

Interest Group Profiles

Liberal Interest Group on the Environment: Protect Our Planet

You are a member of the board of directors of an environmental group called Protect Our Planet. Your interest group needs to build relationships with candidates and politicians in order to change environmental policies in the United States and abroad. You are particularly concerned with global warming and feel that the U.S. government needs to immediately pass laws to restrict greenhouse gas emissions. You also want the United States to stop the destruction of ancient forests that clean our air and act as cooling agents for our planet. Every year, millions of acres of land are cleared for development, which contributes to global warming and threatens our Earth's future. You also want to protect the oceans from coastal development, which is wreaking havoc on marine life, and from offshore oil drilling and irresponsible fishing practices, both of which slaughter marine life.

Liberal Interest Group on Energy: Association for Eco-Friendly Fuel

You are a member of the board of directors of a think tank called Association for Eco-Friendly Fuel. Your interest group does research on the need for, and possibility of, eco-friendly fuel sources. You want the U.S. government to adopt more eco-friendly fuels for automobiles, such as E85 (an ethanol-based fuel produced from plants like sugar cane and corn), hydrogen (which can be produced in practically unlimited quantities from renewable energy sources), and electricity (which costs less than gasoline and causes no harmful emissions). You want the government to offer tax incentives for companies producing automobiles and fuel that decrease or eliminate the emission of harmful greenhouse gases.

Liberal Interest Group on Crime: Socially Responsible Crime Prevention

You are a member of the board of directors of Socially Responsible Crime Prevention. Your interest group is staunchly opposed to the death penalty. DNA testing has recently led to the release of a number of prisoners after long stints in prison for crimes they did not commit. You do not want to see anyone unjustly put to death. Instead, you advocate that more funds should be spent on crime prevention, including crime-prevention education for young children. You also want to outlaw firearm distribution and ownership. Firearms are used in one out of three instances of violent crime, and your organization feels that the best way to prevent violent crime is to eliminate the ownership of firearms. Once all firearms are outlawed, the government can more easily crack down on the illegal distribution of weapons.

Liberal Interest Group on Health Care: Health Care for Everyone

You are a member of the board of directors of Health Care for Everyone, an interest group that believes that health care is a fundamental right for all citizens, not just those who can afford it. Your group is seeking to convince the government to provide universal health care for all Americans. Every year, people suffer, and sometimes die, because they do not have health insurance and cannot get the health care they require to treat their illnesses. Because so many employed Americans do not have health insurance, you want the government to ensure that there is a federally funded program to provide everyone with health care. Your plan is for the government to tax all businesses a set amount per employee to cover the cost of the program. All health care providers and pharmacies would legally be required to accept the government's health care plan. This would eliminate the need for private health insurance companies and would ensure that all Americans get the care they need and deserve.

Liberal Interest Group on Social Services: Citizens for One America

You are a member of the board of directors of Citizens for One America. This interest group focuses on ensuring that all Americans receive the social services they need to help them become more productive members of society. Many Americans are locked in a cycle of poverty that is determined by the situation they are born into, and your group wants to help them break that cycle. Your group is advocating that the tax cuts on the wealthiest 1% of Americans be scaled back. Those tax dollars could then be used to fund essential social programs aimed at eliminating poverty, including job-training programs, day-care tuition assistance for low-income families, and early childhood education.

Liberal Interest Group on Immigration: Citizens United for Fair Immigration

You are a member of the board of directors of Citizens United for Fair Immigration, an interest group whose mission is to make the immigration process easier to navigate and more nondiscriminatory. Currently, it takes a long time and involves many steps to complete the process of becoming a U.S. citizen. Your group wants to make the process shorter and more expedient so that people will be more likely to immigrate legally. You also want to eliminate quotas that limit the number of people who can immigrate. Instead, you want the United States to take as many (or as few) immigrants as are likely to make good, productive U.S. citizens. Your group also wants to grant amnesty to all undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States.

