

AP American Government: Unit IV
Political Participation (Ch 7, 8, &11)



- Thursday 10/2 Review Unit 1 Multiple Choice Questions.
Discuss Movie Review: Pay to Play.
Assign **Quiz 155-167**, finish as **Take Home**
- Friday 10/3 **Collect: Take-home quiz**, Ch7 pp. 155 - 167
(Up to Political Ideology). **In Class Activity:** James Q. Wilson's
"**Contradictions of an Advanced Capitalist State**" *Thesis and critical review 1 page*. Start in
class and finish for homework. Due Monday.
- Monday 10/6 Quiz, Ch7 pp. 167-175. "**Contradictions of Advanced
Capitalist State**" Due
CBS: Faith, Politics, and the Christian Right.
- Tuesday 10/7 Quiz, Ch8 pp. 178-194
CBS: Faith, Politics, and the Christian Right.
- Wednesday 10/8 one page critical review due on Charles Krauthammer's article, "**In
Praise of Low Voter Turnout.**" (In unit packet)
Introduce PAC Bonus Activity
- Thursday 10/9 Quiz, Ch11 pp. 265-276 (Funds for Interest Groups)
Frontline: Washington's Other Scandal
- Friday 10/10 *Critical review due* on "**Running with the PAC's,**" by Walter
Isaacson, in Woll pp. 272-282 (In packet).
Frontline: Washington's Other Scandal
- Monday 10/13 Quiz, Ch11 pp. 276-287.
Frontline: Washington's Other Scandal
- Tuesday 10/14 Summary of "**The Misplaced Obsession with PACs**" by Larry J.
Sabato (in packet, I hope).
Video: The Power Game: The Unelected. (An oldie but not moldy)
Worksheet in packet.
- Wednesday 10/15 **Video: The Power Game: The Unelected.**
Worksheet in packet. Collected for points!

Thursday 10/16.

PAC Bonus Activity due.

PART TWO

Opinions, Interests, and Organizations

5

Public Opinion

I. Reviewing the Chapter

A. Chapter Focus

The purpose of this chapter is to explore what we mean by *public opinion* and to ask what sorts of effects public opinion has on our supposedly democratic form of government. After reading and reviewing the material in this chapter, you should be able to do each of the following:

1. List the sources of our political attitudes, and indicate which are the most important sources. Assess the influence of various religious traditions on political attitudes.
2. Explain why there is no single cleavage between liberals and conservatives in this country and why there are crosscutting cleavages. Explain the significance of these facts. Assess the significance of race in explaining political attitudes.
3. Define *political ideology* and state why most Americans do not think ideologically. Summarize the "liberal" positions on the economy, civil rights, and political conduct. Describe the major "policy packages" in the Democratic party, and indicate which groups in the Democratic coalition can be identified with each package.

4. Identify which elite groups have become liberal, and compare their current attitudes with the past political preferences of these groups. Discuss the "new class theory" as an explanation for changes in attitudes. Analyze why these changes are causing strain in the political party system.

B. Study Outline

- I. What is public opinion?
 - A. Government does not always do what people want
 1. Unbalanced budget
 2. Opposition to busing
 3. Support for ERA
 4. Aid to Nicaragua
 - B. Reasons public policy and public opinion may differ
 1. Many constitutional checks on public opinion, many publics
 2. Limits on effectiveness of opinion polling; difficult to know public opinion
 3. Government listens more to elite views
 - C. Influences and limitations
 1. Public ignorance: Monetary Control Bill ruse, poor name recognition of leaders
 2. Importance of wording of questions, affects answer
 3. Instability of public opinion
 4. Public has more important things to think about—need clear-cut political choices
 5. Specific attitudes less important than political culture
- II. The origins of political attitudes
 - A. The role of the family
 1. Child absorbs party identification of family but becomes more independent with age
 2. Much continuity between generations
 3. Declining ability to pass on identification
 4. Younger voters exhibit less partisanship; more likely to be independent
 5. Meaning of partisanship unclear in most families; less influence on policy preferences
 6. Few families pass on clear ideologies
 - B. Religion
 1. Religious traditions affect families
 - a. Catholic families somewhat more liberal
 - b. Protestant families more conservative
 - c. Jewish families decidedly more liberal
 2. Two theories on differences
 - a. Social status of religious group
 - b. Content of religion's tradition
 - C. The "gender gap"
 1. Has existed as long as voting records exist
 2. Changing: partisan advantage
 - a. Women are likely to be Republicans in 1950s
 - b. Women are likely to be Democrats in 1990s
 - c. Change results from shift in party positions on gender issues
 - d. Women give more votes to female candidates, which may be result of more women candidates being Democrats
 - D. Schooling and information
 1. College education has liberalizing effect; longer in college, more liberal
 2. Effect extends beyond end of college
 3. Cause of this liberalization?
 - a. Personal traits: temperament, family, intelligence
 - b. Exposure to information on politics
 - c. Liberalism of professors

