CHAPTER 11

INTEREST GROUPS

CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. Introduction (pp. 331–332)
   A. The worst and oldest stereotype of a lobbyist is of someone who bribes a lawmaker.
   B. An incredible array of interest make their voices heard in Washington.
   C. Although turnout in elections has declined since 1960, participation in interest groups has mushroomed.

II. The Role of Interest Groups (p. 333)
   A. An interest group is an organization of people with similar policy goals who enter the political process to try to achieve those aims.
   B. Interest groups are often policy specialists, whereas parties are policy generalists.

III. Theories of Interest Group Politics (pp. 333–336)
   A. Pluralism and Group Theory
      1. Pluralist theory argues that interest group activity brings representation to all.
      2. The group theory of politics contains several arguments.
         a. Groups provide a key link between people and government.
         b. Groups compete.
         c. No one group is likely to become too dominant.
         d. Groups usually play by the "rules of the game."
         e. Groups weak in one resource can use another.
   B. Elites and the Denial of Pluralism
      1. Elite theory argues that a few groups, primarily the wealthy, have most of the power.
      2. Groups are extremely unequal in power.
      3. Awesome power is controlled by the largest corporations.
      4. The power of a few is fortified by a system of interlocking directorates.
      5. Corporate elites prevail when it comes to the big decisions.
   C. Hyperpluralism and Interest Group Liberalism
      1. Hyperpluralist theory asserts that too many groups are getting too much of what they want, resulting in a government policy that is often contradictory and lacking in direction.
      2. The phrase "interest group liberalism" refers to government's excessive deference to groups.
         a. Groups have become too powerful in the political process as government tries to aid every conceivable interest.
b. Interest group liberalism is aggravated by numerous subgovernments.
c. Trying to please every group results in contradictory and confusing policy.

IV. What Makes an Interest Group Successful? (pp. 336–341)
A. The Surprising Ineffectiveness of Large Groups
   1. A potential group is composed of all people who might be group members because they share some common interest.
   2. An actual group is composed of those in the potential group who choose to join.
   3. A collective good is something of value that cannot be withheld from a potential group member.
   4. The free-rider problem occurs when members of the potential group share in benefits that members of the actual group work to secure.
   5. Olson's law of large groups states that the larger the group, the further it will fall short of providing an optimal amount of a collective good.
   6. Selective benefits are goods that a group can restrict to those who pay their yearly dues.
B. Intensity
   1. Intensity is a psychological advantage that can be enjoyed by small and large groups alike.
   2. A single-issue group is a group that has a narrow interest, dislikes compromise, and single-mindedly pursues its goal.
C. Financial Resources

V. The Interest Group Explosion (pp. 341–342)
A. The number of interest groups in the United States has been increasingly rapidly over the past several decades.
B. Technology has contributed to the growth in the number of interest groups.

VI. How Groups Try To Shape Policy (pp. 342–348)
A. Lobbying
   1. Lobbying is a communication, by someone other than a citizen acting on his or her own behalf, directed to a governmental decision-maker with the hope of influencing his or her decision.
   2. Lobbyists can help a member of Congress. They are an important source of information. They can help politicians with political strategy. They can help formulate campaign strategy. They are a source of ideas and innovations.
B. Electioneering
   1. Electioneering consists of aiding candidates financially and getting group members out to support them.
   2. Political Action Committees (PACs) provide a means for groups to participate in electioneering.
C. Litigation
   1. **Amicus curiae briefs** consist of written arguments submitted to the courts in support of one side of a case.
   2. **Class action lawsuits** enable a group of similarly situated plaintiffs to combine similar grievances into a single suit.

