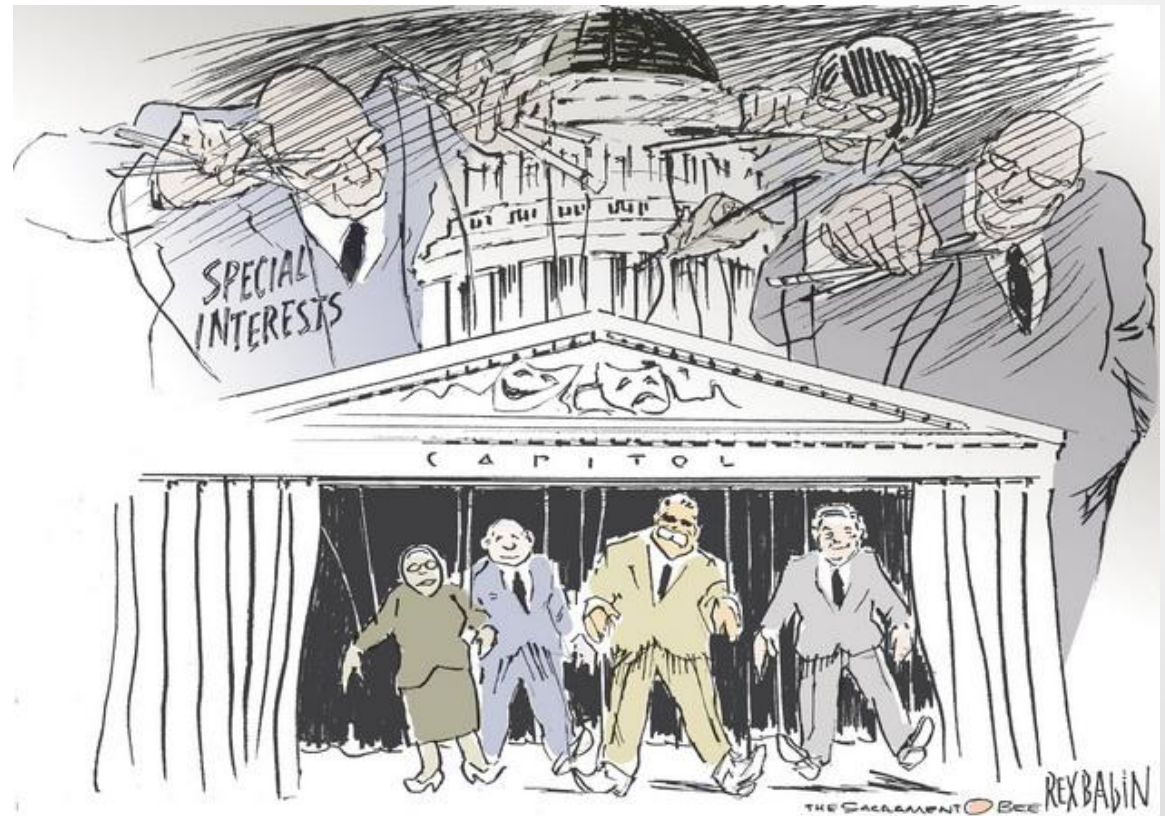


Interest Groups

Chapter 11

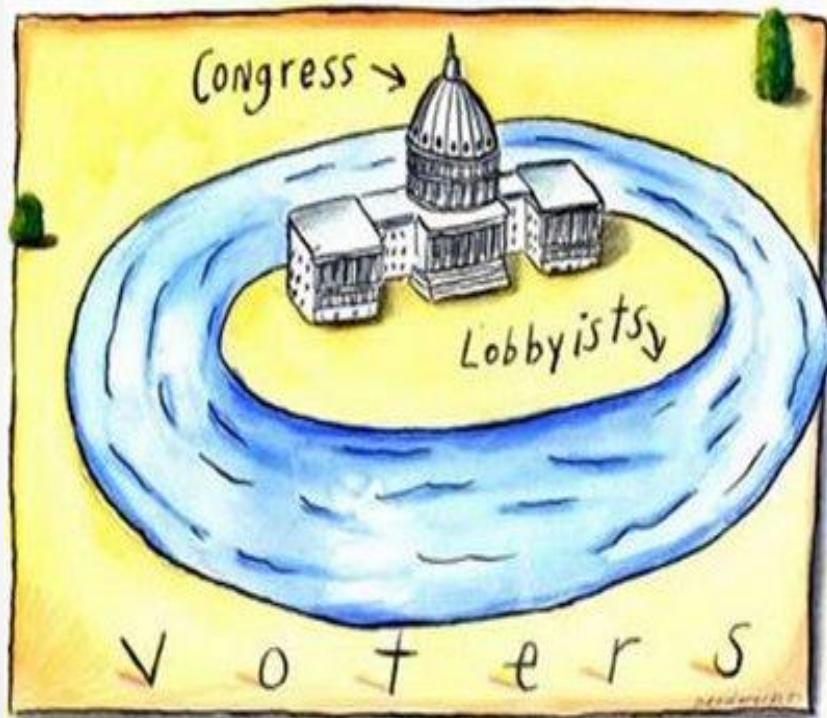


The Role and Reputation of Interest Groups



- Defining Interest Groups
 - Organization of people with shared policy goals entering policy process at one of several points.
 - Political Parties run candidates for office.
 - Interest groups are policy specialists; political parties policy generalists.

The Role and Reputation of Interest Groups



(Illustration: James T. Pendergrast)

- Why Interest Groups Get Bad Press
 - Writers of Constitution disliked organized factions.
 - Dishonest lobbyists get more press than honest ones- even though there are far more honest lobbyists.
 - Term “lobbying” in general has negative connotations.

Theories of Interest Group Politics- Pluralism



- Definition:
 - Politics is mainly competition among groups, each pressing for its own preferred policies.
 - Many centers of power and many diverse, competing groups.
 - No group wins or loses all the time.
 - Interest groups are a linkage institution between people and government.

Theories of Interest Group Politics- Pluralism



“So we’re agreed: we’ll go to mediation.”