4. Effect growing as more go to college
 5. Increasing conservatism since 1960s?
 - a. Yes (legalizing marijuana) and . . .
 - b. No (school busing)
- III. Cleavages in public opinion
- A. Social class: less important in United States than in Europe
 1. More important in 1950s on unemployment, education, housing programs
 2. Less important in 1960s on poverty, health insurance, Vietnam, jobs
 3. Why the change?
 - a. Education—occupation depends more on schooling
 - b. Noneconomic issues now define liberal and conservative
 - B. Race and ethnicity
 1. Becoming more important even on nonracial matters
 2. Blacks most consistently liberal group; little cleavage
 3. Other minorities less liberal
 - C. Region
 1. Southerners more conservative than northerners: military and civil rights issues but difference fading overall
 2. Southern lifestyle different
 3. Lessening attachment to Democratic party
- IV. Political ideology
- A. Consistent attitudes
 1. Ideology: patterned set of political beliefs about who ought to rule, their principles and policies
 2. Most citizens display little ideology; moderates dominate
 3. Yet may have strong political predispositions
 4. "Consistency" criterion somewhat arbitrary
 5. Some believe ideology increased in 1960s
 6. Others argue that poll questions were merely worded differently
 - B. What do *liberalism* and *conservatism* mean?
 1. *Liberal* and *conservative* labels have complex history
 - a. Europe during French Revolution: conservative = church, state authority
 - b. Roosevelt and New Deal: activism = liberalism
 - c. Conservative reaction to activism (Goldwater): free market, states' rights, economic choice
 - d. Today's imprecise and changing meanings
 - C. Various categories
 1. Three useful categories emerge from studies
 - a. Economic policy: liberals favor jobs for all, subsidized medical care and education, taxation of rich
 - b. Civil rights: liberals prefer desegregation, equal opportunity, and so on
 - c. Public and political conduct: liberals tolerant of demonstrations, favor legalization of marijuana, and so on
 - D. Analyzing consistency: people can "mix" categories
 1. Pure liberals: liberal on both economic and personal conduct issues
 2. Pure conservatives: conservative on both economic and personal conduct issues
 3. Libertarians: conservative on economic issues, liberal on personal conduct issues
 4. Populists: liberal on economic issues, conservative on personal conduct issues
 - E. Political elites
 1. Definition: those who have a disproportionate amount of some valued resource
 2. Elites, or activists, display greater ideological consistency
 - a. They have more information than most people
 - b. Their peers reinforce consistency
 - F. Is there a "new class"?
 1. Definition: those who are advantaged by the power, resources, and growth of government (not business)

2. Two explanations of well-off individuals who are liberals
 - a. Their direct benefits from government
 - b. Liberal ideology infusing postgraduate education
 3. Traditional middle class: four years of college, suburban, church affiliated, probusiness, conservative on social issues, Republican
 4. Liberal middle class: postgraduate education, urban, critical of business, liberal on social issues, Democratic
 5. Emergence of new class creates strain in Democratic party
- V. Political elites, public opinion, and public policy
- A. Elites influence public opinion in two ways
 1. Raise and form political issues
 2. State norms by which to settle issues, defining policy options
 3. Elite views shape mass views
 - B. Limits to elite influence on the public
 1. Elites do not define problems
 2. Many elites exist, hence many elite opinions

