

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION 1871

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR & CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS
AFL CIO

NARAL Pro-Choice America

UNION YES
AFL CIO

Special Interests:

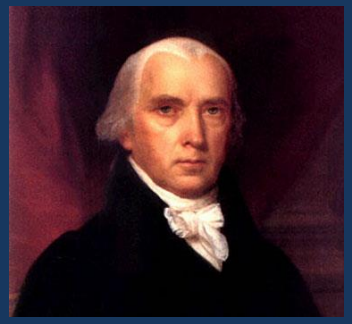
Who are they and what do they want?

What is an “interest group”?

- An interest group is an organization of people with similar policy goals that tries to influence the political process to try to achieve those goals
- Interest groups try to influence every branch of gov’t and every level of gov’t
- Lawsuits, lobbying, helping to write legislation, initiative process, etc.

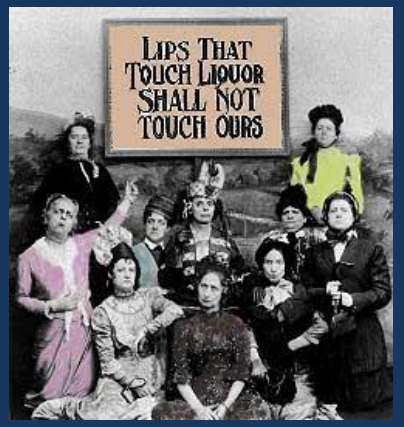
Roots of American Interest Groups

- Interest groups have been around since our inception
- James Madison argued for a proliferation of groups (factions) so that no one group could seize power
- As society has evolved, so have interest groups



Examples

- The Abolitionist Movement
- Workers rights/safety reforms = unions
- Suffrage for women/push for women's rights = women's groups; Women's Christian Temperance Union; NOW
- Civil rights for minority groups = NAACP
- Business interests = Chamber of Commerce





Gaining Access and Influence

- PAC's = used to raise money to support candidates during campaign season; goal is to buy access
- Lobbying = most common form of trying to influence policy
- Colleges, gov't agencies, corporations, unions, foreign countries—all hire lobbyists to represent their interests
- A lobbyist is someone whose task it is to influence legislation or policymaking
- Movie = *Miss Sloane* (2016)

Techniques Used to Influence the Decision Makers

Direct Techniques:

- Private meetings
- Testifying at hearings
- Drafting legislation
- Hosting social gatherings
- Providing policy positions
- Endorsing candidates
- Attack Ads

Indirect Techniques:

- Raising public awareness through media:
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXopxsiIf1E
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1wR8NjXRZI
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-Tabvyrf0I
- Holding events to gain media attention
- Using testimonials from ordinary citizens
- Building alliances with other like-minded groups

Local Community-Based Groups

- Sometimes interest groups are locally-based groups
- Community organizing efforts
- Tara Parrish
- The Korean Women's Association | Washington | KWA (kwacares.org)

What Makes an Interest Group Successful?



Three factors:

1. Leaders – Having prominent leaders who are respected in their field or that are high profile
2. Funding – It takes money to get your message out
3. Membership – The larger the group, the more influence they will have (+ organization)





Remember the three theories?

- Pluralism
- Hyperpluralism
- Elitism

Criticisms of Interest Groups

- Focus too much on narrow issues
- Narrow focus can lead to gridlock in gov't
- Plays to people's emotions, not their logical side
- They have become too influential!

Important things to keep in mind!

Interest groups do play an important role:

- Promote interest in public affairs
- Can provide useful information
- https://www.ama-assn.org/
- Serve as watchdogs
- https://www.aclu.org/
- https://www.concordcoalition.org/
- Represent the interests of certain groups of citizens
- Final Thought = Each of us is a special interest!