy. The interest group might also be concerned that another Republican candidate who wins some other office might be offended by attacks on a party colleague, even if he or she agrees with the group's policy aims.

Campaigns for public office cost a great deal of money. Interest groups are quite aware of this fact, and they are a major source of campaign funds today. Much of their financial help now goes to parties and their candidates through political action committees (PACs). As you know, PACs raise and distribute money to candidates who will further their goals. (See Chapter 7, page 199.)

The number of PACs has grown dramatically over the past 30 years or so. One particular variety, often called **single-interest groups**, has grown most rapidly. These organizations are PACs that concentrate their efforts on one issue, such as abortion, gun control, or health care. They work for or, more often, against a candidate solely on the basis of that candidate's stand on that one

issue. For them, all other considerations—the candidate's record on other questions, his or her party identification or political experience, and so on—are of little or no importance.

Most interest groups focus on the public policy-making process. Any part they play in the electoral process is an offshoot of that primary concern. The efforts of single-interest groups stand as a notable exception to that rule.

## Lobbying

**Lobbying** is usually defined as those activities by which group pressures are brought to bear on legislators and the legislative process. Certainly, it is that, but it is also much more. Realistically, lobbying includes all of the methods by which group pressures are brought to bear on all aspects of the public policy-making process.

What happens in a legislative body is often of deep concern to several different, and competing, interests. A bill to regulate the sale of firearms, for example, excites the interest of many individuals and groups. Those companies that make guns, those that sell them, and those that produce or sell ammunition, targets, scopes, hunting jackets, sleeping bags, and related products have a clear stake in that bill's contents and its fate. So, too, do law-enforcement agencies, hunters, wildlife conservationists, such groups



▲ **Making Their Views Known** Lobbyists make their interests known in a variety of ways, including direct contact with legislators (top). The League of Women Voters, which often works at the grassroots level, promotes active participation in government (bottom). **H-SS 12.6.4**

as the National Rifle Association and the American Civil Liberties Union, and many others. These groups all seek to influence legislators as they consider the passage of that bill.

Public policy is made by much more than the words in a statute, however. What happens after a law has been passed is often of real concern to organized interests, too. How is the law interpreted? How vigorously is it applied by the agency that enforces it? What position will the courts take if the law is challenged on some legal ground? These questions point to the fact that

interest groups often have to carry their lobbying efforts beyond the legislative arena. Lobbying is thus also often brought into one and sometimes several agencies in the executive branch and sometimes into the courts, as well.

Nearly all of the more important organized interests in the country—business groups, labor unions, farm organizations, the professions, veterans, churches, and many more—maintain lobbyists in Washington. Most estimates put the number of people who earn at least part of their living by lobbying Congress at no fewer than 20,000. Lobbyists are also stationed in the 50 State capitals, and their number grows whenever the State’s legislature is in session.<sup>7</sup>

### Lobbyists at Work

Lobbyists themselves often prefer to be known by some other title—“legislative counsel” or “public representative,” for example. Whatever they call themselves, their major task is to work for those matters that benefit their clients and against those that may harm them.

A lobbyist’s effectiveness depends in large part on his or her knowledge of the political system. The competent lobbyist is thoroughly familiar with government and its procedures, with the facts of current political life, and with the techniques of “polite” persuasion. Some have been members of Congress or the State legislature. They know the “legislative ropes” and have many close contacts among present-day members. Many others are lawyers, former journalists, or men and women who have come into lobbying from the closely related field of public relations.

Lobbyists at work use a number of techniques as they try to persuade legislators and other policy makers to share their points of view. They see that articles, reports, and all sorts of other information favorable to their causes reach those officeholders. Many testify before legislative committees. If the House Committee on the Judiciary is considering a

<sup>7</sup>The “lobby” is actually an outer room or main corridor or some other part of a capitol building to which the general public is admitted. The term *lobby-agent* was being used to identify favor-seekers at sessions of the New York State legislature in Albany by the late 1820s. By the 1830s the term had been shortened to lobbyist and was in wide use in Washington and elsewhere.

gun control bill, for example, representatives of all those groups with an interest in firearms mentioned earlier are certain to be invited, or to ask for the opportunity, to present their views. The testimony that lobbyists give is usually "expert," but, of course, it is also couched in terms favorable to the interests they represent.

Most lobbyists also know how to bring "grass-roots" pressures to bear. **Grass roots** means of or from the people, the average voters. The groups that the lobbyists speak for can mount campaigns by e-mail, letter, postcard, and phone from "the folks back home"—and often on short notice. The good lobbyist's arsenal of publicity includes any number of other weapons: favorable news stories, magazine articles, advertisements, radio and television appeals, and endorsements by noted personalities.

