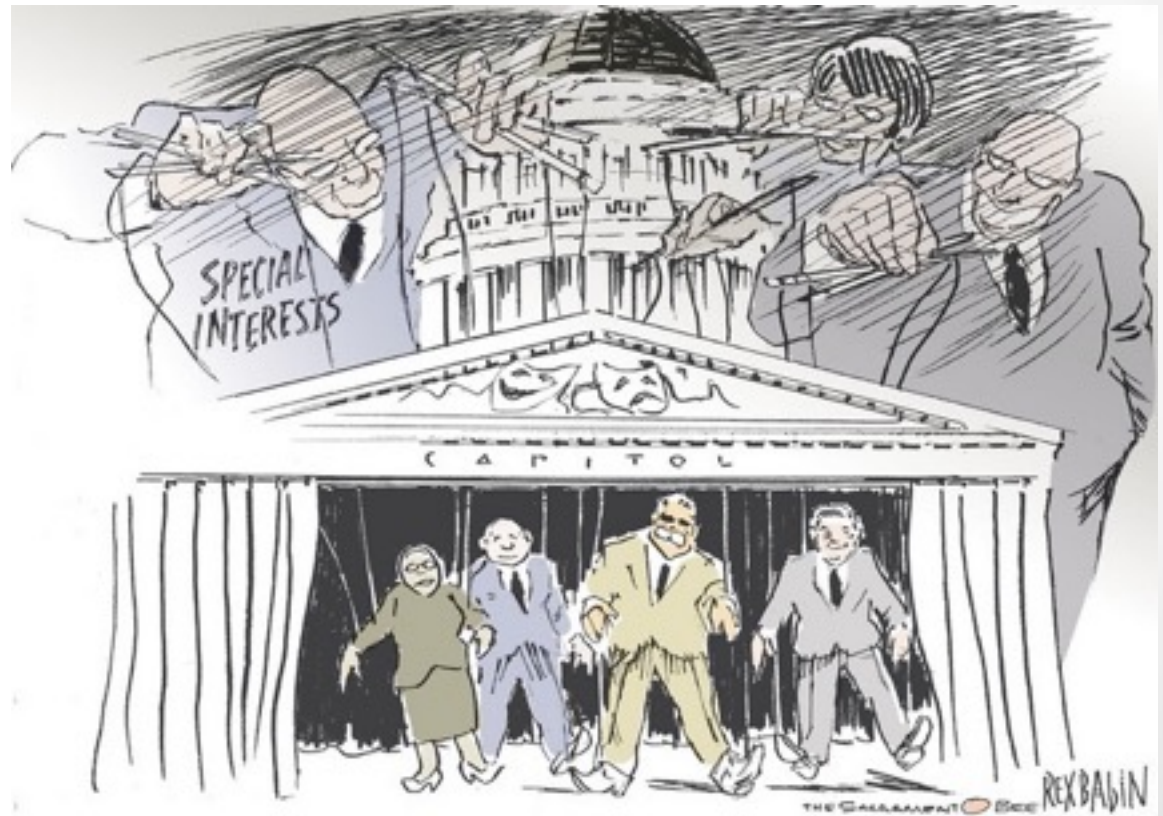


# Interest Groups

## Chapter 10

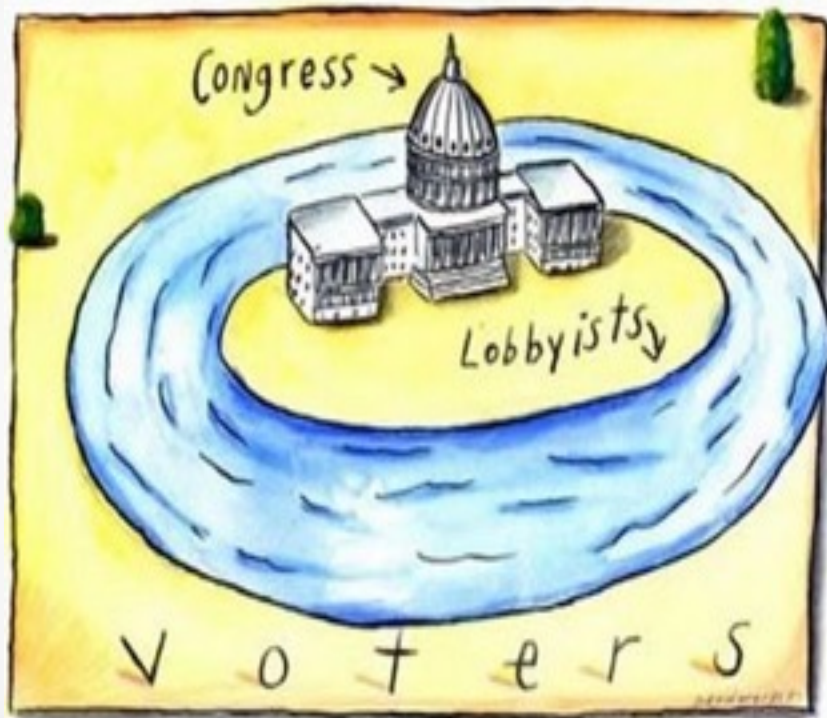


# The Role and Reputation of Interest Groups



- 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.

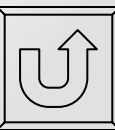


# Theories of Interest Group Politics- Pluralism



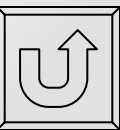
"So we're agreed: we'll go to mediation."

- 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

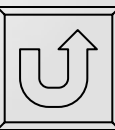
- Definition:
  - Societies are divided along class lines and the upper-class elite will rule.
  - Power is not equally divided among groups, some have much more.
  - Largest corporations and unions hold the most power.