- Groups compete
- No group becomes too dominant
- Groups play by rules
- Groups weak in one resource can rely on another resource.
- Lobbying is open to all, not just those groups with the most resources.



Theories of Interest Group Politics- Elitism

- Definition:
 - Societies are divided along class lines and the upper-class elite will rule.
 - Power is not equally divided among groups, some have much more.
 - Largest corporations and unions hold the most power.



Theories of Interest Group Politics- Elitism

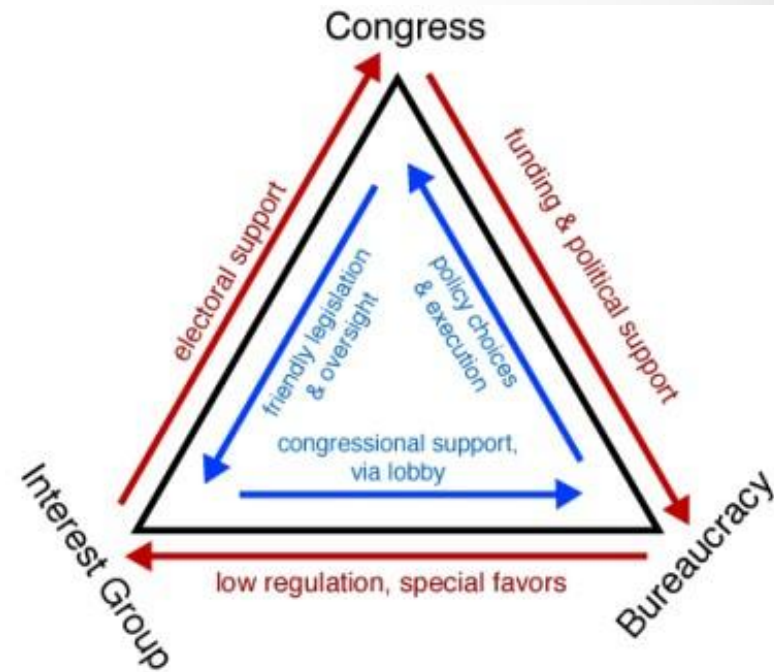


- Power is strengthened by the system of interlocking directorates of corporations and other institutions.
- Corporate elites are willing to lose minor policy battles, but work to win on major policy issues .
- Lobbying is a problem because it benefits few at the expense of many.



Iron Triangles and Issue Networks

- Iron triangles are formed in specific policy areas among congressional committees, agencies, and interest groups.
- Issue network may be replacing iron triangles.
- Issue networks are groups that are connected through a policy issue.



What Makes an Interest Group Successful?

