# UNIT SIX

# INTEREST GROUPS

#

**Study Guide**

INTEREST GROUPS TYPES OF INTEREST GROUPS

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| **TYPE OF GROUP** | **DESCRIPTION** |
| **ECONOMIC INTEREST GROUPS** | These organizations form to serve the economic interest of their members, such as labor groups. |
| **SOCIAL ACTION AND EQUALITY GROUPS** | When a social change is desired, people may join together to help get this change made. |
| **PUBLIC INTEREST GROUPS** | Some organizations exist to work for their perception of the public’s best interests. (Not just to benefit group members) |
| **GOVERNMENTAL UNITS** | State and local governments are becoming strong organized interests as they lobby the federal government or even charitable foundations for money for a vast array of state and local programs. (They want **earmarks**: monies targeted for programs within a state or congressional district to fund basic programs for roads schools, parks & waterways, or other public works projects) |
| **POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES (PACs)** | Federally regulated, officially registered fund-­raising committee that represent interest groups in the political process.(Often made up of corporations, labor unions, and interest groups) |
| **-­Interest Group:** A group that tries to encourage or prevent change in public policy without being elected. (Political parties are different because they want to control the government by winning elections)-­Other names interest groups go by: special interests, pressure groups, organized interests, nongovernmental organization (NGO’s), political groups, lobby groups, and public interest groups.-­Interest groups connect citizens to the government by increasing public awareness about issues and helping frame the public agenda.-­Do the rich and powerful have greater influence? More than they deserve? |

INTEREST GROUP THEORIES

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| **THEORY** | **DESCRIPTION** |
| **PLURALIST THEORY** | The theory that political power is distributed among a wide array of diverse and competing interest groups. |
| **DISTURBANCE THEORY** | The theory that interest groups form in part to counteract the efforts of other groups. |
| **TRANSACTIONS THEORY** | The theory that public policies are the result of narrowly defined exchanges among political actors. |
| **POPULATION ECOLOGY THEORY** | The theory that the life of a political organization is conditional on the density and diversity of the interest group population in a given area. |

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| **FUNCTION** | **SPECIFIC FUNCTION** | **DESCRIPTION** |
| **LOBBYING** | **LOBBYING CONGRESS** | Lobbying activities include congressional testimony on behalf of a group (even writing bills), individual letters from interested constituents, and campaign contributions (straight up vote buying is illegal) |
| **LOBBYING THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH** | Groups target the president, White House staff, and numerous levels of bureaucracy to influence policy decisions at the formation and implementation stages. |
| **LOBBYING THE COURTS** | -­Direct sponsorship of **litigation,** paying so their group can sue someone using a test case. (Example: NAACP paid for lawyers to take the Brown case all the way to the Supreme Court to fight against segregation in the American schools)-­*Amicus curiae* briefs: Write to inform justices of the group’s policy preference, generally offered in the guise of legal arguments. |
| **GRASSROOTS LOBBYING** | Interest group activity that encourages people to contact their congressional representatives directly in an effort to affect policy. |
| **PROTESTS AND RADICAL ACTIVISM** | This is occasionally used by some interest groups. Like the Boston Tea Party. Or when marchers risk detention or jail to protest the International Monetary Fund. |
| **ELECTIONEERING** | **CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT AND ENDORSEMENTS** | Some interest groups recruit, endorse, and/or provide financial or other forms of support for political candidates. |
| **GETTING OUT THE VOTE** | Launch GOTV to increase voting expecting these voters will vote in favor of the group’s policy preferences. |
| **RATING THE CANDIDATES OR OFFICE HOLDERS** | Liberal and conservative interest groups rate members of Congress so the public can hold members accountable. |
| **POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES (PACs)** | Interest groups use these to raise and spend money on campaigns. |
| **-­Lobbying**: the process by which interest groups attempt to assert their influence on the policy-­making process. Interest groups are large organization that hire people to apply pressure at all aspects involving policy. Lobbyists are experts in their fields with scientific data to back up their claims, so when they testify to congress and write legislation it is very persuasive.**-­Electioneering:** to actively take part in the activities of an election campaign. |