C. Key Terms Match

Match the following terms and descriptions:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------|---|
| a. conservative | 1. ___ | The political party for which one or one's family usually votes |
| b. crosscutting cleavages | 2. ___ | People who say that they have been "born again" and who see certain moral questions as political issues |
| c. Evangelical Christians | 3. ___ | Differences in political views between men and women |
| d. gender gap | 4. ___ | Differences in political preferences based on more than one variable |
| e. liberal | 5. ___ | A coherent and consistent set of beliefs about who ought to rule, what principles rulers should obey, and what policies they ought to pursue |
| f. libertarian | 6. ___ | People who have a disproportionate amount of political power |
| g. middle America | 7. ___ | Middle-income people who usually live in suburbs, attend church, favor business, and have mostly conservative political views |
| h. new class | 8. ___ | Middle-income people who live in cities, skip church, and have mostly liberal political views |
| i. norm | 9. ___ | Young urban professionals |
| j. party identification | 10. ___ | One who is liberal on both economic and personal conduct issues |
| k. political elites | 11. ___ | One who is conservative on both economic and personal conduct issues |
| l. political ideology | 12. ___ | One who is conservative on economic issues, liberal on personal conduct issues |
| m. poll | 13. ___ | One who is liberal on economic issues, conservative on personal conduct issues |
| n. populist | 14. ___ | One who favors more limited and local government, less government regulation of markets, and more social conformity to traditional norms and values |
| o. pure conservative | | |
| p. pure liberal | | |
| q. random sample | | |
| r. religious tradition | | |
| s. sampling error | | |
| t. silent majority | | |
| u. social status | | |
| v. traditional middle class | | |
| w. yuppies | | |

(continued)

15. ___ One who favors more government regulation of business and support for social welfare but less regulation of private social conduct
16. ___ Americans who have moved out of poverty but are not yet affluent and who cherish middle-class values
17. ___ A standard of right or proper conduct that helps determine the range of acceptable social behavior and policy options
18. ___ A survey of public opinion
19. ___ A sample selected in such a way that any member of the population being surveyed has an equal chance of being interviewed
20. ___ The moral teachings of religious institutions on religious, social, and economic issues
21. ___ The difference between the results of two surveys or samples
22. ___ A phrase used to describe people, whatever their economic status, who uphold traditional values, especially against the counterculture of the 1960s
23. ___ A measure of one's social standing obtained by combining such factors as education, income, and occupation

D. Did You Think That . . . ?

Below are listed a number of misconceptions. You should be able to refute each statement in the space provided, referring to information or argumentation contained in this chapter. Sample answers appear at the end of the Handbook.

1. "The Founders intended that the government was to be run by the will of the majority."

2. "Differences of opinion in the United States are clearly related to differences in class."

3. "Most Americans take consistently liberal or conservative positions on issues."

4. "Affluent people are always politically conservative."

6

Political Participation

I. Reviewing the Chapter

A. Chapter Focus

This chapter reviews the much-discussed lack of voter turnout and other forms of political participation in the United States and concludes that individual Americans may not be at fault for their seeming nonparticipation, but that other factors may be at work. After reading and reviewing the material in this chapter, you should be able to do each of the following:

1. Explain why the text believes that the description, the analysis, and the proposed remedy for low voter turnout rates in this country are off base.
2. Compare the way turnout statistics are tabulated for this country and for other countries, and explain the significance of these differences.
3. Describe how control of elections has shifted from the states to the federal government, and explain what effects this shift has had on blacks, women, and youths.
4. State both sides of the debate over whether voter turnout has declined over the past century, and describe those factors that tend to hold down voter turnout in this country.
5. List and explain Nie and Verba's four categories of political participation.
6. Discuss those factors that appear to be associated with high or low political participation.
7. Compare participation rates in various forms of political activity here and in other countries.

B. Study Outline

- I. A closer look at nonvoting
 - A. Alleged problem: low turnout compared with Europeans
 1. But this compares registered voters with eligible adult population
 - B. Common explanation: voter apathy on election day
 1. But the real problem is low registration rates
 - C. Proposed solution: get-out-the-vote drives
 1. But this will not help those who are not registered
 - D. Apathy not the only cause of nonregistration
 1. Costs here versus no costs in European countries where registration automatic
 2. Motor-voter law of 1993 takes effect in 1995
 - E. Voting is not the only way of participating
- II. The rise of the American electorate
 - A. From state to federal control
 1. Initially, states decided nearly everything
 2. This led to wide variation in federal elections

