

- **Leading litigation** Interest groups have financed and provided legal representation in many landmark Supreme Court cases, such as *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Interest group activity is a form of political speech and is protected by the First Amendment. Nevertheless, there have been attempts to control interest groups. One, a 1946 law, required groups and individuals seeking to influence legislators to register with Congress and file quarterly financial reports. This accomplished little because grassroots activity was not restricted and no staff was provided to enforce the law through review of the registrations or reports. A 1995 act provided a broader definition of lobbying and tightened reporting requirements. This more recent act also authorized the Justice Department to undertake investigations into possible violations.

With the trend towards weaker political parties and increased diversity of public interest, interest groups will likely provide an expanded role in linking the American voter and the government.

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. All of the following explain the proliferation of interest groups EXCEPT
 - (A) America is diverse, with countless immigrants, races, and religions
 - (B) because of its federal system, there are multiple points of access to government
 - (C) political authority is shared by several branches of government, each of which might be targeted by interest groups
 - (D) interest groups often run candidates for office to give their supporters a voice in government
 - (E) political parties are relatively weak, which helps explain the strength and number of interest groups

2. Throughout American history, which of the following conditions has led to an increase in interest groups' activity?
 - I. a strong economy with low inflation
 - II. the rise of professional societies, such as the American Medical Association (AMA)
 - III. government policies that create new groups, such as veterans
 - IV. leaders who are willing to make personal sacrifices
 - (A) I and II
 - (B) I, II, and III
 - (C) II, III, and IV
 - (D) I, II, and IV
 - (E) III and IV

3. "Free riders" occur when interest groups fight for benefits to the public as a whole, such as consumer protection. How can interest groups prevent the free-rider problem?
- (A) by ensuring that the benefits they seek will help only their members
 - (B) by providing people an incentive to join the interest group, such as a subscription to a magazine
 - (C) by limiting membership to a few carefully screened members
 - (D) by lobbying members of Congress only in the district where the interest group operates
 - (E) there is no practical way for interest groups to prevent the "free-rider" problem
4. Environmentalists, women, and union members have worked over the years to advance their interests. What is the best description of these causes?
- (A) They are social movements that have spawned several related interest groups.
 - (B) They are PACs, which give money to political campaigns.
 - (C) They are social movements because all of them have liberal goals.
 - (D) They are interest groups because they lobby Congress for favorable legislation.
 - (E) They are social movements because they do not take strong positions and tend to support moderate policies.
5. Why are lobbyists useful to members of Congress in considering legislation?
- (A) because most lobbyists are lawyers and can draft bills using technical legal language
 - (B) because lobbyists have bigger research staffs than members of Congress
 - (C) because lobbyists are policy generalists who have knowledge about a broad range of topics
 - (D) because members of Congress must listen to lobbyists in order to get electoral support
 - (E) because members of Congress are policy generalists and lobbyists are policy specialists with expert knowledge in their area
6. An interest group would use grassroots lobbying on all of the following issues EXCEPT
- (A) abortion
 - (B) Medicare
 - (C) Social Security
 - (D) complex tax legislation affecting a few people
 - (E) affirmative action

