



INTEREST GROUPS a.k.a. Advocacy Groups Class Notes



I. *Linkage Institutions*

- A. Structures within a society that connect the people to the government
- B. Interest groups are key **linkage institutions** that connect citizens to government and vice versa.
- C. Primary examples: 1) Elections, 2) Political Parties, 3) Interest Groups and 3) The Media

II. *Interest Group* – an organization of people sharing a common interest or goal that seeks to influence government policy

- A. **1st Amendment** = Constitutional basis for interest groups: assembly, petition, speech, press, some cases religion
- B. IG's and 1st Amendment
 1. Assembly – protest rallies, policy/issue meetings, grassroots organizing
 2. Speech: Marches, signs, speeches, contributing \$ candidates/parties/independent expenditures (*Citizens United*), endorse candidates for office
 3. Petition: written or online petitions (MoveOn.org)
 4. Press: Write editorial, sponsor online publications, newsletters, issue magazines
 5. Religion: some IGs are religious based (Christian Coalition, Americans United for Separation of Church and State), take stand on religion related issues
- C. **Lobbyist** – a person, often a professional, attempting to influence government decisions on behalf of a special interest group

III. *Types of Interest Groups or “Interest Groups according to Sabato”*

- A. *Economic IGs* with primary purpose of promoting the financial interests of its members = profits & benefits
 1. “Big Three” = bus. + lab. unions = farmers
 2. Ex: Chamber of Commerce, American Medical Association
 3. Most have permanent lobbyist offices in DC
- B. *Public IGs* - organization that sees a collective good that will not selectively and materially benefit the members of the group
 1. Ex: Progressive Era groups @ turn of the century
 2. Common Cause, ACLU, Greenpeace, AARP
- C. Liberal Interest groups/PACs:
 - ACLU
 - National Abortion Rights League
 - Amnesty International
 - NAACP
 - American Bar Assoc.
 - Greenpeace
 - AFL-CIO (labor unions)
 - MoveOn.org
- D. Conservative Interest groups/PACs:
 - National Rifle Association
 - Heritage Foundation
 - National Right to Life Committee
 - Christian Coalition
 - American Medical Assoc.
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - American Crossroads

IV. How Interest Groups Influence Government

- A. *Lobbying Congress* - testify at hearings, contact government officials directly, talk to press; alerting cong to effects of a bill on their districts, etc.
- B. *Lobbying Executive Branch* - White House and federal agencies
- C. *Lobbying Regulatory Agencies* - Ex: FDA, EPA, FTC
- D. *Program Monitoring* - National Organization for Women (NOW) AND review of Title IX compliance
- E. *Lobbying Courts* - especially Supreme Ct >>> sponsorship of *amicus curae* briefs (ACLU); signal support or opposition to Supreme Court nominees (Robert Bork, Clarence Thomas)
- F. *Litigation* - Bring lawsuits/court action on behalf of members, issues, etc. [examples: NAACP, ACLU, NRA]
- G. *Inform the Public* - about policy issues, government officials, candidates
- H. *Grassroots Lobbying* - involve people at the bottom level of political system >>> door-to-door info & petition drives, internet
- I. *Organize Protest Rallies* - some members willing to put everything on the line for a cause >>> Shays' Rebellion, MLK & nonviolence, KKK, Freedom Works Tea Party group
- J. *Candidate Endorsements*
- K. *Creating Political Parties* - Ross Perot's United We Stand to Reform Party in 1992; Nader to Green Party
- L. *Contribute Money* - campaign contributions through PACs
- M. *Sponsor "Issue Ads"*

V. K Street, Washington DC - center of American lobbying

VI. Regulating Interest Groups???

- A. *Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995*
 - 1. Lobbyist > devotes 20% of time client's time to lobbying activities
 - 2. Report amounts paid by each client
- B. *Honest Leadership & Open Government Act of 2007*
 - 1. Bans gifts to members of Congress and staff
 - 2. Toughens disclosure requirements