3. Congress has since reduced state prerogatives
 - a. 1842 law: House members elected by district
 - b. Suffrage to women
 - c. Suffrage to blacks
 - d. Suffrage to eighteen- to twenty-year-olds
 - e. Direct popular election of U.S. senators
 4. Black voting rights
 - a. Fifteenth Amendment gutted by Supreme Court as not conferring a right to vote
 - b. Southern states then use evasive strategies
 - (1) Literacy test
 - (2) Poll tax
 - (3) White primaries
 - (4) Grandfather clauses
 - (5) Intimidation of black voters
 - c. Most of these strategies ruled out by Supreme Court
 - d. Major change with 1965 Voting Rights Act; black vote increases
 5. Women's voting rights
 - a. Western states permit women to vote
 - b. Nineteenth Amendment ratified 1920
 - c. No dramatic changes in outcomes
 6. Youth vote
 - a. Voting Rights Act of 1970
 - b. Twenty-sixth Amendment ratified 1971
 - c. Lower turnout; no particular party
 7. National standards now govern most aspects
- B. Voting turnout
1. Debate over declining percentages: two theories
 - a. Real decline as popular interest and party competition decrease
 - b. Apparent decline, induced in part by more honest ballot counts of today
 - (1) Parties once printed ballots
 - (2) Ballots cast in public
 - (3) Parties controlled counting
 - c. Most scholars see several reasons for some real decline
 - (1) Registration more difficult; longer residency; educational qualifications; discrimination
 - (2) Continuing drop after 1960 cannot be explained
- III. Who participates in politics?
- A. Forms of participation
1. Voting the most common, but 8 to 10 percent misreport it
 2. Verba and Nie's six forms of participation
 - a. Inactives
 - b. Voting specialists
 - c. Campaigners
 - d. Communalists
 - e. Parochial participants
 - f. Complete activists
- B. Causes of participation
1. Schooling, or political information, more likely to vote
 2. Church-goers vote more
 3. Men and women vote same rate
 4. Race
 - a. Black participation lower than that of whites overall
 - b. But controlling for SES, higher than whites
 5. Level of trust in government?
 - a. Studies show no correlation

6. Difficulty of registering?
 - a. As turnout declines, registration gets easier
 7. Several small factors decrease turnout
 - a. More youths, blacks, and other minorities
 - b. Decreasing effectiveness of parties
 - c. Remaining impediments to registration
 - d. Voting compulsory in other nations
 - e. Ethnic minorities encounter language barriers, whereas blacks are involved in nonpolitical institutions
 - f. May feel that elections do not matter
 8. Democrats, Republicans fight over solutions
 - a. No one really knows who would be helped
 - b. Nonvoters tend to be poor, black, and so on
 - c. But increasing percentage of college graduates are also not voting
 - d. Hard to be sure that turnout efforts produce gains for either party: Jesse Jackson in 1984
- C. The meaning of participation rates
1. Americans vote less but participate more
 - a. Other forms of activity becoming more common
 - b. Some forms more common here than in other countries
 2. Americans elect more officials than Europeans do and have more elections
 3. U.S. turnout rates heavily skewed to higher status
 - a. Meaning of this is unclear

C. Key Terms Match

Match the following terms and descriptions:

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---------|--|
| a. activist | 1. ___ | The lack of interest among the citizenry in participating in elections |
| b. Australian ballot | 2. ___ | Those citizens not disqualified from voting (too young, in prison, and so forth) |
| c. campaigners | 3. ___ | Those citizens actually registered to vote |
| d. communalists | 4. ___ | Requirement that voters be able to read; formerly used in the South to disenfranchise blacks |
| e. complete activists | 5. ___ | Proof of tax payment, to be produced when voting; used to disenfranchise blacks |
| f. eligible electorate | 6. ___ | A southern expedient to keep blacks from participating in primary elections |
| g. Fifteenth Amendment | 7. ___ | Requirement that for an individual to automatically qualify to vote, his or her grandparent had to have voted (excluded former slaves and their descendants) |
| h. grandfather clauses | 8. ___ | Legislation that made it illegal to exclude potential voters on the basis of race |
| i. inactives | 9. ___ | Legislation that extended suffrage to women |
| j. literacy tests | 10. ___ | Legislation that gave eighteen-year-olds the right to vote in federal elections |
| k. motor-voter bill | 11. ___ | Legislation that gave eighteen-year-olds the right to vote in all U.S. elections |
| l. Nineteenth Amendment | | |
| m. parochial participants | | |
| n. poll tax | | |
| o. registered voters | | |
| p. Twenty-sixth Amendment | | |
| q. voting-age population | | |
| r. voter apathy | | |

(continued)

