

INTEREST GROUPS

Chapter 9

Interest Groups

- An **interest group** is a collection of people who share certain views on public matters and work to shape public policy to their benefit.
- Interest groups exist to influence public policy.

- How is this similar/different to a political party?



What are the different types of interest groups at work in American society?

Types of Interest Groups

- Economic Interest Groups
 - Business Groups (Nat'l Assoc of Manufacturers)
 - Labor and Agricultural Groups (AFL-CIO, National Farm Bureau)
 - Trade and Professional Associations (American Medical Assoc)
- Single-Issue Groups & Groups with a Cause
 - Tons of these!
 - Can be broad or narrowly focused (Greenpeace, NRA)
 - May focus on a particular population (AARP, NAACP)
- Public Interest Groups
 - Work to promote the public good (members or not, agree or not) – ACLU

You know more than you think.....

- Brainstorm groups you can think of that fit into these categories
- Pick two groups from your list and articulate what their goals are....what do they want?
- What do they DO to get what they want?

Interest Group Activities – What they DO

- Member Benefits & Fundraising
 - AAA discounts, WWF totebags
- Influence Public Opinion
 - Education, Propaganda
- Influence Parties & Elections
 - Candidate endorsements
 - Campaign Contributions (PACs)
- Influence Policy in Governing
 - Legislator ratings
 - Litigation (working through the courts)
 - **Lobbying – direct and indirect**

How Lobbying Works

- Lobbying: How interest groups influence policy makers
- Lobbyists: The people who do the influencing
 - Lobbying occurs wherever public policy is made – at the national, State, and local levels of government all across the country.
- Direct Lobbying
 - The “inside game”:
Cheapest and most effective when the lobbyist knows the process and the lawmakers: meetings, schmoozing, providing testimony, etc
 - “Revolving Door”
- Indirect Lobbying
 - Working from outside the system: grass-roots efforts like letter-writing campaigns, protests, use of media & publicity, campaign contributions.

Interest Groups – good or bad?

- In what ways are interest groups good, or helpful in our political system?
 - *Give a voice to many different views* - *Provide valuable info*
 - *Connect people with their government* - *Raise public awareness*
- In what ways might interest groups be bad, or harmful, in our political system?
 - *Those with more money have more influence*
 - *Self-interest can outweigh the public interest*
- Like them or not, what protects the right of citizens (and interest groups) to do all these activities to influence government?
 - **THE FIRST AMENDMENT**

Want More Info?

- Check out the Crash Course Govt videos on Interests Groups!
- [Interest Groups 101:](#)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOvBA7oIlgc&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtOfse2ncvffeelTrqvhrz8H&index=42>
- More on Interest Groups (Activities)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGo9Asfwric&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtOfse2ncvffeelTrqvhrz8H&index=43>