



## Money In Politics: Notes

### In this lesson,

- Interest Groups
- Lobbying
- Campaign Finance Rules

### Interest Groups:

- **An organization of people who members share policy views on specific issues and attempt to influence public policy to their benefit**
- Operate at all levels of government (local, state, national)
- **Public policy:** the course of action the government takes in response to an issue (Ex. Not passing gun regulations)
- **Goals**
  - **Gain access to policymakers**
  - **Influence public policy**
  - **Support sympathetic policy makers**
- **How are they linkage institutions?**
  - Express members' preferences to government
  - raise/spend money to influence policymakers
  - educate/inform members about government policy
- **Government Money & Regulation = Lots of Interest Groups**
  - President and Congress control billions of dollars and choose regulation to have
  - Most industries, corporations, professions, unions have interest groups to have their interest represented
  - 1959 - 6,000 interest groups
  - Today - 22,000 interest groups
- **Political Party vs. Interest Groups:**
  - Nominate, compete, try to gain power vs. support officials (\$\$\$) to influence public policy
  - Have positions on wide range issues vs. focus on members' issues, represent them
  - Public, accountable to voters vs. private, accountable to members

### Lobbying:

- **How interest groups try to influence decisions of policymakers**
- **Lobbyists: people who attempt to persuade policymakers for group**
  - **There are over 30,000 spending \$2B a year lobbying**
- **Lobbying Congress:**



- **Provide expertise: give members of Congress information, technical issues, small changes to bills**
- **Testifying before Congress:** in front of committees
- **Meet with Congressional aides:** staff, people who actually write bills
- **Bring like minded, influential constituents to DC:** talk policy with members of Congress
- **Provide gifts, favors, special treatment:** to gain access, favors, etc.
- **Executive Branch:**
  - Present P.O.V. to White House aides
  - President has staff for talking to lobbyists
  - Try to gain access to regulatory agencies to influence regulations
- **Courts:**
  - No direct access
  - Last resort, if fail in Congress
  - Amicus Curiae Briefs: “friend of the court” brief, written arguments supporting interest groups side in Supreme Court
- **Shaping Public Opinion**
  - **Public relation campaigns:** try & bring an issue to public’s attention
  - **Grassroots organizing:** organizing members to contact reps. about issue
  - **Advertisements:** to promote their image as “good citizens”
  - **Demonstrations:** raise awareness, express viewpoints
- **Interest Group Theories:**
  - **Pluralist Theory:** Many groups compete, all balance each other and force compromise, no domination
  - **Hyper-pluralist Theory:** Too many interest groups resulting in conflicting policy
  - **Power Elite Theory:** policy decisions are dominated by small number of super rich groups, policy reflects the preferences of these groups at the expense of everyone else
- **What makes an interest group successful?**
  - **Size**
    - Large membership: more emails, bigger protests, more volunteers
    - Small membership: more passion
    - Free riders: people who benefit from interest group without making a contribution
  - **Intensity**
    - More passion = more successful
    - Single issue interest groups - most passionate
  - **Financial Resources**
    - More money = more lobbyists, PACs, amicus curiae briefs, events, etc.
    - Money compensated for low size/intensity



- Astroturfing: makes your group look like real grass roots but is actually fake
- **Access to lawmakers**
  - Campaign donations, fundraisers, support, buys access to lawmakers - have influence over legislative process

### **Campaign Finance Rules:**

- **Purpose**
  - **Disclosure of financial activity**
  - **Limits on contributions & disclosure of who gives and how much**
  - **Limits on expenditures, especially by outside groups pushing self interest agenda**
- **Contributions: money given**
- **Expenditures: money spent**
- **Historical attempts at controlling campaign finances:**
  - **Federal Election Campaign Act (1972):**
    - Public financing: system where election is funded by taxpayers for agreeing to rules
    - Disclosure of dominoes
    - Limits on contributions & expenditures
    - Federal Elections Commission: police
      - Disclose information to public
      - Enforce contribution limits
      - Oversee public finance system
  - **Buckley v. Valeo (1976)**
    - Challenge to FECA
    - Contribution limit was okay
    - Expenditure limit was not okay
      - It violate the 1st amendment
  - **Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act aka McCain-Feingold (2002)**
    - Limit attack ads/close loopholes
    - Limit soft money
    - “Stand by your ad”
    - Stop non candidate ads before 6- days before general election
  - **McConnell v. FEC (2003)**
    - Prohibition on PAC and 527 ads is violation of 1st amendment
  - **Citizens United vs. FEC (2010)**
    - BCRA/FECA are unconstitutional
    - Disclosure of contributions is fine
    - Can make independent expenditures (don’t coordinate with campaign)



- Corporations are people (1st amendment)
- **Types of Contributions:**
  - **Hard Money**
    - Donation directly to candidate
    - \$5,000 to each candidate max
  - **Soft Money**
    - Donation to party committee
    - \$30,800 limit per party
  - **Dark Money**
    - Donations made to Super PACs
    - Unlimited \$\$\$ per year
- **Ways to contribute**
  - **Political Action Committees (PACs)**
    - Formed by interest groups to raise money and contribute to campaigns
    - Get hard money
    - Support incumbents
    - Special interest join together to make contributions to candidates
    - Can also make independent expenditures by lobbying and creating ads
  - **Super PACs**
    - Result of Citizens United case
    - Independent expenditure only committee
    - Can't coordinate with campaigns
    - spend/raise unlimited amount of money
    - Most disclose donor
    - **BUT THERE IS A LOOPHOLE!**
  - **501(c)4**
    - Non-profit, tax exempt interest group
    - Must represent public welfare issues
    - Don't have to disclose donors
    - **If you don't want your name attached to a Super PAC, just donate to a 501(c)4 and they give money to the Super PAC**
      - **You don't have to give name because the 501(c)4's name will show up**