Several interest groups now publish ratings of members of Congress. These rankings are based on the votes cast on measures that those groups regard as crucial to their interests. Among the most prominent of the many organizations that now compile and publish such ratings are the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the various State Public Interest Research Groups (PIRG), the American Conservative Union (ACU), the National Tax Limitation Committee (NTLC), and the Chamber of Commerce of the United States.

Each of these groups selects a number of key measures and then rates each member on the basis of his or her votes on those bills. In the usual rating scheme, each senator or representative is given a score that reflects how often he or she voted in accordance with the views of the interest group.

Interest groups see to it that the mass media publicize these ratings. They also distribute the ratings to the group's membership. Their ultimate objective is twofold: either to persuade unfriendly legislators to change their voting behavior or to help bring about their defeat in future elections.

The typical lobbyist of today is a far cry from those of an earlier day, and from many of the fictitious ones still found on television and in novels and the movies. The once fairly common practice of bribery and the widespread use of unethical practices are almost unknown. Most present-day lobbyists work openly, and their major techniques come under the headings of friendliness, persuasion, and helpfulness.

**2003 ADA Voting Records**

**HOUSE SHIFTS LEFT, SENATE REMAINS SOLIDLY SPLIT**

\*\*\*\*\*

Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), the nation's oldest independent liberal organization, released its 50th Annual Voting Records today, covering the first session of the 108th Congress. Since ADA's founding in 1947, the Voting Records have served as the standard guideline measuring a legislator's political liberalism.

The first session of the 108th Congress provided the opportunity for important legislative progress. But the year was marked with disappointment as partisan politics weighed heavily on every move. War in Iraq, Medicare restructuring, a media ownership power struggle, and an assault on workers' rights took center stage in 2003. The battles ranged from flat disappointing to outrageous and unprecedented.

The House moved left in its voting with Democrats scoring an 89.2% on average, up from an 85.5% rating last year and

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- Key to Voting Record
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You may search for ratings by state or legislator. You may narrow your search for a particular legislator by using the controls below.

Year:

State:

Chamber:

Legislator:

member of the House and Senate since 1971. [Click here for archived ratings prior to 1999.](#) Private rating listed in all major political almanacs and reference guides, the ACU ratings are media and are extensively used by political strategists and candidates running for public office.

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▲ Some interest groups rate members of Congress on issues of concern to their members. *Critical Thinking Why is using the Internet an effective way for interest groups to publish this kind of information?* **H-SS 12.7.6**

Lobbyists are ready to make campaign contributions, provide information, write speeches, and even draft legislation. The contributions are welcome, the information usually quite accurate, the speeches forceful, and the bills well-drawn. Most lobbyists know that if they behaved otherwise (gave false information, for example) they would damage, if not destroy, their credibility and thus their overall effectiveness.

Lobbyists work hard to influence committee action, floor debate, and the final vote in a legislative body. If they fail in one house, they carry their fight to the other. If they lose there too, they may turn to the executive branch and perhaps to the courts, as well.<sup>8</sup>

### Lobby Regulation

Lobbying abuses do occur now and then, of course. False or misleading testimony, bribery, and other unethical pressures are not common, but they do happen. The first major attempt to corral lobbying came in 1946 when Congress passed the Federal Regulation of Lobbying Act. This law required lobbyists to register with the clerk of the House and the secretary of the Senate. More specifically, it required the registration

<sup>8</sup>Notice that various government agencies often act much like interest groups in their relations with Congress or with a State's legislature—for example, when they seek funds or when they offer testimony for or against a bill in committee.

of those individuals and groups who collected or spent money for the “principal purpose” of influencing legislation.

That vague phrase “principal purpose” proved to be a huge loophole through which many very active groups avoided registration. The 1946 law was also ineffective because its provisions applied only to lobbying efforts aimed at members of Congress, not at congressional staff members or at officials in the executive branch.

Congress finally responded to years of criticism of the 1946 law with a much tighter statute, the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995. That law eliminates the “principal purpose” standard. It requires registration by all individual lobbyists and organizations that seek to influence members of Congress, their staffers, or any policy-making official in the executive branch, from the President on down. Those who must register are required to supply such basic information as name, address, and principal place of business, plus a general description of their activities. They must also furnish similar information about their clients and describe in detail their lobbying activities in semiannual reports.

Each State also has its own law or laws regulating lobbying activities. The variations among them are extreme, however. Although most States have laws that are weaker than the federal statute, a few States have fairly rigorous laws. On the other hand, a few States condone virtually anything a lobbyist chooses to do.

## Section 3 Assessment

### Key Terms and Main Ideas

1. For what three reasons do interest groups reach out to the public?
2. (a) Why do interest groups use **propaganda**? (b) Identify at least three major propaganda techniques.
3. (a) Why do interest groups try to influence political parties? (b) What is a **single-interest group**?
4. How is **lobbying** used to influence public policy?