Conservative Interest Group on the Environment: Good Cents for Earth

You are a member of the board of directors for Good Cents for Earth. As the name of your organization implies, your group believes that business and the environment do not need to be at odds. You are opposed to most environmental regulations on businesses. You agree that minimal laws to protect the air, land, and water might be necessary. But you also believe that other environmental laws, such as the ban on oil drilling in protected areas like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge or restrictions on automobile emissions, hurt the American people by limiting their options and making products more expensive. Eliminating such bans would allow businesses to fully develop American industry to its potential, creating new jobs and additional wealth in the process. Your group will be satisfied if you can get some of the current environmental regulations rolled back and prevent further regulations.

Conservative Interest Group on Energy: Association of Petroleum Distributors

You are a member of the board of directors of an interest group representing major petroleum distributors. The companies you represent want less government interference in their businesses. The demand for oil, not only in the United States but worldwide, is rising dramatically. To meet that need, the companies you represent want more freedom to drill for oil in the United States. These companies also recognize that automobile emissions from gasoline-fueled cars are harming the environment. Thus they are willing to work to make gas cleaner (resulting in lower levels of greenhouse gas emissions) or to develop alternative fuels, such as ethanol- or hydrogen-based fuels (both of which limit emissions). However, if these companies move into developing alternative fuels, they expect significant government subsidies (funding) to help fund research and the cost of changing their production models.

Conservative Interest Group on Crime: Safety on Our Streets

You are a member of the board of directors of Safety on Our Streets, an interest group primarily concerned with making the United States safer. You believe that the key to a safe America is to keep dangerous criminals locked up for life. Your group strongly supports the death penalty as the best way to prevent criminals from repeating their crimes and to save U.S. taxpayers money. However, you are opposed to limitations on the legal ownership of firearms. Your group claims that the Second Amendment protects Americans' rights to own firearms for their own protection. Your organization has done studies showing that the greatest deterrent for violent crime is criminals' fear that the victims they target may possess firearms. Rather than disarming responsible citizens who own legally registered firearms, the government should instead spend more time and money recovering illegal firearms from criminals.

Conservative Interest Group on Health Care: Association of American Health Care Providers

You are a member of the board of directors of the Association of American Health Care Providers, an interest group representing the entire spectrum of health care providers, from hospital staff to in-home health care providers. Your group wants to provide the best possible care, at the lowest cost, with the shortest wait time, to all patients. Your group strongly believes that the current U.S. health care system, in which individuals obtain private health insurance to cover most of their health care needs, is the best way to meet these goals. The fact that U.S. health care is among the best in the world is proof that the system works. Your group wants the government to invest in the current system by providing grants and subsidies to doctors and hospitals to help keep the costs of treatment down. You also want the government to provide additional funding for Medicare (health care for the elderly) and Medicaid (health care for the poor) so that everyone receives the treatment they deserve.

Conservative Interest Group on Social Services: Americans United for Responsible Choices

You are a member of the board of directors of Americans United for Responsible Choices, an interest group dedicated to improving the government's role in providing social services. Your organization argues that the government wastes too much money, especially on expensive and unsuccessful social service programs. Your group agrees that welfare programs aimed at ending poverty, such as job-training programs and early childhood education, are necessary. However, you feel that the government is inefficient in administering these programs, resulting in a large and wasteful bureaucracy. Instead, you would like to see private corporations or faith-based organizations compete for federal funds that are currently dedicated to social services. The group that wins each contract would then provide that service at a lower cost and in a more efficient manner than the government currently does, resulting in programs that would accomplish their mission without wasting taxpayer money.

Conservative Interest Group on Immigration: Citizens United for Better Immigration

You are a member of the board of directors of Citizens United for Better Immigration, a group representing citizens who are concerned about the problems of immigration. Your group argues that higher immigration rates lead to increased violence and a greater strain on our social welfare system, costing Americans billions of tax dollars every year. You would like to see immigration restricted to college-educated individuals and their spouses and children. On the issue of illegal immigration, your group wants the government to step up its efforts to prevent undocumented immigrants from entering the country by building fences along common entrance points or by using U.S. soldiers to secure the border. Your group also wants the government to do more to root out undocumented immigrants currently in the country and deport them.