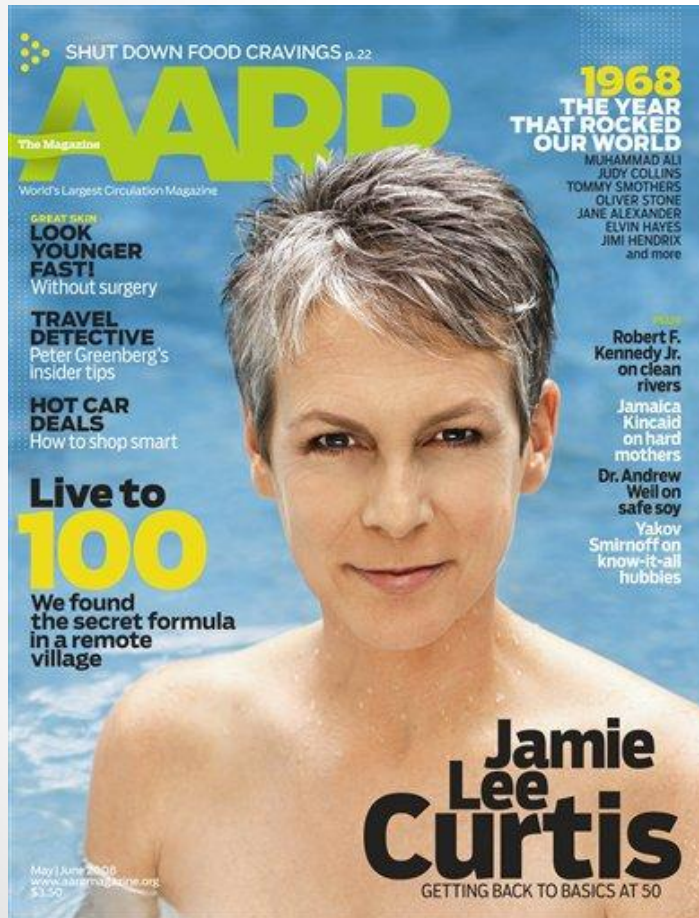
1. American Association of Retired Persons	2. National Rifle Association
3. National Federation of Independent Business	4. American Israel Public Affairs Committee
5. AFL-CIO	6. Association of Trial Lawyers
7. Chamber of Commerce	8. National Right to Life Committee
9. National Education Association	10. National Restaurant Association

What Makes an Interest Group Successful?

- The Surprising Ineffectiveness of Large Groups
 - Free-Rider problem: Some people don't join interest groups because they benefit from group's activities without officially joining.
 - The bigger the group, larger the free-rider problem.
 - Large groups are difficult to keep organized.



What Makes an Interest Group Successful?



- Small groups are better organized and more focused on group's goals.
- Consumer groups have a difficult time getting significant policy gains because benefits are spread over entire population.
- Groups that can provide **selective benefits** sometimes overcome the problem.

What Makes an Interest Group Successful?

- Intensity
 - **Single-Issue groups:** Groups that focus on a narrow interest and dislike compromise.
 - Groups may focus on an emotional issue, providing them with a psychological advantage.
 - May be more likely to use protests and other means of political participation than traditional interest groups that use lobbyists.



What Makes an Interest Group Successful?

- Financial Resources
 - Not all groups have equal amounts of money.
 - Monetary donations usually translate into access to politicians, like phone calls and meetings.
 - Wealthier groups don't always win in the policy arena.



