You Can Make a Difference

LOBBYISTS WORK at both the national and State levels—and they can be teenagers, not just paid professionals. Such was the case in Pinellas County, Florida, when some high school students tried to address an issue of concern to them. Voting procedures in the State of Florida were at the heart of the controversial presidential election of 2000. In the years following, reforms were instituted to ensure more fair and accurate results in future elections. Doing their part, members of the Pinellas County Youth Advisory Committee traveled to Tallahassee to lobby State legislators. They wanted a bill passed that would require all Florida high school seniors to take at least one class period of voter education. Senator Jim Sebesta agreed to sponsor the bill. Said Brian Aungst, Jr., one of the Youth Advisory Committee’s leaders in this effort: “It doesn’t matter that I’m young because I’m involved in the community, and I know what matters to me and what matters to the youth in the community.”

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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