D. Going Public
   1. Interest groups appeal to the public for support.

VII. Types of Interest Groups (pp. 348–355)
   A. Economic Interests
      1. Labor
         a. The **union shop** requires new employees to join the union representing them.
         b. **Right-to-work laws** outlaw union membership as a condition of employment.
   2. Business
   B. Environmental Interests
   C. Equality Interests
   D. Consumers and Public Interest Lobbies
      1. **Public interest lobbies** are organizations that seek a collective good.
      2. The consumer movement was spurred by the efforts of Ralph Nader.

VIII. Understanding Interest Groups (pp. 355–356)
   A. Interest Groups and Democracy
   B. Interest Groups and the Scope of Government

IX. Summary (p. 357)

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

*After studying Chapter 11, you should be able to:*

1. Define interest groups and distinguish them from political parties.
2. Compare and contrast the pluralist, elite, and hyperpluralist theories of interest groups.
3. Explain what makes an interest group successful and why small groups have an advantage over large groups.
4. Identify and describe the strategies that groups use to shape public policy.
5. Describe some of the many types of groups in the American political system.
6. Evaluate interest groups in terms of their influence on democracy and the scope of government.
The following exercises will help you meet these objectives:

Objective 1: Define interest groups and distinguish them from political parties.

1. Provide a definition of the term "interest group."

2. Name two factors that distinguish interest groups from political parties.

   1. 
   
   2. 

Objective 2: Compare and contrast the pluralist, elite, and hyperpluralist theories of interest groups.

1. Complete the following table on the theories of interest group politics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Role of Groups</th>
<th>Who Holds Power</th>
<th>Group Impact on Public Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pluralist Theory</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Elite Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hyperpluralist Theory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. List five essential arguments of the group theory of politics.
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.
   5.

3. List four major points made by the elitist view of the interest group system.
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.

4. List the three major points of the hyperpluralist position on group politics.
   1.
   2.
   3.
Objective 3: Explain what makes a group successful and why small groups have an advantage over large groups.

1. What is the difference between a potential group and an actual group?

2. What is Olson's law of large groups?

3. Define the term single-issue group and give an example.

Objective 4: Identify and describe the strategies that groups use to shape public policy.

1. List the four general strategies used by interest groups to shape public policy.
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.

2. What are the two basic types of lobbyists?
   1.
   2.
3. List four important ways lobbyists can help a member of Congress.
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 
   4. 

4. What are the five most common answers from PAC directors as to why they give money to certain candidates?
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 
   4. 
   5. 

5. What is an amicus curiae brief?

Objective 5: Describe some of the many types of groups in the American political system.

1. What was the main purpose of the Taft-Hartley Act?
2. List three issues that trade and product associations seek when lobbying Capitol Hill.

1.

2.

3.

3. List three items environmental groups have promoted and three items they have opposed.

Promoted:

1.

2.

3.

Opposed:

1.

2.

3.

4. Name two important organizations involved in promoting equality and summarize their major goals.

1.

2.

5. What is meant by a public interest lobby?
Objective 6: Evaluate interest groups in terms of their influence on democracy and the scope of government.

1. Summarize the pluralist, elitist, and hyperpluralist perspectives on interest groups and democracy.

   1. Pluralist:

   2. Elitist:

   3. Hyperpluralist:

2. How do interest groups affect the scope of government?

KEY TERMS

*Identify and describe:*

- interest group
- pluralist theory
- elite theory
- hyperpluralist theory
- subgovernments
potential group

actual group

collective good

free-rider problem

Olson's law of large groups

selective benefits

single-issue group

lobbying

electioneering

political action committees (PACs)

amicus curiae briefs

class action lawsuits
Compare and contrast:

pluralist theory, elite theory, and hyperpluralist theory

hyperpluralist theory and subgovernments

potential group and actual group

collective good and free-rider problem

Olson's law of large groups and selective benefits

lobbying and electioneering

electioneering and political action committees

amicus curiae briefs and class action lawsuits

union shop and right-to-work laws
Name that term:

1. This is an organization of people with similar policy goals entering the political process to try to achieve those goals.

