

What Are Interests and Are They “Special”?

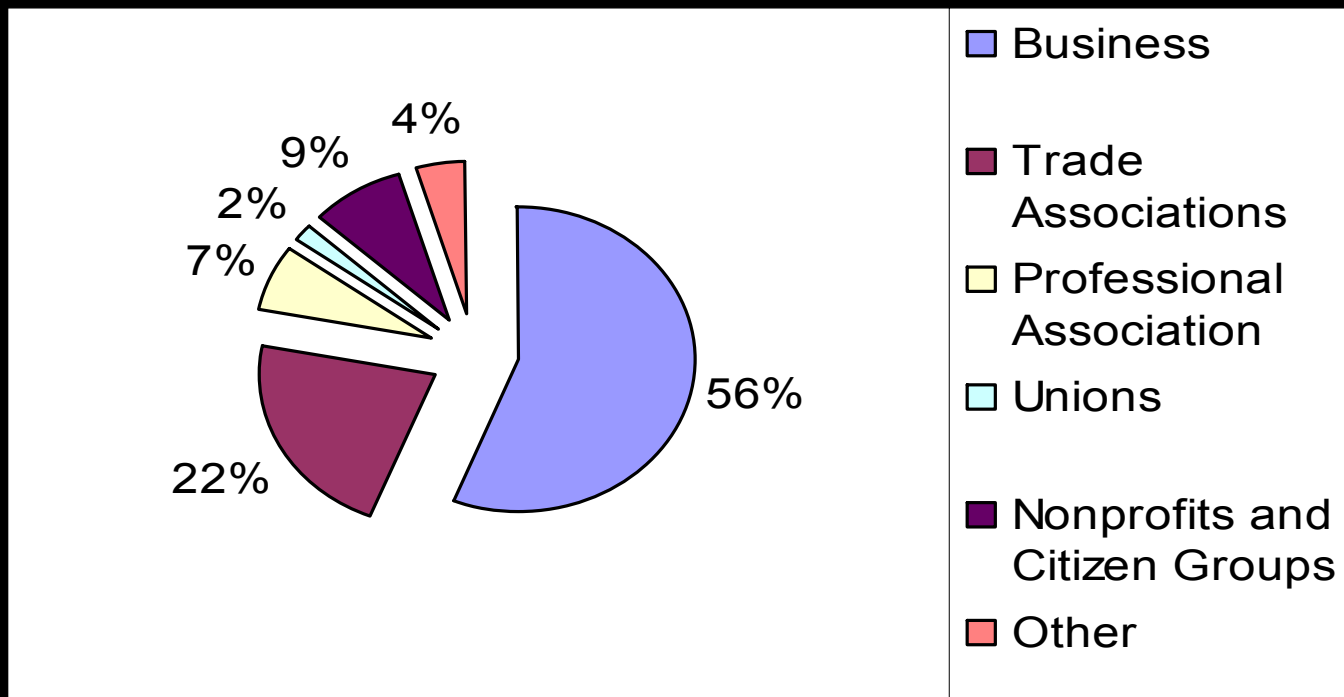
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“Interests,” Not (Just) “Groups”

- Interest: “the perceived or anticipated effects of policy – government action or inaction in all its symbolic forms as well as more tangible allocations --upon values...” (Salisbury 1984)
- Types of interest organizations:
 - Institutions (no members)
 - Trade associations (institutional members)
 - Professional associations (individual members)
 - Citizen groups (individual members)

Reported “Lobbying” Expenditures

(Source: Baumgartner and Leech 2001)



Regulation of Federal Lobbyists

(Lobbying Act of 1946 &
Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995)

- “Covered officials” (i.e. individual targets) include members of Congress, senior executive branch officials, and their staffs.
- “Lobbyist” means professional lobbyist (i.e. 20% or more of time) – not fly-ins, grassroots, etc.
- Lobbyists must:
 - Register
 - Report on issues and expenditures
- Former officials must refrain from lobbying their former offices for one (Congress) or two (executive branch) years.

How Big Is the Lobbying Industry?

- How many lobbyists are there?
 - News reports: over 30,000 (SOPR)
 - *Wash Reps*: approx. 11,500
 - Jim Thurber: over 100,000
- How much money is spent on lobbying?
 - Lobbying reports: \$2.16 billion (CRP)
 - 3x? 4x?

The Ten Biggest Interests (Cumulative LDA Reported Spending)

1. U.S. Chamber of Commerce
2. Altria
3. General Electric
4. AMA
5. Northrup-Grumman
6. Edison Electric Institute
7. Verizon
8. Business Roundtable
9. AHA
10. PhRMA

The Washington “Game”

- More than money
- Multiple channels of communication:
 - “Inside”
 - “Outside”
- Multiple venues:
 - Legislative
 - Executive
 - Regulatory
 - Judicial
- May be embedded in multi-level strategy (global, regional, federal, state, local)

Interest Representation: Elements of Strategy

- Issue agenda and objectives
- Venues
- Targets
- Messages
- Channels
- Coalition partners
- Timing

Own Channels: From Inside to Outside

- Staff lobbyists
- Contract lobbyists
- Executives and managers
- “Grasstops” (local notables)
- “Grassroots” (rank and file)
- The “rent chain” (“dependents”)

Creating Alternative Channels

- “Interest groups” are generally perceived to be self-interested and biased.
 - Messages may not be believed.
 - Messages may produce perverse results.
- Two solutions:
 - Establish your own credibility.
 - Borrow someone else’s:
 - Media
 - Experts
 - Citizens

Borrowing Credibility

- Media:
 - News coverage (“earned media”)
 - Advertising (“paid media”)
 - Celebrities and entertainment shows
 - The “blogosphere” (and beyond)
- Experts:
 - Academia
 - Think tanks
 - Contract and subsidiary research organizations
- Citizens:
 - Internal communications
 - Activation via media: “cause” marketing

The System that “Should Be”

- Participatory
- Fair
- Far-sighted
- Pragmatic
- Model for the world?
 - “City on the hill”
 - GWB foreign policy
 - Birth of the global public domain

System Critique #1

Gridlock

- Democracy + time =
 - Interest organization
 - Program advocacy
- Barriers to program cuts:
 - Diffuse benefits
 - Concentrated costs
- Fiscal limits
- Symbolic reform and practical punishment

System Critique #2: Deliberation Deficit

- Interest organizations: too strategic!
 - “Prebuttals”
 - “Permanent campaign”
- Media norms:
 - Conflict and drama
 - “Horse race” frame
 - Fragmentation

System Critique #3: Inequality

- Availability of resources to participate
- Collective action problem
- Professionalization of advocacy:
 - influence of staff
 - Influence of donors
 - Demands of technology
- Message construction
- Message delivery

Imperfect Solutions

- Public education
- Self-regulation
 - Advocates
 - Media
- Disclosure
- Government regulation (and enforcement)
- Subsidized pluralism
- Re-centralization