7. A group with more than fifty members, representing a corporation, labor union, or special interest that raises and spends campaign contributions on behalf of candidates or causes is a
- (A) special-interest group
 - (B) grassroots lobbying committee
 - (C) political action committee
 - (D) social movement
 - (E) tax-exempt entity
8. Interest groups do all of the following EXCEPT
- (A) hire lobbyists to represent them in talking with members of Congress
 - (B) attempt to influence the government to enact policies they favor
 - (C) run candidates for state and federal office
 - (D) educate the public about issues
 - (E) monitor the activities of government
9. Which of the following are sources of funding for interest groups?
- I. foundation grants
 - II. federal grants
 - III. federal contracts
 - IV. direct-mail solicitations
- (A) I, II, and III
 - (B) I and II
 - (C) II, III, and IV
 - (D) I and III
 - (E) I, II, III, and IV
10. Which of the following is a concern about the influence of lobbyists on government?
- (A) Many lobbyists are former federal officials who gave up their positions in government to work for interest groups.
 - (B) Many lobbyists are attorneys who have undue influence because of their legal expertise.
 - (C) Many lobbyists also work as congressional staff members.
 - (D) Many members of Congress are former lobbyists who still have strong connections with interest groups.
 - (E) Because lobbyists do not have to register with the government, it is difficult to control their activities.
11. Sometimes interest groups pursue goals that will principally benefit nonmembers, such as raising money to house orphans. Such groups are known as
- (A) public interest lobbies
 - (B) social movements
 - (C) ideological interest groups
 - (D) political action committees
 - (E) noncontroversial interest groups

12. Which of the following is a restriction on the interaction between members of Congress and interest groups?
- (A) Members of interest groups may not provide members of Congress with information regarding pending legislation.
 - (B) Members of Congress may not accept gifts of any value from registered lobbyists.
 - (C) Retired members of Congress may not work as lobbyists for interest groups.
 - (D) Members of Congress must retain records of all email, text, and phone messages from lobbyists.
 - (E) Interest groups may not run ads on behalf of members of Congress.
13. An interest group would use public pressure on all of the following issues EXCEPT
- (A) abortion
 - (B) Medicare
 - (C) Social Security
 - (D) complex tax legislation affecting a few people
 - (E) affirmative action
14. Which of the following best describes an earmark?
- (A) an entire piece of legislation that is written to provide benefits to a small group of people
 - (B) a provision in a law that provides a direct benefit to a client without being reviewed on the merits by all members of Congress
 - (C) a provision in a law that is wasteful and expensive
 - (D) a provision in a law that provides a subsidy to farmers or ranchers
 - (E) a piece of legislation containing several unrelated provisions that benefit a few states
15. All of the following statements about political actions committees (PACs) are true EXCEPT
- (A) they are formed by groups of like-minded people
 - (B) they must have at least fifty individual members
 - (C) they can give an unlimited amount of soft money to political parties
 - (D) PAC donations to individual candidates are limited to \$5,000
 - (E) labor PACs give most of their money to Democrats

Free-Response Questions

1. Interest groups attempt to influence the policy-making process in a number of ways and through multiple access points.
 - a. Pick one technique from the list below and explain how interest groups use this technique to advance their cause, giving a specific example.

- b. Pick another technique from the list below and explain how interest groups use this technique to advance their cause, giving a specific example.
- litigation
 - donating money through PACs
 - grassroots lobbying/public pressure
2. Although lobbying by interest groups is no longer considered synonymous with vote buying, it still has its critics.
- a. Define interest group.
 - b. Define political action committee (PAC).
 - c. Describe one negative influence of interest groups and PACs on the policy-making process.
 - d. Describe one benefit of interest groups and PACs on the policy-making process.

Answers

MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. (D) Interest groups occur because of diversity. They target all levels of government. American political parties are weaker than in many other countries, but interest groups may be stronger. However, interest groups do not usually run candidates for office (*American Government*, 11th ed., pages 259–260 / 12th ed., pages 261–262).
2. (C) Interest groups have been created by professional organizations, such as the AMA, and new government policies, such as wars that create veterans. Interest groups often have a strong leader—historically, the NAACP has had many—who is willing to make personal sacrifices. Interest groups are less likely to arise in good economic times (*American Government*, 11th ed., pages 260–263 / 12th ed., pages 262–264).
3. (B) Interest groups, such as AARP, often provide incentives to their members, such as magazines and travel discounts. This encourages people to pay a fee to become members of the group (*American Government*, 11th ed., page 265 / 12th ed., page 266).
4. (A) A social movement is a widely shared demand for change in some aspect of the social or political order. These movements, such as those led by environmentalists, women, and unions, often result in the creation of several related interest groups (*American Government*, 11th ed., pages 268–270 / 12th ed., pages 268–271).

