

Unit 3 Learning Objectives

What are Interest Groups?

3.9 Explain the role of interest groups and social movements in American politics.

Types of Interest Groups

■3.10 Categorize American interest groups into types.

The Influence of Interest Groups

■3.11 Describe lobbyists and their influence on policy.

How Much Do Interest Groups Influence Elections and Legislation?

■3.12 Evaluate the effectiveness of interest groups in influencing elections and legislation.

Chapter 5: Interest Groups



- Interest Groups Past and Present: "The Mischiefs of Faction"
- Types of Interest Groups
- Characteristics and Power of Interest Groups
- The Influence of Lobbyists
- Money and Politics
- How Much Do Interest Groups Influence Elections and Legislation?

What are Interest Groups?

- 3.9 Explain the role of interest groups and social movements in American politics.
 - Interest group: any organization that seeks to influence public policy without running anyone for political office.



Why Interest Groups are Common

- Many cleavages (ethnic, class, ideology, gender, profession) mean that there are many different interests demanding access and change
- Pluralism: the Constitution provides many access points: voting, testifying, personal meetings, protesting, letter writing, campaigning.
- Catch-All parties rely on many interest groups for elections: mobilization and money.
- Committee system requires a great deal of input and specialized information.



Incentives to Join Interest Groups

- Solidarity incentives—pleasure, companionship
- Material incentives—money, things, services
- Purposive incentives—goal/purpose of the organization itself

Types of Interest Groups

3.10 Categorize American interest groups into types.

- Single Instance Groups: WM3 (West Memphis Three), SOS (Stop Our Shutdown)
- Public interest groups (Single-issue oriented): Tea Party, ACLU, Greenpeace, NORML
- Social Movements (specific groups): NOW (women), NGLBTF (gay rights), AIM (Native Americans), NAACP (Blacks), JDL (Jewish Defense League)
- Economic interest groups (institutions): CoC (business),
 AMA/ABA (professionals), AFL (labor)
- Government interest groups (local and state government): National League of Cities, National Governors Association.

The Influence of Interest Groups

3.11 Describe the influence on policy of Interest groups and lobbyists

Techniques for Exerting Influence

- Information
 - · Testimony, Direct Contact with Government
- Mobilization
 - Protest, Publicity, Mass Media, Litigation, and Voting
- Money
 - Campaign Support

Activities of Interest Groups: Information

Supplying credible **information** is the single most important tactic of interest groups

- "Insider" strategy
 - **■**Testimony in Committee
 - ■Technical information
 - Face-to-face contact between lobbyist and Congressman or staff target the undecided legislator or bureaucrat

Lobbyists

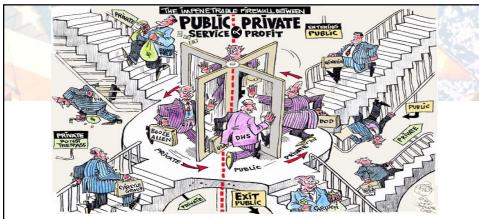
- Lobbyists: persons who are employed by an organized interest group or corporation and who try to influence policy decisions in the executive and legislative branches.
- The term "lobbying" was not generally used until around the mid-nineteenth century in the United States.
- Lobbyists help prepare legislation, testify before legislative hearings, and contribute a large share of the costs of campaigns.

The Influence of Lobbyists

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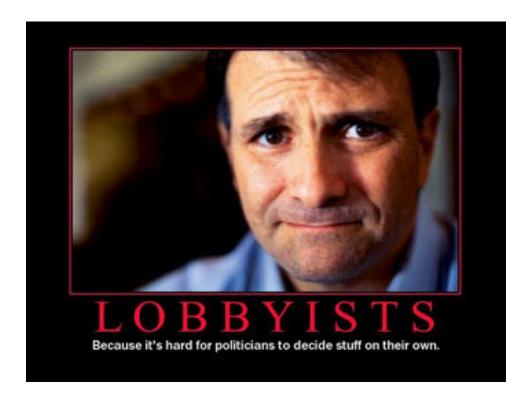
Who Are the Lobbyists?

- Lobbyists are former public servants.
- Lobbyists are experienced in government.
- Lobbyists often go to work for one of the interests they dealt with while in government.



The "Revolving Door"

- Federal government workers leave to take positions in private industry
- This may give private interests a way to influence government decisions



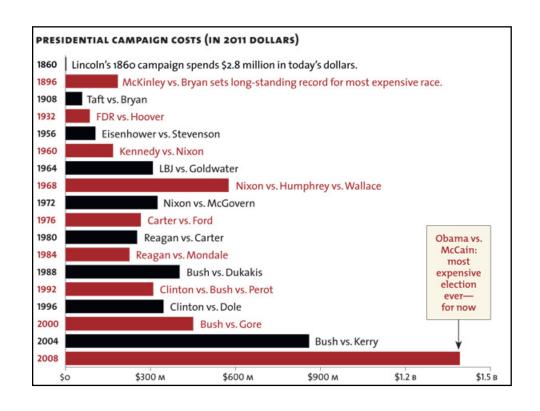
Activities of Interest Groups: Mobilization

