

Interest Groups

Linkage Institutions

Interest Groups

- Organized group of individuals seeking to influence the government and policies
- *they operate at all levels of government (state and national)

Lobbyist

- Representative for an interest group



MNC



- Preserve Mac and Cheese!!
- We are dedicated to protecting this national treasure!

Mill Kee Chedda (lobbyist)



So why would a group like “MNC” need a lobbyist?

- Turn to an elbow partner and come up with 2 reasons

Now, in all seriousness ... why would a group like PETA or a labor union or the NRA form? Why would they need lobbyists?

- With your elbow partner, come up with two reasons.

Functions of Interest Groups

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Representation

- Serves as a link between government and the people

Education

- Increase people's awareness and interest
- Educate government with data to make good policies

Participation

- People work together for a common goal

Agenda building

- Bring issues to public and government attention
- Make sure something is done to fix issues

Program Monitoring

- Keep track of government programs that are important to the group's goals

In your own words ...

- What is the function of interest groups in our government?
- In other words, what do they do?

Why do interest groups form?

- Remember Federalist No. 10?? – Madison says factions are undesirable but inevitable
- Why? People naturally group together to address concerns, interests, etc.

How do interest groups link the government to the people?

- Express members' desires to elected officials
- Convey government policy plans to the people
- Raise and spend money to influence government officials

How are interest groups different from political parties?

- Parties: ELECT individuals to office, focus on broad topics and are accountable to all people
- Interest Groups: INFLUENCE elected officials, focus on one topic, and are accountable only to members (private organization)

How do Interest Groups connect people to the government?

- What do you think?
- Give examples!

Types of Interest Groups

- Economic Interest: primary purpose is to promote the financial interests of its members
 - Business
 - Labor
 - Professional
 - Agricultural

Business

- Companies have interest groups monitor legislation that may impact business
- Examples: Chamber of Commerce, NAM (National Association of Manufacturers)



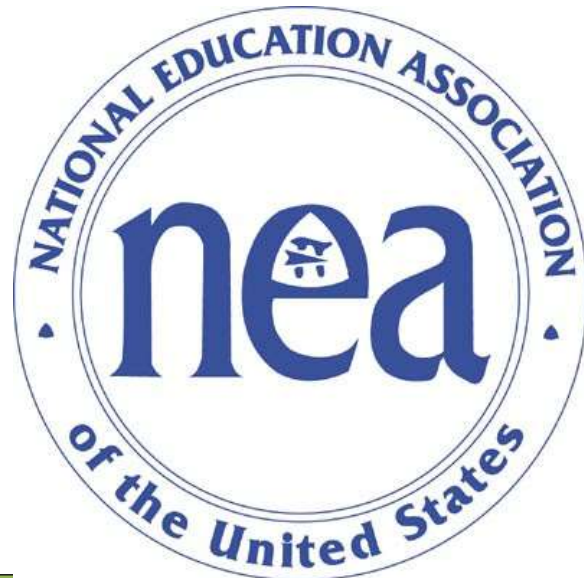
Labor

- Union organizations that represent worker's rights
- Examples: AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor – Congress of Industry Organization)



Professional

- Membership based on job
- Examples: NEA (educators), AMA (medical), ABA (American Bar Association – lawyers)



Agricultural

- Shape agricultural/farming policies
EX: National Farmers Union, Farm Bureau



GEORGIA FARM BUREAU
The Voice of Georgia Farmers

Types of Interest Groups:

- Public Interest – wants collective good that doesn't focus on benefitting just one group of people
 - Environmental
 - Equality
 - Single-issue

Environmental

- wilderness protection, pollution, animal rights, no offshore drilling, etc.
- Ex: PETA, WWF (World Wildlife Federation) and Sierra Club

Equality

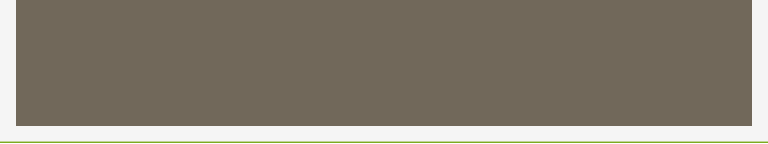
- Equal rights for minority groups
- Ex: NOW, NAACP, VFW and AARP



Single-Issue

- Focus on one issue (instead of a group of people)
- Ex: Planned Parenthood, NRA





If you were going to join an Interest Group, which would you join? Why?