JOIN
the
National Rifle Association

The Interest Group Explosion



How Groups Try to Shape Policy

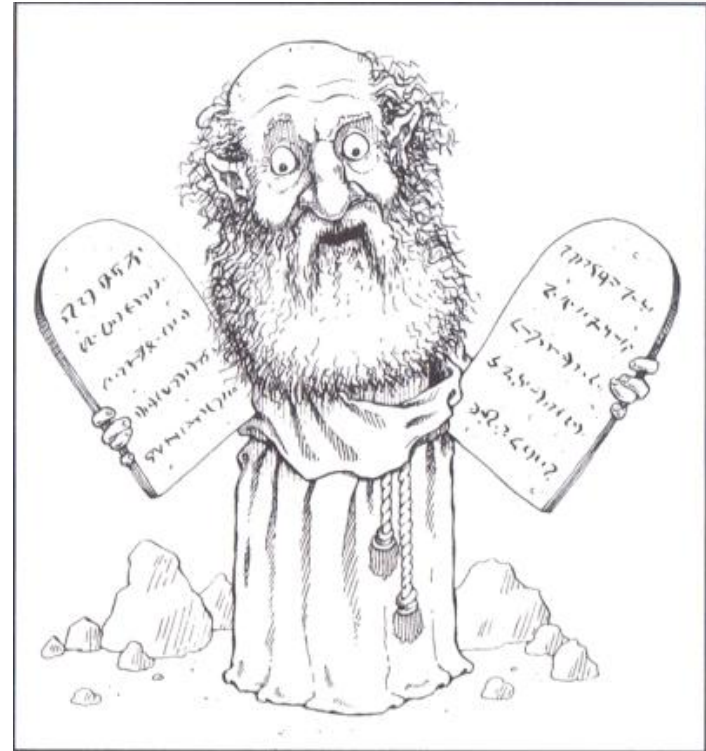
- Lobbying

“communication by someone other than a citizen acting on his own behalf, directed to a governmental decision maker with the hope of influencing his decision.”



How Groups Try to Shape Policy

- Lobbyists are source of information.
- Lobbyists can help politicians plan political strategies for legislation.
- Lobbyists can help politicians plan political strategies for reelection campaigns.
- Lobbyists can provide ideas and innovations that can be turned into policies for which the politician can take credit.



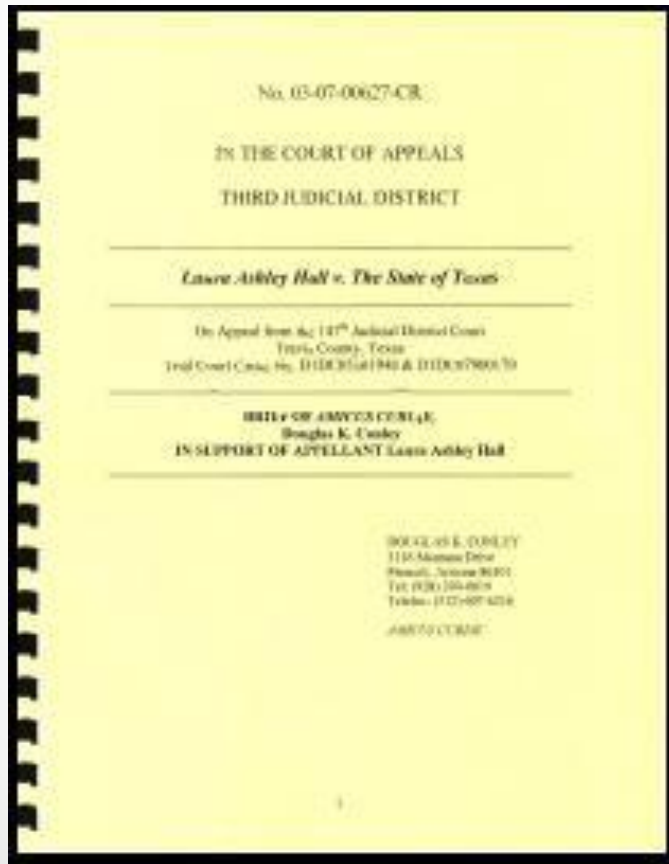
Moses, one of the world's first lobbyists.
"Well I got it down to ten, but adultery is still in."

How Groups Try to Shape Policy

- Electioneering
 - Direct group involvement in election process.
 - Political Action Committee (PAC): Used by corporations and unions to donate money directly to candidates.
 - 527s and 501 (C) (3)s are used to generate independent expenditures.
 - Groups may give to both sides.
 - Groups can help with campaigns.



How Groups Try to Shape Policy



- Litigation
 - If an interest group fails in one area, courts may be able to provide remedy.
 - Interest groups can file **amicus curiae** briefs in court cases to support position.
 - Class Action lawsuits permit small groups file on behalf of a much larger group.

How Groups Try to Shape Policy

- Going Public
 - Groups try and cultivate good public image.
 - Groups use marketing strategies to influence public opinion of group and its issues.
 - Groups will purchase advertising to motivate the public about an issue.
 - Groups use grassroots lobbying to get members to advocate on behalf of their interest.



Conventional Participation

- Voting
- Letter writing
- Contact with Representatives
- Working on Campaigns
- Campaign Contributions



Unconventional Participation

- Boycotts
- Marches
- Sit-ins
- Demonstrations
- Violence



Interest Groups

- Economic Interests
 - Labor (AFL-CIO)
 - Agriculture
 - Business (NAM, Chambers of Commerce)
- Environmental Interests (Greenpeace, Sierra Club)
- Equality Interests (NAACP, NOW)
- Consumer and Public Interest Lobbies (ACLU, Pro-Life, Pro-Choice, Center for Responsive Politics)

