

INTEREST GROUPS

J. Alexander Branham

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WHAT ARE INTEREST GROUPS

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Evil corporate groups who exploit the democratic system...

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Or a varied system of organizations who represent the interests of their members?

Cartographers for Social Equality

- Education of members on issues that affect them

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- Lobbying on behalf of members

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- Lobbying on behalf of members
- Promote democratic participation (voting, etc)

- Founders concern with faction

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- *Especially* a majority

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- Interests groups not equal in resources, though

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 - Labor: AFL-CIO, Teamsters
 - Professional organizations: The Bar Association, the American Medical Association

- Membership essential

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 - Collective action problems (and solutions)

- Groups usually rely on membership dues

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- As well as voluntary contributions

- Leadership and organization essential

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- Can be simple

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- Can be simple
- Or complicated - melding local chapters into states, then states into national...

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 - Wealthier people tend to have more money and time
 - These groups can also provide professional contacts for their careers

- Even groups associated with progressive politics and support for the poor tend to have upper-middle and upper-class members

HOW AND WHY?

- Interest groups don't represent interests in proportion to the interest in the population

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 - Or, 4% of the population looking for work but only 0.1% of organizations

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- But it's costly to obtain that goal...

- You and your friend are accused of stealing & are kept in separate rooms

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	Snitch	Don't snitch
Snitch	(3,3)	(0,6)
Don't snitch	(6,0)	(1,1)

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 - If B also snitches, we get 3 instead of 6 years
 - If B doesn't, then we go free instead of getting 1 year
- So both end up snitching on each other, getting (3,3) instead of (1,1)

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- Large groups tend to be anonymous
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- Enforcement
- Thus, it's hard for large groups to form

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- Informational: Conferences, research
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- Solidarity: networking, friendship
- Purposive: advocacy & participation

(HOW) DO INTEREST GROUPS INFLUENCE POLICY?

- Insider strategies involve directly working with politicians and their staff

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- Outsider strategies involve going public and using electoral tactics

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- Many groups use both of these

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- Approximately \$4 billion per year is spent on lobbying at the federal and state level

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- Direct members' campaign contributions

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- Very limited time

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- Comment period on new rules is frequently used by lobbyists

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 - Registration of lobbyists

- Limitation of gifts to Congresspeople:

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 - \$50, no more than \$100 annually

- Bringing suit directly

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- Filing *amicus curiae* briefs

- Increasingly, the courts are a battleground where various interests fight

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- E.g. the privacy and abortion fights, segregation, etc

- **Going public** - launching a campaign to raise awareness of your issue and persuade people

- TV, newspapers, radio, etc

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- Both image-building

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- And persuasive

- Direct mail & email

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- Increasingly prevalent

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- Strikes and general strikes are some of union's most powerful weapons

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- Little evidence that PAC contributions “buy” votes from those members

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 - may not directly coordinate

- Get out the vote campaigns

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- Can have large effects in low-turnout elections

- The **initiative** allows citizens to pass policy without going through the legislature

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- Interest groups can run campaigns to get the requisite number of signatures

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- If it is effective, why don't we see much more?