Creating a Candidate or Interest Group Web Site

You will work with your group to create a Web site to help others understand the views of your candidate or interest group.

Step 1 Use the examples below as a guide for designing a poster version of your Web site.

- Underlined headings on the examples must appear on your Web site.
- You must write a slogan appropriate for your candidate or interest group and display it prominently.

Step 2 Create position statements or talking points for your Web site.

Candidate groups: Create brief position statements explaining your candidate's views for each issue on the Web site template below.

Interest group representatives: Create at least three talking points that explain why the issues you represent are important and how you want them handled by elected officials.

Step 3 Add color and other creative touches to make your Web site visually appealing.

Candidate Web Site Example

<h2 style="margin: 0;">George Washington</h2> <p style="margin: 0;">★ Integrity ★ Leadership ★ Experience ★</p>					
Home	About	Get Involved	Multimedia	Blog	Contribute
<p><u>Why you should vote for George Washington</u></p> <p><u>Important Issues Facing Our Nation</u> Click on an issue to learn more about our candidate's position.</p> <p>Crime</p> <p>Energy</p> <p>Environment</p> <p>Foreign Policy</p> <p>Health Care</p> <p>Social Services</p> <p>Immigration</p>					

Interest Group Web Site Example

<h2 style="margin: 0;">Americans for Education</h2>					
Home	About	Get Involved	For the Press	Legislation	Contribute
<p><u>About us:</u></p> <p><u>On the Issues:</u> Learn more about our group's views on the issues below.</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>					

Candidate and Interest Group Meet-and-Greet

You will now prepare for and participate in a meet-and-greet between political candidates and interest group representatives.

Step 1 Prepare for the meet-and-greet.

- Create a name tag that includes the name of your candidate or interest group, your role (such as Campaign Manager or Board of Directors Member), and a slogan for the candidate's campaign or the interest group.
- Review Student Handout E. Write your group's name in the appropriate place. Then identify each interest group or candidate you want to meet with during the meet-and-greet. Write that candidate's or interest group's name in the first column of the table. If you run out of space, use the back of the handout to record additional information.

Step 2 Participate in the meet-and-greet.

Candidate groups: Your goal is to meet with board members representing the interest groups whose causes align with your candidate's beliefs. If you are willing to make an interest group's issue one of your campaign's main issues, try to negotiate for Power Tokens from the interest group in exchange for their support. You also want endorsements from as many interest groups as possible. Use Student Handout E to record Power Tokens and endorsements you give or receive during the meet-and-greet.

Interest group representatives: Your goal is to determine which candidate, if any, your group will endorse. The best way to ensure that your goals are met is to align yourself with a candidate who has a good chance of winning the election. You can give Power Tokens to as many candidates as you wish. However, you may endorse only one candidate. Use Student Handout E to record Power Tokens and endorsements you give or receive during the meet-and-greet.

Recording Details About the Meet-and-Greet

Use this sheet to record exchanges of Power Tokens and endorsements during the meet-and-greet.

Power Tokens: Power Tokens represent the additional assistance that an interest group can give to a candidate during an election. Sometimes this assistance comes as a financial donation to the campaign or as a promise to encourage its membership to vote for the candidate. In exchange, the candidate promises to support the interest group's issue.

Endorsements: Candidates often seek endorsements from interest groups. When an interest group endorses a candidate, the group is telling its membership and others who believe in the cause that the group supports a particular candidate and that the candidate supports the group's cause.

Rules Governing the Use of Power Tokens and Endorsements

- Each interest group has a set number of Power Tokens. Interest groups may give all of their tokens to one candidate or divide them among multiple candidates.
- Each interest group can officially endorse only one candidate (or no candidates).
- Interest groups cannot give, and candidates cannot receive, endorsements or Power Tokens unrealistically. If a candidate accepts Power Tokens or an endorsement from an interest group whose cause the candidate could not realistically support, the candidate will be penalized by having Power Tokens confiscated.

Record information in the table as you participate in the meet-and-greet.

Your group name: _____

Interest Group or Candidate	What the Candidate Promised to the Interest Group	What the Interest Group Gave to the Candidate