_________________________

2. These are also known as iron triangles.

_________________________

3. There are usually more members in this group than in the actual group.

_________________________

4. This occurs when it is easier to not join a group because you will receive the benefits anyway.

_________________________

5. This states that, "the larger the group, the further it will fall short of providing an optimal amount of a collective good."

_________________________

6. People in this group tend to dislike compromise and single-mindedly pursue their goal.

_________________________

7. In recent years, these have provided a means for groups to participate in electioneering more than ever before.

_________________________

8. This enables a group of similarly situated plaintiffs to combine similar grievances into a single suit.

_________________________

9. These organizations seek a collective good that will not selectively benefit the membership of the organization.

_________________________
USING YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Investigate an interest group about which you are curious. Contact the group to see if they can provide information on the group and its policy goals. Find out how the group's actual membership compares to its potential membership. Try to identify the strategies that the group uses in efforts to achieve its policy goals. Briefly describe what you found in terms of how well the group is achieving its goals and forging a link between people and policy.

2. Using newspapers or newsmagazines, collect some current examples of group involvement in the policy process. Try to find examples of various types of groups — groups in different policy arenas, public interest lobbies, and single-issue groups. Analyze each example in terms of the policymaking area in which group activity was focused (e.g., electoral, legislative, administrative, or judicial), strategies used by the group to affect policy, and the degree to which the group was successful in achieving its policy goals. Discuss whether or not your findings support the interpretation of groups provided by pluralist theory, elite theory, and hyperpluralist theory.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Circle the correct answer:

1. An organization of people with similar policy goals entering the political process to try to achieve those aims is called
   a. a political party.
   b. a political action committee.
   c. an interest group.
   d. a collective.
   e. a political corporation.

2. The successes of civil rights and women's rights groups in redirecting the course of public policy, once they were organized, is pointed to as evidence to support the theory that American politics is open and not a problem.
   a. pluralist
   b. hyperpluralist
   c. elite
   d. hyperelitist
   e. free market
3. _______ theorists are impressed by how insignificant most organized interest groups are.
   a. Pluralist
   b. Hyperpluralist
   c. Elitist
   d. Pluralist and hyperpluralist
   e. Deconstruction

4. Interest group liberalism is promoted through networks of
   a. ideologically liberal interest groups and not conservative groups.
   b. one group winning and another losing in the competition for government action or funding.
   c. subgovernments.
   d. hyperpluralists.
   e. All of the above

5. The idea that too many groups are getting too much of what they want is associated with
   a. elite theory.
   b. pluralist theory.
   c. hyperpluralist theory.
   d. democratic theory.
   e. proliferation theory.

6. Which of the following ideas is NOT associated with hyperpluralism?
   a. Groups have become too powerful in the political process.
   b. Interest group liberalism is aggravated by numerous subgovernments.
   c. Trying to please every group results in contradictory and confusing policy.
   d. Political power is highly concentrated.
   e. The dominance of an economic elite.

7. E. E. Schattsneider’s remark that “pressure politics is essentially the politics of small groups…pressure tactics are not remarkably successful in mobilizing general interests,” suggests that
   a. small groups have organizational advantage.
   b. large groups have organizational advantage.
   c. interest groups have organizational advantage over elites.
   d. elites have organizational advantage over interest groups.
   e. Both b and c
8. According to Olson's law of large groups,
   a. the larger the group, the further it will fall short of providing an optimal amount of a collective good.
   b. the smaller the group, the further it will fall short of providing an optimal amount of a collective good.
   c. the more levels of authority within a group, the more faith its members will have in it.
   d. the more levels of authority within a group, the less faith its members will have in it.
   e. the larger the group, the more likely it is to win.

