POLS 205

American National Government

Pressure Unit – Interest Groups and Campaign Finance

Under Pressure!

Interest Groups and Campaign Contributions

Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–59)

Americans combine to give fêtes, found seminaries, build churches, distribute books, and send missionaries to the antipodes. Hospitals, prisons, and schools take shape in that way. Finally, if they want to proclaim a truth or propagate some feeling by the encouragement of a great example, they form an association. In every case, at the head of any new undertaking, where in France you would find the government or in England some territorial magnate, in the United States you are sure to find an association. I have come across several types of association in America of which, I confess, I had not previously the slightest conception, and I have often admired the extreme skill they show in proposing a common object for the exertions of very many and in inducing them voluntarily to pursue it.

Interest Groups

Link people to government by organizing those with similar viewpoints on a specific policy area and presenting these views to (not necessarily elected) government officials.

The incredible diversity of American life is reflected in the vast array of Interest Groups seeking to influence our political process!

Freedom of Association

With a Nic-Nac, Paddy PAC, give a Pol a Bone…

Trade Unions

The NEA

http://www.nea.org/

*The National Education Association is the nation’s largest professional employee organization, representing more than 3.2 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support personnel, school administrators, retired educators, and students preparing to become teachers.*

United Automobile Workers

Members of the Tennessee UAW visited with Rep. Ford during their annual legislative conference where legislative issues relating to foreign trade and union rights were a top priority.

AFL/CIO

http://www.aflcio.org/

http://www.aflcio.org/joinaunion/voiceatwork/efca/

Tell Congress…

Professional Associations

The American Medical Association

The American Bar Association

The National Association of Realtors

The American Society for Public Administration

Environmentalists

Business Groups

http://www.nam.org/s\_nam/index.asp

Trade or Industry Groups

http://www.cement.org/

http://www.npga.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=1720

Agriculture

http://www.fb.org/

Ethnic Lobbies

http://www.naacp.org/

http://lulac.org/

Good Government Groups

http://www.commoncause.org/site/pp.asp?c=dkLNK1MQIwG&b=186966

Religious Associations

http://www.cc.org/

http://www.sclcnational.org/

http://www.ncccusa.org/

One of these things is NOT like the other….

http://www.citizenlink.com/

Why not? Tax exemptions and FEC rules.

Specialty Interests

Got Milk?

Campaign Contributions

Interest Groups

Link people to government by organizing those with similar viewpoints on a specific policy area and presenting these views to (not necessarily elected) government officials.

Money is the Mother’s Milk of Politics, thus…

Interest groups contribute money to help get candidates elected who support their issues.

Money Makes the World Go Around…

Bribes vs Contributions:

None of this is paid directly to the candidates. (That would land you in jail)

None of this is meant to be a straight trade for votes; no *quid pro quo*. (That would get you censured)

Campaign Contributions

Party Contributions

Political Action Committees

Organizations set up to influence the political process by raising funds from their members and funneling that money to candidates

But there are RULES

PACS-Who Are the Big Guns?

Who would you guess is the biggest PAC?

http://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/toppacs.php?Type=C&cycle=2010

Note: How many at the top are unions!

Also note the changes from 2008 to 2010.

Leadership PAC’s

Ways for politicians to collect, bundle and funnel campaign contributions to other politicians.

Allows them to make money and make friends.

Harry Reid’s Page

http://www.giveemhellharry.com/

http://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/industry.php?txt=Q03&cycle=2010

And Then the World Exploded!

Introducing… The SUPERPAC

(or independent expenditure-only committees)

Brought to you via

Citizen’s United vs the FEC (2010) Supremes

SpeechNow.org vs the FEC (2010) DC Circuit

And When I Say Exploded, I Mean BOOOOM!

As of February 26, 2012, 342 groups organized as Super PACs have reported total receipts of $130,334,342 and total independent expenditures of $61,418,349 in the 2012 cycle.

(That’s mostly the Republican Presidential Primary. Just you wait until the fall!)

Super PACs

Unlimited contributions from

corporations,

unions

associations and

individuals

Unlimited expenditures

May advocate for or against political candidates.

Report donors to the Federal Election Commission on a monthly or quarterly basis -- the Super PAC's choice -- as a traditional PAC would.

Unlike traditional PACs, Super PACs are prohibited from donating money directly to political candidates

Key words: no official or direct contact with the candidate.

(From Open Secrets.org)

A Bridge Too Far?

Interest groups have been called a bridge over which people and players can reach the political game.

Describe the bridge. A toll bridge

Why Am I Telling You All This?

Because interest groups and political contributions in all their forms have a significant impact on policy choices.