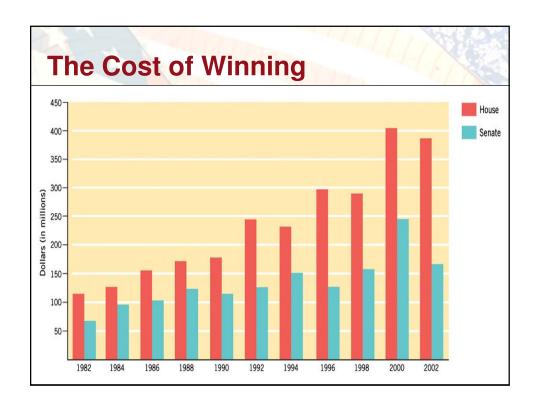
Mobilizing voter support or opposition is very effective

- "Outsider" strategy
 - Public opinion polls; talk radio
 - attack opponents to embarrass them; the "ratings" system
 - grassroots mobilization of the public for protest or voting

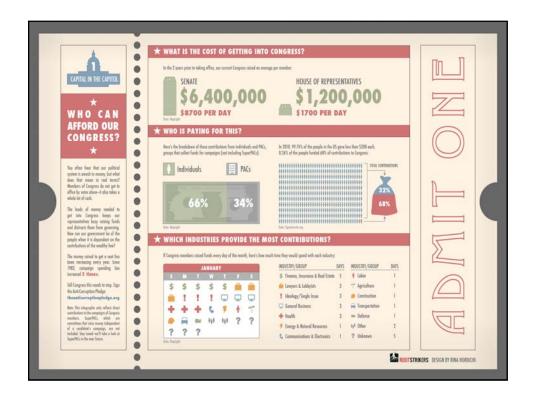








National and State Level Primary: elect nominees for party General: elect candidates to office State Only Referendum: Voters asked to approve legislation Recall: Voters asked to retain/remove official from office



How Much Do Interest Groups Influence Elections and Legislation?

3.12 Evaluate the effectiveness of interest groups in influencing elections and legislation.

Interest groups seek to influence politics and public policy by spending money on elections in several ways.

- Interest groups contribute money to candidates for their election campaigns.
- Interest groups contribute to political parties.
- Interest groups assist candidates seeking office, especially in contested races.

1974 Federal Election Campaign Act



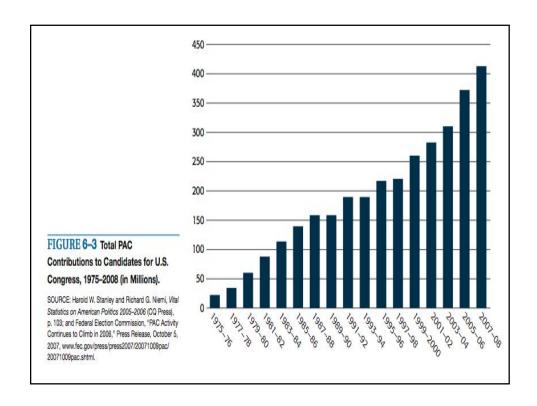


- Created <u>Federal Election</u> Commission
- Required candidates to report donations
- Caps on donations
- Limited the amount of personal wealth the could be used by candidates
- Required Political Action Committees (PACs) to handle money

Activities of Interest Groups: Money

- PAC: a committee set up by an interest group to raise and spend money on campaigns and candidates
- PACs are important because they contribute a large share of the money candidates raise for campaigns.



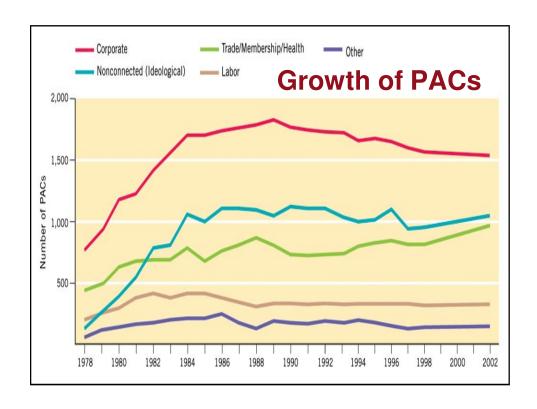




Buckley vs. Valeo (1976)



- · Upheld restriction on amount of donations
- But held that restrictions on personal spending violate the First Amendment
- Ruled that individuals, groups, and parties can spend unlimited amounts in campaigns for or against candidates as long as they operate independently from the candidates.
- This is called an independent expenditure.



Loopholes in FECA



Soft Money (Party Donations)

- · No limits on donations to party
- · No limits on party spending
- No limits on number of Political Action Committees

2002 Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA)



- Closed soft money loophole
- PAC can spend as much as it wishes, so long as it is not coordinated with a candidate's campaign
- Bans "issue" ads 30 days prior to a primary and 60 days prior to general election

Loopholes in BCRA



SuperPacs

- A new source of money under the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act
- Pool PAC resources into one enormous fund to direct resources wherever it is needed
- They can spend their money on politics so long as they do not coordinate with a candidate or lobby directly for that person

Leaderships PACs

 formed by an officeholder who collects contributions from individuals and other PACs and then makes contributions to other candidates and political parties.

Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (2010)



 Upheld requirements for public disclosure of donations

BUT...

 The First Amendment prohibits the government from restricting independent political expenditures by corporations and unions