9. Which of the following groups has the largest potential membership?
   a. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
   b. National Organization for Women
   c. American Medical Association
   d. Air Transport Association of America
   e. American Political Science Association

10. An example of a collective good is
    a. food.
    b. employment.
    c. clean air.
    d. housing.
    e. All of the above

11. Selective benefits refer to
    a. goods that the government distributes to interest groups.
    b. goods that interest groups distribute to the government
    c. goods that a group can restrict to those who pay membership dues or otherwise join an organization.
    d. goods that interest groups distribute to the wider society.
    e. goods, such as membership fees, that individual members distribute to interest groups.

12. ________ is a communication by someone other than a citizen acting on his or her own behalf, directed to a government decision maker, particularly in the legislative and executive branch, with the hope of influencing his or her decision.
    a. Electioneering
    b. An amicus curiae brief
    c. Lobbying
    d. Litigation
    e. Campaigning
13. The text identifies two types of lobbyists,
   a. full-time employees and consultants.
   b. policy experts and legal specialists.
   c. attorneys and non-attorneys.
   d. those based in Washington, D.C., and those based elsewhere.
   e. "old school" and "modern style" lobbyists.

14. Groups that engage in electioneering
   a. seek to mobilize group members in support of a candidate.
   b. aid candidates financially.
   c. Create an iron triangle.
   d. All of the above
   e. Both a and b

15. Most PAC money goes overwhelmingly to incumbents because incumbents
   a. need more money due to the restraints of being in office.
   b. have already been "bought off" by interest groups.
   c. have already become friends and supporters of lobbyists.
   d. are the most likely to be able to return the investment.
   e. have the need for large amounts of money to maintain themselves in power.

16. In 1977, flight attendants won a(n) ________ against the airline industry's regulation that
    all stewardesses had to be unmarried.
   a. amicus curiae brief
   b. writ of habeas corpus
   c. bill of attainder
   d. class action lawsuit
   e. administrative appeal

17. Which of the following statements about interest groups going public is FALSE?
    a. Interest groups carefully cultivate their public images.
    b. Interest groups market not only their stand on issues but their reputations as well.
    c. More and more organizations have launched expensive public relations efforts.
    d. The public relations of most groups tend to be characterized by hard sell and bias.
    e. Both a and c

18. Which of the following methods for influencing members of Congress is NOT legal?
    a. Lobbyists can give information to members of Congress.
    b. Lobbyists can help politicians with political strategy for getting legislation
       through.
    c. Lobbyists can help formulate campaign strategies and get the group’s members
       behind a politician’s reelection campaign.
    d. Lobbyists can be a source of ideas and innovation.
    e. All of the answers above are ways that lobbyists can legally influence members of
       Congress.
   a. banned soft money in campaigns.
   b. permitted states to adopt right-to-work laws.
   c. dealt a severe blow to the labor movement.
   d. reenergized the labor movement.
   e. Both b and c

20. Environmental groups have been most successful at
   a. stopping strip mining.
   b. halting the trans-Alaskan pipeline.
   c. thwarting the expansion of the nuclear power industry.
   d. stopping the development of commercial supersonic aircraft.
   e. protecting the reefer toad and other endangered species.

TRUE/FALSE QUESTIONS

Circle the correct answer:

1. A key difference between interest groups and political parties is that interest groups are policy generalists. T / F
2. A central assumption in pluralist theory is that free and open competition prevents any single group from becoming too dominant. T / F
3. The goal of a subgoverment is to protect self-interest. T / F
4. People who might be interest group members because they share some common interest are called a potential group. T / F
5. Between 1959 and 1995, the number and diversity of interest groups has declined. T / F
6. Free-riding is an increasingly popular litigation strategy used by interest groups. T / F
7. *Amicus curiae* brief are briefs submitted by a “friend of the court,” for the purpose of influencing the court’s decisions. T / F
8. The union shop is a provision found in some collective bargaining agreements that requires all employees of a business to join the union as a condition of employment. T / F
9. The National Organization for Women is an example of a consumer lobby. T / F
10. Interest group politics has the effect of reducing the scope of government. T / F