SUCCESSFUL INTEREST GROUPS

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| **ITEMS** | **DESCRIPTIONS** |
| **DIFFERENT MEASUREMENTS** | -­The group’s ability to get its issues on the public agenda.-­Winning key pieces of legislation Congress.-­Successful implementation of laws-­Winning key lawsuits in court.-­Backing successful candidates. |
| **FACTORS THAT OFTEN CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESS** | -­**Leaders**: Must be inspiring, persuasive, and attract new members.-­**Patrons & Funding**: Providing start-up funds to pay for advertising, litigating, and lobbying.-­Committed members: Leaders at top, then workers, then due paying members (that do not do much else). All groups provide some collective good: something of value like money, a tax write-­off, a good feeling, or a better environment that cannot be withheld from a nonmember. |
| **-­Free rider problem**: Potential members fail to join a group because they can get the benefit, or collective good, sought by the group without contributing the effort. |

REGULATING LOBBYISTS

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| **ITEM** | **DESCRIPTION** |
| **UNREGULATED PERIOD** | For the first 150 years of our nation’s history, federal lobbying practices went unregulated. |
| **THE FEDERAL REGULATION OF LOBBYING ACT (1946)** | This required anyone hired to lobby any member of Congress to register and file quarterly financial reports. For years very few lobbyists actually filed any reports. |
| **THE LOBBYING DISCLOSURE ACT OF 1995** | Defined a lobbyist anyone who devotes at least 20 percent of a client’s or employer’s time to lobbying activities. Also it required:1. register with the clerk of the House and the secretary of the Senate
2. report their clients and issues and the agency or house they lobbied
3. estimate the amount they are paid by each client

(by 2005 32,890 lobbyists were registered and they spend $4 million on lobby both chambers) |
| **HONEST LEADERSHIP** | -­ban on gifts |
| **AND OPEN** | -­- tougher disclosure requirements |
| **GOVERNMENT ACT OF** | -­longer time limits on moving from federal government to the |
| **2007** |  private lobbying sector. |

MAJOR INTEREST GROUPS (ALSO REGISTERED AS LOBBIES)

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| **INTEREST GROUP** | **DESCRIPTION** |
| **AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED PERSONS (AARP)** | citizen over 55 influences on issues like Social Security and prescription drugs |
| **AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION (ABA)** | represents the legal community |
| **AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION (ACLU)** | legal experts focuses on civil rights and civil liberties |
| **CHAMBER OF COMMERCE** | represent the business community all across the nation |
| **COMMON CAUSE** | lobbies for liberal causes and “open, accountable” government |
| **AMERICAN-­ISRAEL PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE** | support for Jewish communities and Israel |
| **AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR-­CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS (AFL-­CIO)** | headed labor movement and worker rights for decades |
| **EAGLE FORUM** | advocates for family values issues and laissez-­faire economics |
| **EARTH FIRST!** | radical environmental group & controversial violent protests |
| **HERITAGE FOUNDATION** | lobbies in favor of reducing the federal bureaucracy (less gov) |
| **LEAGUE OF UNITED LATIN AMERICAN CITIZENS (LULAC)** | defends the civil rights of Hispanic citizens |
| **MOTHERS AGAINST DRUNK DRIVING (MADD)** | influences changes in state law concerning penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol |
| **THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE (NAACP)** | advocates for African American civil rights |
| **NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION (NRA)** | focuses on the 2nd amendment rights (anti-­big government) |
| **NATIONAL RIGHT TO LIFE COMMITTEE** | seeks to make abortion illegal |
| **NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN (NOW)** | supports women’s right & abortion rights |
| **PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL TREATMENT OF ANIMALS (PETA)** | advocates for animal rights |
| **PROMISE KEEPERS** | represents evangelical Christians and conservative views |
| **SIERRA CLUB** | environmental group focuses on conservation issues maintaining clean air and water standards |