Magruder’s American Government

CHAPTER 9

Interest Groups
SECTION 1  The Nature of Interest Groups

SECTION 2  Types of Interest Groups

SECTION 3  Interest Groups at Work
The Nature of Interest Groups

• What role do interest groups have in influencing public policy?

• How can we compare and contrast political parties and interest groups?

• Why do people see interest groups as both good and bad for American politics?
The Role of Interest Groups

• Interest groups are private organizations whose members share certain views and work to shape public policy.

• **Public policy** includes all of the goals a government sets and the various courses of action it pursues as it attempts to realize these goals.

• Interest groups exist to shape public policy.
Political Parties and Interest Groups

Political parties and interest groups differ in three striking respects: (1) in the making of nominations, (2) in their primary focus, and (3) in the scope of their interests.

Nominations

• Political parties are responsible for the nominating process, while interest groups hope to influence those nominations.

Primary Focus

• Political parties are interested in winning elections and controlling government, while interest groups are interested in influencing the policies created by government.

Scope of Interest

• Political parties concern themselves with the whole range of public affairs, while interest groups tend to focus on issues that their members are concerned about.
Valuable Functions of Interest Groups

• Interest groups raise awareness of public affairs, or issues that concern the people at large.

• Interest groups represent people who share attitudes rather than those who share geography.

• Interest groups provide specialized information to government agencies and legislators.

• Interest groups are vehicles for political participation.

• Interest groups keep tabs on various public agencies and officials.

• Interest groups compete.
Politics

John Kerry's Voting Record on Second Amendment and Hunting Issues

His voting record makes John F. Kerry the most anti-gun Presidential nominee in United States history. Since his election to the U.S. Senate in 1984, John F. Kerry has cast 59 votes (NRA did not score 4 of them) on issues involving firearms rights and hunting. These votes included votes to ban guns, to impose waiting periods on gun buyers, to financially punish gun manufacturers for operating a legal business and to restrict the free speech of Second Amendment advocates.

In addition, Kerry currently is a co-sponsor of S. 1431, which would ban all semi-automatic shotguns, all detachable-magazine semi-automatic rifles and many other guns, calling the whole lot "assault weapons."

Following are highlights of those votes that demonstrate Kerry's unwavering record of opposition to gun owners' rights.

Overview
Criticisms

• Some groups have an influence far out of proportion to their size or importance.

• It can be difficult to tell who or how many people are served by a group.

• Groups do not always represent the views of the people they claim to speak for.

• In rare cases, groups use tactics such as bribery, threats, and so on.
Section 1 Review

1. What is the role of interest groups?
   (a) Raising the interest rate
   (b) Organizing party conventions
   (c) Influencing public policy
   (d) All of the above

2. Which of the following is not a criticism of interest groups?
   (a) They keep tabs on public agencies.
   (b) They may not represent the views of all of their members.
   (c) Some use underhanded tactics.
   (d) Some have undue influence.

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Types of Interest Groups

• How has the American tradition of joining organizations resulted in a wide range of interest groups?

• What are the four categories of groups based on economic interests?

• What are the reasons other interest groups have formed?

• What is the purpose of public-interest groups?
Reasons for Interest Groups

• Most interest groups have been founded on the basis of an economic interest, especially business, labor, agricultural, and professional interests.

• Some are grounded in geographic area.

• Some are based on a cause or idea, such as environmental protection.

• Some promote the welfare of certain groups of people, such as retired citizens.

• Some are run by religious organizations.
ALL RIGHT YOU JOB-HOLDIN' GREENHORN-
FORK OVER SOME DRUG MONEY OR ELSE!

MEDICARE BILL

Go To Section: 1 2 3
Membership in Labor Unions

Membership in Labor Unions

Note: Statistics are for nonfarm employees.

SOURCE: AFL-CIO
Public-interest groups seek to institute public policies that benefit people whether they belong to that organization or not.
SECTION 3

Interest Groups at Work

• What are interest groups’ three major goals in influencing public opinion?

• How do interest groups use propaganda to persuade people to their point of view?

• How do interest groups try to influence political parties and elections?

• How does lobbying bring group pressures to bear on the process of making public policy?
Influencing Public Opinion

Interest groups reach out to the public for these reasons:

1. To supply information in support of the group’s interests
2. To build a positive image for the group
3. To promote a particular public policy
**Propaganda**

- **Propaganda** is a technique of persuasion aimed at influencing individual or group behaviors.

- Its goal is to create a particular belief which may be true or false.

- Propaganda disregards information that does not support its conclusion. It is not objective. It presents only one side of an issue.

- Propaganda often relies on name-calling and inflammatory labels.
When you ride ALONE you ride with Hitler!

Join a Car-Sharing Club TODAY!
Campaign Propaganda

**Contrast** - Windsurfing

**Transfer** - Celeb

**Contrast** - Coin

**Transfer** - Delighted

**Glittering Generalities** - Freedom

**Mudslinging** - Ambition

**Card stacking** – 90%

**Testimonial** – Jeb
**Political Action Committees (PACs)** raise and distribute money to candidates who will further their goals.

**Growth of PACs**

SOURCE: Federal Election Commission
Lobbying

• **Lobbying** is any activity by which a group pressures legislators and influences the legislative process.

• government agencies, the executive branch, and even the courts feel the effects of lobbying.

• Most organized interest groups maintain lobbyists in Washington, D.C.
Lobbyists at Work

Lobbyists use several techniques:

• They **send articles**, reports, and other information to officeholders.

• They **testify** before legislative committees.

• They bring “**grass-roots**” **pressures** to bear through email, letters, or phone calls from constituents.

• They **rate** candidates and publicize the ratings.

• They make **campaign contributions**.
Section 3 Review

1. What is propaganda?
   (a) A bill that has been vetoed
   (b) A one-sided argument
   (c) An objective description
   (d) A scientific paper

2. How do lobbyists influence legislators?
   (a) Campaign contributions
   (b) “Grass roots” campaigns
   (c) Publicized ratings
   (d) All of the above

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