# Theories of Interest Group Politics- Elitism

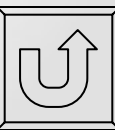
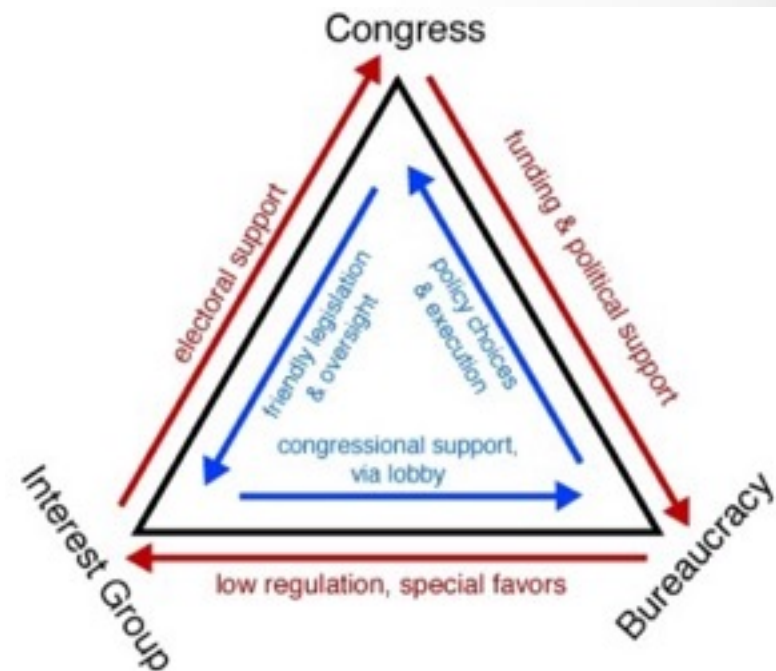


- Power is strengthened by the system of interlocking directorates of corporations and other institutions.
- Corporate elites are willing to lose minor policy battles, but work to win on major policy issues .
- Lobbying is a problem because it benefits few at the expense of many.



# 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.



# The Interest Group Explosion



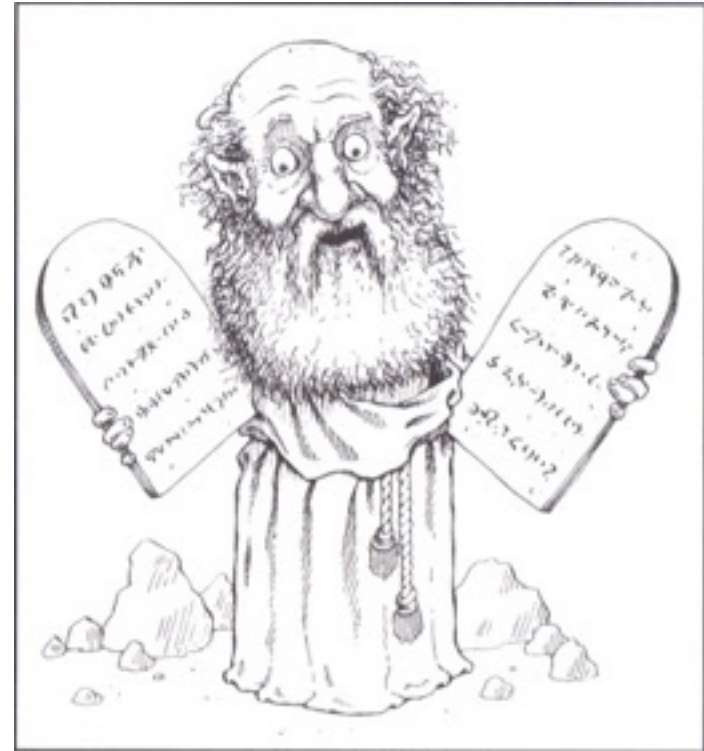
# How Groups Try to Shape Policy

- 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."



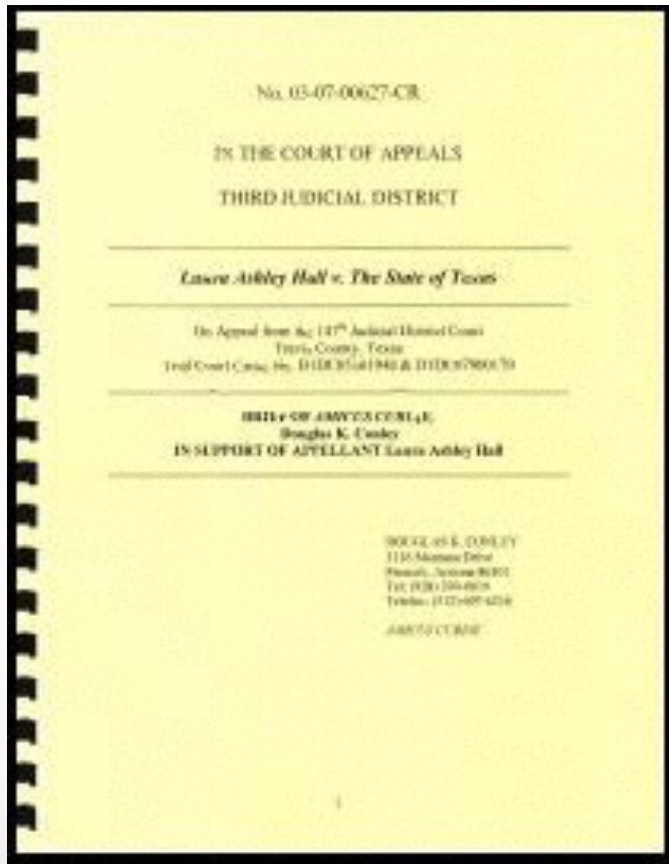
# How Groups Try to Shape Policy

- 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



# Types of 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)