- s. Voting Rights Act of 1970
 - t. voting specialists
 - u. white primaries
12. ___ A document that is government printed, of uniform size, and cast in secret
 13. ___ Those who avoid all forms of political participation
 14. ___ Those who restrict their political participation to voting in elections
 15. ___ Those who both vote in elections and get involve^d in campaigns
 16. ___ Those who join organizations and participate in politics but not in partisan campaigns
 17. ___ Those who avoid elections and civic organizations but will contact officials regarding specific problems
 18. ___ Those who take part in all forms of political activity
 19. ___ An individual who actively promotes a political party, philosophy, or issue she or he cares personally about
 20. ___ A bill that requires states to allow voter registration by mail, when applying for a driver's license, and at some state offices that serve the disabled or poor
 21. ___ The citizens who are eligible to vote after reaching a minimum age requirement

D. Did You Think That . . . ?

Below are listed a number of misconceptions. You should be able to refute each statement in the space provided, referring to information or argumentation contained in this chapter. Sample answers appear at the end of the Handbook.

1. "There has been an increase in voter turnout in elections throughout American history."

2. "Throughout the twentieth century blacks have been able to exercise the right to vote with little difficulty."

3. "Because the United States holds more elections for more offices than most other nations, its party system is stronger than that of most other nations."

4. "Registered American voters vote less frequently than do their counterparts in Europe."

9

Interest Groups

I. Reviewing the Chapter

A. Chapter Focus

The purpose of this chapter is to survey the wide variety of interest groups or lobbies that operate in the United States and to assess the effect they have on the political system of the country. After reading and reviewing the material in this chapter you should be able to do each of the following:

1. Explain why the characteristics of American society and government encourage a multiplicity of interest groups, and compare the American and British experiences in this regard.
2. Describe the historical conditions under which interest groups are likely to form, and specify the kinds of organizations Americans are most likely to join.
3. Describe relations between leaders and rank-and-file members of groups, including why the sentiments of members may not determine the actions of leaders.
4. Describe several methods that interest groups use to formulate and carry out their political objectives, especially the lobbying techniques used to gain public support. Explain why courts have become an important forum for public interest groups.
5. List the laws regulating conflict of interest, and describe the problems involved with "revolving door" government employment. Describe the provisions of the 1978 conflict-of-interest law. Explain the suggestions that have been made for stricter laws. Describe the balance between the First Amendment's freedom of expression and the need to prevent corruption in the political system.

B. Study Outline

- I. Explaining proliferation
 - A. Why interest groups are common in America
 1. Many kinds of cleavage in the country
 2. Constitution makes for many access points
 3. Political parties are weak
- II. The birth of interest groups
 - A. Periods of rapid growth
 1. Since 1960, 70 percent have established an office in Washington D.C.
 2. 1770s— independence groups
 3. 1830s, 1840s—religious, antislavery groups
 4. 1860s—craft unions
 5. 1880s, 1890s—business associations
 6. 1900—1920—most major lobbies of today

- B. Factors explaining the rise of interest groups
 - 1. Broad economic developments create new interests
 - a. Farmers produce cash crops
 - b. Mass production industries begin
 - 2. Government policy itself
 - a. Created veterans' groups—wars
 - b. Encouraged formation of Farm Bureau
 - c. Launched Chamber of Commerce
 - d. Favored growth of unions
 - 3. Emergence of strong leaders, usually at certain times
 - 4. Expanding role of government
- III. Kinds of organizations
 - A. Institutional interests
 - 1. Defined: individuals or organizations representing other organizations
 - 2. Types
 - a. Businesses: example, General Motors
 - b. Trade or governmental associations
 - 3. Concerns—bread-and-butter issues of concern to their clients
 - a. Clearly defined, with homogeneous groups
 - b. Diffuse, with diversified groups
 - 4. Other interests—governments, foundations, universities
 - B. Membership interests
 - 1. Americans join some groups more frequently than in other nations
 - a. Social, business, etc.—same rate as elsewhere
 - b. Unions—less likely to join
 - c. Religious/civic groups—more likely to join
 - d. Greater sense of efficacy, duty explain tendency to join civic groups
 - 2. Most sympathizers do not join because
 - a. Individuals not that significant
 - b. Benefits flow to nonmembers too
 - C. Incentives to join
 - 1. Solidary incentives—pleasure, companionship (League of Women Voters, AARP, NAACP, Rotary, etc.)
 - 2. Material incentives—money, things, services (farm organizations, retired persons, etc.)
 - 3. Purpose of the organization itself—public-interest organizations
 - a. Ideological interest groups' appeal is controversial principles
 - b. Engage in research and bring lawsuits
 - D. The influence of the staff
 - 1. Staff has most influence if members joined for solidary or material benefits
 - 2. National Council of Churches and unions are examples
- IV. Interest groups and social movements
 - A. Social movement is a widely shared demand for change
 - B. The environment movement
 - C. The feminist movement; three kinds
 - 1. Solidary—LWV and others (widest support)
 - 2. Purposive—NOW, NARAL (strong position on divisive issues)
 - 3. Caucus—WEAL (material benefits)
 - D. Union movement; left over after social movement dies
- V. Funds for interest groups
 - A. Foundation grants
 - 1. Ford Foundation and public interest groups
 - 2. Scaife foundations and conservative groups
 - B. Federal grants and contracts
 - 1. National Alliance for Business and summer youth job programs
 - 2. Jesse Jackson's PUSH

