

# Government 30

## Lecture 20

### Interest Groups

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## Interest Groups: What They Are

Definition (V.O. Key): Organized associations that “promote their interests by attempting to influence government rather than by nominating candidates and seeking responsibility for the management of government.”

- influence w/o governance
- influence w/o responsibility
- parties nominate candidates and govern; in Europe, link btw parties and IGs stronger.

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## Interest Groups: What They Are

### B. Public v. Private Interests (Schattschneider)

1. Private interests -- e.g., NAM, AFBF.
2. Public interests -- e.g., American League to Abolish Capital Punishment, National Child Labor Committee.

(Where do we see analog in the *Federalist*?)

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## Interest Groups: Why They're Important

Main reason for concern: deleterious effects on democracy.

A. IGs as unelected elites ("K Street").

B. IGs as factions (Madison, *Federalist* #10)

"The latent causes of faction are thus sown into the nature of man" and "the regulation of these various and interfering interests" is "the principal task of modern legislation."

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## II. What Do Interest Groups Do?

A. Try to Influence Elections

1. Endorsements (EMILY's List, PBA [cops], National Right to Life Org, Sierra Club)
2. Rate Candidates (ADA, ACU) -- recall last time
3. Give \$ -- PACs, bundling
4. Get out the Vote (Christian Coalition)

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## II. What Do Interest Groups Do?

B. LOBBY: Try to Influence Policy

Two views of lobbying.

1. Distributive lobbying ("Pork")
  - iron triangles
  - revolving-door hypothesis
2. Informational lobbying ("Policy")
  - issue networks (Heelo)
  - revolving door b/c IGs are best informed about policy

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### III. Interest Groups: Where Do They Come From?

#### A. Biggest puzzle: Why are there IGs at all?

- collective action (“free-rider”) problem (Olson)
- e.g., AARP and senior citizens
- can prove crippling -- business and industry associations were long plagued by free-riding off of pro-business lobbying
- easy to think about lots of potential groups that don’t exist at all b/c of this problem

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### III. Interest Groups: Where Do They Come From?

#### B. Causes of IG Formation

1. Disturbance Theory (Hansen, Truman)
  - IGs form and grow in response to threats
  - groups form in response to other groups
2. Entrepreneurship; patrons and financiers.
3. Selective benefits (Olson)
  - solidary incentives (community)
  - material incentives (AARP, Illinois FB)
  - purposive incentives (PIRGs)

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### IV. The Problem of Interest Groups

#### A. Bias and organizational politics

1. Do labor unions and their PACs really represent workers?
2. Does the NRA really represent gun owners, or gun makers?

#### B. Upper-class bias.

1. Those w/ more resources join
2. Business & professional groups more numerous, better financed

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## IV. The Problem of Interest Groups

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C. BUT... business groups and labor often divided amongst themselves, & money-vote connection not clear

D. No Regulation: 1946 Act meaningless.

E. BUT BUT...Rick Hall's research shows that lobbyists can buy time even when they can't buy money

Lobbying as a Subsidy: I give you something you want in order for you to spend money on something

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