### Critical Thinking

5. **Expressing Problems Clearly** Create a “Help Wanted” ad for a lobbyist. Include a job description as well as the preferred professional experience and abilities that a candidate should bring to the position.



### Standards Monitoring Online

For: Self-quiz with vocabulary practice  
Web Code: mqa-2093

6. **Recognizing Propaganda** Choose an issue of particular interest to students, such as year-round schooling or censorship of school publications. Then write a paragraph in which you use at least two of the propaganda techniques described in this section to persuade your audience to support your point of view.



For: An activity on PACs  
Web Code: mqd-2093

## May Taxpayers Challenge Federal Spending Laws?



Analysis Skills HR4,  
HI3, HI4

*The federal courts possess the power of judicial review, but they can exercise that power only in those cases properly brought to them. May anyone who questions the constitutionality of a federal law challenge that law in court?*

### **Flast v. Cohen (1968)**

Flast was one of a group of seven taxpayers who objected to the use of federal funds to help support religious schools under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The group believed that public funding of these schools violated the First Amendment in two ways. First, such aid constituted an “establishment of religion.” Second, by forcing the group to pay taxes to support religious activities, such aid interfered with the free exercise of their own religion. The group sued Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Wilbur J. Cohen and other federal officials whose job it was to implement the Act.

The majority of a special three-judge federal court ruled that the Flast group did not have “standing” to proceed with the suit. “Standing” is a legal requirement under which a person can file a suit only if he or she has a personal stake in the outcome of the case. The court ruled that the plaintiffs’ only stake in the outcome of the case was in their capacity as taxpayers, and this was not enough to give them standing. (In 1923, in the case of *Frothingham v. Mellon*, the Supreme Court had ruled that an individual could not challenge an act of Congress simply because that act affected the individual’s tax bill.) The plaintiffs appealed to the Supreme Court, which considered whether its decision in *Frothingham* barred their suit.

### **Arguments for Flast**

1. The *Frothingham* decision does not mean that a taxpayer may never challenge the constitutionality of an act of Congress. It merely means that a person’s status as a taxpayer does

not, by itself, give him or her standing to pose such a challenge. The plaintiffs in this case have a personal stake in the outcome of the case and should be allowed to proceed.

2. There is a connection between the plaintiffs’ status as taxpayers and their claims in this case. The 1st Amendment’s Establishment Clause limits Congress’s power to collect taxes in support of religion. Thus the plaintiffs’ role as taxpayers gives them a direct and concrete interest in the outcome of the case.

### **Arguments for Cohen**

1. Federal courts already have a high caseload. The requirement that plaintiffs have sufficient standing helps prevent unnecessary lawsuits by ensuring that only those with a serious stake in the outcome bring cases.
2. People with no special interest in a controversy besides the tiny amount of their taxes that may be involved should not be allowed to sue in federal court.

### **Decide for Yourself**

1. Review the constitutional grounds on which each side based its arguments and the specific arguments each side presented.
2. Debate the opposing viewpoints presented in this case. Which viewpoint do you favor?
3. Predict the impact of the Court’s decision on other potential taxpayer suits challenging federal laws. (To read a summary of the Court’s decision, turn to pages 799–806.)

Go  online  
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Use Web Code mqp-2096 to register your vote on this issue and to see how other students voted.



## Political Dictionary

**public policy** (p. 236), **public affairs** (p. 239),  
**trade association** (p. 244), **labor union** (p. 244),  
**public-interest group** (p. 247), **propaganda** (p. 249),  
**single-interest group** (p. 251), **lobbying** (p. 251),  
**grass roots** (p. 253)

## Standards Review

- H-SS 12.1.2** Discuss the character of American democracy and its promise and perils as articulated by Alexis de Tocqueville.
- H-SS 12.1.5** Describe the systems of separated and shared powers, the role of organized interests (*Federalist Paper Number 10*), checks and balances (*Federalist Paper Number 51*), the importance of an independent judiciary (*Federalist Paper Number 78*), enumerated powers, rule of law, federalism, and civilian control of the military.
- H-SS 12.2.2** Explain how economic rights are secured and their importance to the individual and to society (e.g., the right to acquire, use, transfer, and dispose of property; right to choose one's work; right to join or not join labor unions; copyright and patent).
- H-SS 12.2.4** Understand the obligations of civic-mindedness, including voting, being informed on civic issues, volunteering and performing public service, and serving in the military or alternative service.
- H-SS 12.3.1** Explain how civil society provides opportunities for individuals to associate for social, cultural, religious, economic, and political purposes.
- H-SS 12.3.2** Explain how civil society makes it possible for people, individually or in association with others, to bring their influence to bear on government in ways other than voting and elections.
- H-SS 12.6.4** Describe the means that citizens use to participate in the political process (e.g., voting, campaigning, lobbying, filing a legal challenge, demonstrating, petitioning, picketing, running for political office).
- H-SS 12.7.5** Explain how public policy is formed, including the setting of the public agenda and implementation of it through regulations and executive orders.
- H-SS 12.7.6** Compare the processes of lawmaking at each of the three levels of government, including the role of lobbying and the media.