- C. Direct mail
 - 1. Unique to modern interest groups through use of computers
 - 2. Common Cause a classic example
 - 3. Techniques
 - a. Teaser
 - b. Emotional arousal
 - c. Celebrity endorsement
 - d. Personalization of letter
- VI. The problem of bias
 - A. Reasons for belief in upper-class bias
 - 1. More affluent more likely to join
 - 2. Business/professional groups more numerous; better financed
 - B. Why these facts do not decide the issue
 - 1. Describe inputs but not outputs
 - 2. Business groups often divided among themselves
 - C. Important to ask what the bias is
 - 1. Many conflicts are within upper middle class
 - 2. Resource differentials are clues, not conclusions
- VII. The activities of interest groups
 - A. Information
 - 1. Single most important tactic
 - a. Nonpolitical sources insufficient; provide detailed, current information
 - 2. Most effective on narrow, technical issues
 - 3. Officials also need "cues"; ratings systems
 - B. Public support
 - 1. Politicians dislike controversy
 - 2. Key targets: the undecided
 - 3. Some groups attack their likely allies to embarrass them
 - 4. Legislators sometimes buck public opinion, unless issue important
 - 5. Some groups try for grassroots support
 - a. Saccharin issue
 - b. "Dirty Dozen" environmental polluters
 - C. Money and PACs
 - 1. Money is least effective way to influence politicians
 - 2. Campaign finance reform law of 1973 had two effects
 - a. Restricted amount interest groups can give to candidates
 - b. Made it legal for corporations and unions to create PACs
 - 3. Rapid growth in PACs has not led to vote buying
 - a. More money is available on all sides
 - b. Members of Congress take money but still decide how to vote
 - 4. Almost any organization can create a PAC
 - a. More than half of all PACs sponsored by corporations
 - b. Recent increase in ideological PACs; one-third liberal, two-thirds conservative
 - 5. Ideological PACs raise more but spend less because of cost of raising money
 - 6. In 1992 unions and business organizations gave most
 - 7. Incumbents get most PAC money
 - a. Business PACs split money between Democrats and Republicans
 - b. Democrats get most PAC money
 - 8. PAC contributions small
 - 9. No evidence PAC money influences votes in Congress
 - a. Most members vote their ideology
 - b. When issue of little concern to voters, slight correlation but may be misleading
 - c. PAC money may influence in other ways, such as access
 - d. PAC money most likely to influence on client politics

- D. The revolving door
 - 1. Promise of future jobs to officials
 - 2. Few conspicuous examples of abuse
- E. Trouble
 - 1. Disruption always part of American politics
 - 2. Used by groups of varying ideologies
 - 3. Better accepted since 1960s
 - 4. History of "proper" persons using disruption—suffrage, civil rights, antiwar movements
 - 5. Officials dread "no-win" situations
- VIII. Regulating interest groups
 - A. Protection by First Amendment
 - 1. 1946 law accomplished little in requiring registration
 - a. Supreme Court restricted application to direct contact
 - b. Grassroots activity not restricted
 - c. No staff to enforce law
 - B. Recent suggestions
 - 1. Disclosure of contributors
 - a. Likely to dry up contributions
 - 2. Complex reporting requirements
 - a. Disadvantage to small groups
 - C. Significant restraints
 - 1. Tax code: threat of losing tax exempt status
 - 2. Campaign finance laws