5. (E) Members of Congress are policy generalists who must decide about a broad range of issues. Lobbyists have expertise in specific fields. Members of Congress need credible information and often rely on lobbyists to provide it (*American Government*, 11th ed., page 274 / 12th ed., pages 273–274).
6. (D) Not every issue lends itself to grassroots lobbying, which encourages individual interest group members to contact members of Congress. The more people are directly affected by a policy, the more likely an interest group will use grassroots lobbying (*American Government*, 11th ed., page 275 / 12th ed., page 275).
7. (C) Political action committees raise and spend money on behalf of candidates and causes. The Federal Election Commission regulates them (*American Government*, 11th ed., page 277 / 12th ed., pages 276–277).
8. (C) Interest groups educate the public, monitor government policy-making, and attempt to get favorable policies enacted. They do not run candidates for office, although they form PACs to contribute to campaigns (*American Government*, 11th ed., pages 274–278 / 12th ed., pages 273–278).
9. (E) Interest groups receive funding from foundation grants given by private groups, along with federal grants and contracts. In addition, they may use direct mail to solicit funds from their members (*American Government*, 11th ed., pages 271–272 / 12th ed., pages 271–273).
10. (A) Many people worry about the “revolving door,” the practice of officials leaving their government positions to accept more lucrative jobs as lobbyists. This may give them undue influence over policy-making (*American Government*, 11th ed., pages 278–279 / 12th ed., pages 278–279).
11. (A) When the purpose of the organization, if attained, will mostly benefit nonmembers, the group is known as a public interest lobby. The most visible of these organizations are highly controversial (*American Government*, 11th ed., page 266 / 12th ed., page 267).
12. (B) Beginning March 21, 2007, new regulations took effect to reform the practices of interest groups and lobbyists. Members of Congress may not accept gifts (including free travel) from interest groups or registered lobbyists (*American Government*, 11th ed., page 281 / 12th ed., page 281).

13. (D) Not every issue lends itself to public pressure, which encourages individual interest group members to contact members of Congress. Interest groups are more likely to use public pressure when a large number of people will be affected by a policy (*American Government*, 11th ed., page 276 / 12th ed., page 276).
14. (B) An earmark is a provision in a law that provides a direct benefit to a particular client, without that benefit being reviewed by most members of Congress (*American Government*, 12th ed., page 275).
15. (C) The Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2002 (McCain-Feingold) closed the "soft money loophole." PAC donations to political parties are limited to \$15,000 on the national level and \$5,000 on the state level (*American Government*, 11th ed., pages 277–278 / 12th ed., pages 276–278).

FREE RESPONSE

1. Part (a) Litigation means the bringing of a lawsuit. Interest groups go to the courts to advance their causes. This may happen when Congress is not responsive to the interest group's demands. For example, during the 1950s, civil rights groups supported legislation to bring equal rights to African Americans. However, these efforts were frequently blocked in Congress, sometimes through filibusters in the Senate. So the NAACP turned to the courts to end segregation. In *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court ruled that school segregation violated the Constitution.

Part (b) Interest groups may contribute money to candidates and causes through political action committees (PACs). Some people worry that the sea of all this political money has resulted in our having "the finest Congress that money can buy." This concern was raised during the savings and loan scandal when it was found that the same congressmen who delayed the investigation of the savings and loan industry had received substantial campaign contributions from these very institutions. However, so much PAC money is available on so many issues that members of Congress may be able to vote freely.

Alternate: Grassroots lobbying/public pressure is designed to generate public support directly on government officials. Interest groups contact their members, asking that they contact the members of Congress representing their district or state. Modern technology has made this even easier with e-mail. No one enjoys dealing with people who are upset, and members of Congress want to satisfy their constituents. An example of this is the American Association of Retired Persons and its use of grassroots lobbying in support of a prescription