## Practicing the Vocabulary

**Matching** Choose a term from the list above that best matches each description.

1. A type of interest group that represents business interests
2. The events and issues of concern to all the people in a society
3. Political action committee devoted to one issue
4. A type of interest group that works for the public good
5. The means by which group pressures are brought to bear on all aspects of the policy-making process
6. Of or from the common people, the average voters

**Word Recognition** Replace the underlined definition with the correct term from the list above.

7. Interest groups exist for the purpose of influencing all of the many goals that a government pursues in all of the many areas of human affairs in which it is involved.
8. In many industries workers have formed organizations of those who share the type of job or who work in the same industry.
9. One type of interest group is a(n) organization devoted to the interests of all the people.
10. Interest groups help to stimulate interest in the events and issues that concern people at large.

## Reviewing Main Ideas

### Section 1.....

11. Why are interest groups sometimes called "pressure groups" or "special interests"?
12. At what levels of government can you find interest groups operating?
13. In what ways are interest groups both similar to and different from political parties?
14. Summarize the debate over the role of interest groups in the American political system.
15. How do interest groups add an element to the checks-and-balances feature of the political process?

### Section 2.....

16. For what reason has the United States often been called "a nation of joiners"?
17. What is the difference between private and public-interest groups?

18. (a) On what kinds of issues do labor groups generally agree? (b) On what kinds of issues might labor interests have different points of view?
19. (a) Describe three types of interest groups that are not based on economic interests. (b) List at least one example of each type of group.

### Section 3.....

20. (a) For what reason must interest groups be concerned with public opinion? (b) For what purposes do interest groups appeal to public opinion?
21. What are the goals of a propagandist?
22. (a) To what extent are most interest groups concerned about elections? (b) What groups provide an exception to this rule?
23. At what stages of policymaking must lobbyists be involved? Explain your answer.
24. The Lobbying Disclosure Act requires registration by all those individuals and organizations that do what?

## Critical Thinking Skills

### Analysis Skill HR4

25. **Applying the Chapter Skill** Use the Internet to find three recent proposed amendments to the Constitution. Who is promoting these amendments, and why?
26. **Demonstrating Reasoned Judgment** You have read that forming interest groups is “both practical and democratic.” (a) Explain your understanding of this statement. (b) What issues in your school or community might usefully be addressed by forming interest groups?
27. **Drawing Conclusions** Consider the discussion of the functions and criticisms of interest groups in Section 1. Based on this information, discuss your opinion about whether or not interest groups are positive or negative influences on the American political process.

## Analyzing Political Cartoons

Using your knowledge of American government and this cartoon, answer the questions below.



28. (a) What does the building in the cartoon represent?  
(b) What is the source of the words on the building?
29. What is the cartoon saying about the influence of special-interest groups on the political process?

## You Can Make a Difference

With a group of friends, think of a policy issue on which you have a definite opinion. Then outline a plan for a group that would lobby for your side of that issue. Use the following suggestions for starting a local interest group.

- (1) Find a faculty sponsor.
- (2) Have a kickoff meeting.
- (3) Gain attention and publicity in a variety of ways—tell your friends, announce your group on the PA system, write an editorial, put up fliers, speak to existing school clubs.

## Participation Activities

### Analysis Skills CS4, HR4

30. **Current Events Watch** Scan recent newspapers and magazines to find a reference to an interest group at work. Then answer the following questions: What is the interest group? What appears to be its goal? How is it attempting to reach that goal? Share your findings with those of your classmates. Of the interest groups you and your classmates have found, which seem to be the most powerful? Why?
31. **Chart Activity** Create a chart that summarizes the types of interest groups mentioned in Section 2. Use the headings in blue as your categories, and list up to five examples in each category. Then choose one of these groups and find out more about it: the issues it follows, how it attempts to influence public policy, its history, the groups from which it draws its membership, and its success rate in reaching its goals.
32. **It's Your Turn** Conduct a survey to discover the interest groups people in your community belong to and why. Before you begin your interviews, frame the questions you wish to ask. Be sure that groups not commonly thought of as interest groups, such as church clubs, are included in your survey. Plan to interview at least ten people. What conclusions do your interviews suggest? (**Conducting a Survey**)



## Standards Monitoring Online

For: Chapter 9 Self-Test Visit: [PHSchool.com](http://PHSchool.com)  
Web Code: mqa-2094

As a final review, take the Magruder's Chapter 9 Self-Test and receive immediate feedback on your answers. The test consists of 20 multiple-choice questions designed to test your understanding of the chapter content.