

Parties and Elections in America, Fourth Edition
Chapter Four

Outline

- 4 Organized Groups in the Political Process
 - I. Organized Groups in American Politics
 - A. Political and Nonpolitical Associations
 - B. Politically Active Groups
 - 1. Economic or Noneconomic Interests
 - 2. Multipurpose or Single-Purpose Groups
 - 3. Federal or National Groups
 - II. Electoral Activities of Organized Groups
 - A. Working within the Party
 - B. Group Ratings
 - C. Political Action Committees
 - III. Interest Groups' Influence on Their Members
 - IV. Politicians View Interest Groups

Key Concepts

FEDERAL GROUPS

Interest groups whose structure reflects a decentralized organization with local, state, or regional units contributing policy views to the federal unit

GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS

Concept that certain attitudes and opinions are adopted because they reflect the views of those in a group with which one associates

ISSUE ADVOCACY ADVERTISEMENTS

Advertisements in which the sponsor's primary interest is in forwarding an issue position, not supporting a particular candidate; money spent in this way is unregulated as long as it is separate and distinct from candidate efforts

LOBBYING

Taking actions to persuade legislators or those in government to pursue policies favored by one's group

MULTIPURPOSE GROUPS

Interest groups that reflect the views on a variety of issues on which their members express concern

NATIONAL GROUPS

Interest groups whose structure is centralized, without powerful local, state, or regional component units

POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES

Organizations that receive contributions from fifty or more individuals and contribute money to at least ten candidates for federal office; often, but not always, affiliated with lobbying organizations

PRESSURE GROUPS

Descriptive name by which interest groups were known in the past

PUBLIC INTEREST GROUPS

Organizations that lobby the government and work for a political agenda that is not defined by economic or other narrowly defined interests

RALPH NADER

Consumer advocate who has pressured government for reform agenda since the 1960s

SELF-IDENTIFICATION

Responses that individuals give about their own sense of whom they are or to what groups they belong

SINGLE-PURPOSE GROUPS

Interest groups that concentrate their efforts on one particular issue

Questions for Discussion

1. What groups do you consider yourself to be a member of? Is there formal membership in these groups? How did you get to be a member?
2. Interest-group leaders claim that they represent their members in the political process. Are there particular interest-group leaders who you think represent you? How do they know what you think?

3. Do you believe that PAC leaders should have to poll those who contribute to a PAC before they determine whom they will support? If so, why? If not, how should they decide who will receive their money?

4. How much pressure do you think legislators feel to vote along interest-group lines? How is the pressure exerted? Do you think it is a positive or a negative influence on American politics and/or on the legislative process?