C. Key Terms Match

Match the following terms and descriptions. (Note: One of the descriptions should be matched with two terms.)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| a. client politics | 1. ___ Any group that seeks to influence public policy |
| b. cue (political) | 2. ___ Individuals or groups representing other organizations |
| c. direct mail | 3. ___ Interest groups made up of those who join voluntarily |
| d. "Dirty Dozen" | 4. ___ The sense of pleasure, status, or companionship arising from group membership |
| e. Federal Regulation of Lobbying Act | 5. ___ Money, things, or services obtainable from interest group membership |
| f. grassroots support | 6. ___ The goals of an organization that, if attained, would benefit primarily nongroup members |
| g. ideological interest groups | 7. ___ Organizations that attract members mostly by the appeal of their broad, controversial principles |
| h. incentive (political) | 8. ___ Organizations that gather information on consumer topics (first organized by Ralph Nader) |
| i. institutional interests | 9. ___ The solicitation of funding through letter campaigns |
| j. interest groups | 10. ___ The situation that arises when a government agency services as well as regulates a distinct group |
| k. lobbies | 11. ___ Backing for a public policy that arises or is created in public opinion |
| l. lobbyist | 12. ___ A list, compiled by an environmental interest group, of those legislators who voted most frequently against its measures |
| m. material benefit incentives | |
| n. membership interests | |
| o. PACs | |
| p. PIRGs | |

(continued)

- q. public-interest lobby
- r. purposive incentive
- s. ratings
- t. revolving-door influence
- u. social movement
- v. solidary incentives

- 13. ___ Groups that can collect political donations and make campaign contributions to candidates for office
- 14. ___ The practice of lobbying officials with such promises as employment after their government service
- 15. ___ The 1946 attempt by Congress to regulate the activities of interest groups
- 16. ___ A signal to a member of Congress that identifies which values are at stake in a vote
- 17. ___ A valued benefit obtained by joining a political organization
- 18. ___ A person attempting to influence government decisions on behalf of an interest group
- 19. ___ The sense of satisfaction derived from serving a cause from which one does not benefit personally
- 20. ___ An assessment of a representative's voting record on issues important to an interest group
- 21. ___ A widely shared demand for change in some aspect of the social or political order

D. Did You Think That . . . ?

Below are listed a number of misconceptions. You should be able to refute each statement in the space provided, referring to information or argumentation contained in this chapter. Sample answers appear at the end of the Handbook.

1. "All major interests are represented by national associations of interest groups."

2. "Interest groups automatically give expression to the sentiments of their membership."

3. "The unorganized are completely unrepresented in American politics."

4. "The most effective way for interest groups to advance their causes is to buy influence with money."

Essay

Charles Krauthammer

In Praise of Low Voter Turnout

Washington, it seems, is a city in decline. History has taken up residence in Budapest and Tokyo, Brussels and Seoul. After a brief spurt of prominence and wealth owed to the Depression, Hitler and the cold war, Washington, we are told, has lapsed into a somnambular state.

This is an exaggeration, but not too far from the truth. Government has grown huge, and a presidential hiccup can still panic the stock market, but Washington has far less impact on the direction of America and the world than it did a generation ago.

The marginalization of Washington is sometimes taken as proof of American decline. Nonsense. With the implosion of its only superpower rival, America stands alone in the world, its relative power—which the decline theorists insist is the only relevant measure—unsurpassed. (One reason, for example, that hostages are being released is that the thug regimes of the world realize that suddenly there is only one superpower left and they had better warm up to it.)

The marginalization of Washington reflects not the decline of America but the decline of politics. In the West—and it is soon to be true in the East, now that they've got the easy part, revolution, out of the way—history is not made by politics. It is made by economics, by demographics and, above all, by science and technology. Politics lubricates, corrupts mildly and takes a slice of the action. But it does not create new worlds as it did, horribly, in 1917 and 1933 and, blessedly, in 1946-49 when the U.S. established the structures of the postwar world. Politics has become, like much of life, maintenance. The house is built; Republicans and Democrats argue now over who is to repair the roof and how to pay for it.

Moreover, the great political debates are over. The romance with isms, with the secular religions of socialism, egalitarianism and totalitarianism, is dead. The fierce battles over whether, for example, the U.S. should lead the crusade against communism are finished too. American politics is no longer about bearing any burden in defense of liberty. American politics is about the Clean Air Act.

This is not to deride clean air. Clean air is important, and the clean air bill now working its way through Congress is a quite satisfying triumph of democratic compromise, smog-producing Detroit working out with smog-ingesting Los Angeles a political arrangement that the whole country can live with. But the great dichotomies of war and peace, left and right, good and evil are gone. Politicians still try to use these categories to carry the fight, but no one believes them.