Strategies

- What do interest groups do?



Influencing elections/electioneering

- Campaign contributions (amount is limited per candidate → PACs)
- Grassroots efforts
- Public awareness

Litigation

- Take issues to court if Congress won't support (example: NAACP supports Brown v. Board case because Congress wasn't moving forward on segregation legislation)
- Class-action suit: people combine lawsuits into 1 stronger case
- Amicus curiae brief – legal document by “friend of the court” supporting 1 side of a case

Going public:

- Appeal to the people for support
- Raise awareness of issues
- Raise money through PACs
- PACs are formed by interest groups to raise money for campaign or candidate

Lobbying **

- Try to influence the government (policymakers) by providing information and data



Direct Lobbying: use of personal contact

- Congress – many lobbyists were Congressmen and have friends in Congress
- Executive – provide decision makers at all levels with information to help implement laws
- Judicial – litigation, amicus curiae briefs (cannot directly “lobby” judges, would be improper)

Grassroots Lobbying

- “the people back home”
- Write letters, emails, fax, phone calls, petitions to representatives/senators

Coalition Lobbying

- Several groups join together for a common goal

Protest/radical lobbying

- Use force to bring attention to a cause
- Examples: PETA (red paint or “blood” of fur worn by celebrities), Civil Rights groups (sit-ins, protest marches, etc.)

What is lobbying?

- With your elbow partner, come up with 3 characteristics of lobbying. Be prepared to share!

What makes interest groups successful?

- Size
- Leaders
- Intensity
- Money

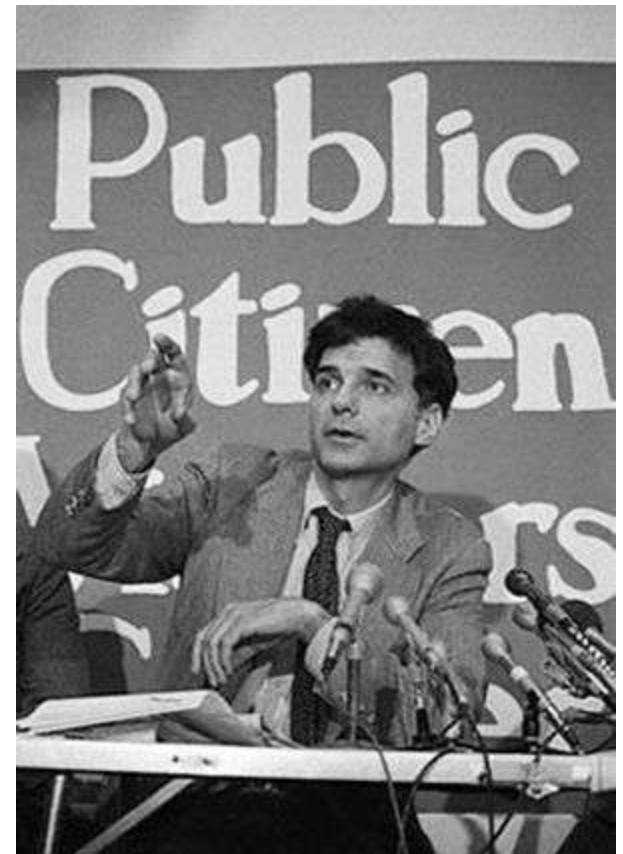
Size

- More people = more calls, emails, campaign work and bigger protests
- BUT more people can lead to conflict AND free-rider problem
- Free-rider – people who benefit from work of the group without doing any work



Leaders

- Strong, charismatic leaders find a way to attract members and are persuasive about importance of issues



Intensity

- The more passionate the members are about a cause the more effort they will put into the group



Money

- Groups need funding to hire lobbyists, support PACs, write amicus curiae briefs and other activities
- More money can make up for less passion from members

Think of an example of a successful interest group...

1. Why are they successful?
2. What is their goal and how do they achieve it?