This triumph of apolitical bourgeois democracy has been a source of dismay to some. They pine for the heroic age when great ideologies clashed and the life of nations turned on a vote in Congress. On the contrary. I couldn't be happier that the political century is over, and that all that's left is to shuffle cards on the cruise ship. The great disease of the 20th century was the politicization of life. The totalitarians, left and right, showed the way, politicizing everything: economics, education, art, religion, family life. Not even genetics could escape

politics. One remembers with disbelief not just Hitler's eugenic lunacies but also Stalin's designation of Lysenko's crackpot genetics as official truth, enforced by secret police.

After such a century, it is a form of salvation, of social health, for politics to be in acute and precipitous decline. As a Portuguese ex-leftist said of his country's recent renaissance, "Portugal's success is that its politics no longer dominate everything."

At its headiest, the aim of 20th century politics was the transformation of man and society by means of power. This great project—politics as redemption—has ended in failure on a breathtaking scale: not just economic and political but also ecological, spiritual and, not surprising for an enterprise of such overweening hubris, moral. The deeper meaning of the overthrow of communism is the realization that man can shape neither history nor society by Five-Year Plans, and that attempts to contradict this truth must end in the grotesque. The revulsion with politics reflects the view that when politicians go about tinkering with something as organic as a poor family or a rural community by means of a federal welfare program or an enormous dam, the law of unintended consequences prevails.

George Bush's great good fortune is that he is a man utterly incapable of vision at a time when the people do not want vision and do not need it. Vision is for Khomeini and Castro, for Jesse Jackson and Pat Robertson. Happily, if only for now, Americans will have none of it.

Which is why when almost every pundit wrings his hands in despair at low voter turnout—some even feel obliged to propose creative schemes to induce people to vote—I am left totally unmoved. Low voter turnout means that people see politics as quite marginal to their lives, as neither salvation nor ruin. That is healthy. Low voter turnout is a leading indicator of contentment. For a country founded on the notion that that government is best that governs least, it seems entirely proper that Americans should in large numbers register a preference against politics by staying home on Election Day.

A few weeks ago, a producer from public television came to ask my advice about planning coverage for the 1992 elections. Toward the end, she raised a special problem: how to get young adults interested in political coverage. I offered the opinion that 19-year-olds who sit in front of a television watching politics could use professional help. At that age they should be playing ball and looking for a date. They'll have time enough at my age to worry about the mortgage and choosing a candidate on the basis of his views on monetary policy.

To say that, of course, is to violate current League of Women Voters standards of good citizenship. Let others struggle valiantly to raise the political awareness of all citizens. Let them rage against the tides of indifference. They will fail, and when they do, relax. Remember that indifference to politics leaves all the more room for the things that really count: science, art, religion, family and play. ■

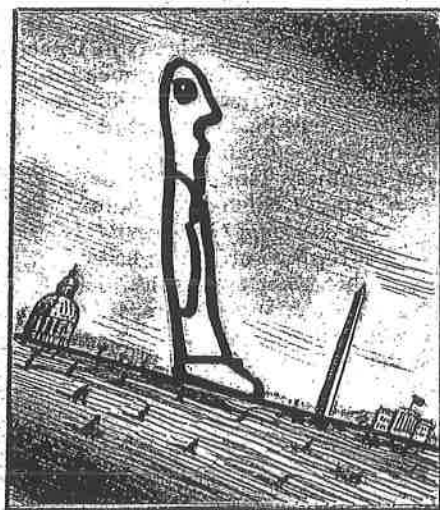


ILLUSTRATION FOR TIME BY EUGENE HINAREZO

The contradictions of an advanced capitalist state

"... There is some exaggeration in most of these complaints, but there is much truth in all of them. To this extent the public's grouching is well founded. Why do these problems exist? There are three reasons: prosperity, freedom and democracy..."

James Q. Wilson

James Q. Wilson, a professor of management at UCLA, is a distinguished political scientist and criminologist who has also advised presidents on urban policy. Among his best-known works are American Government: Institutions and Policies, Thinking about Crime and, most recently, On Character.

Karl Marx thought that the contradictions of capitalism were the inevitability of declining profits and exhausted markets. He got it only slightly wrong: Those turned out to be the problems of communist states. The problems of advanced capitalist, democratic societies are not economic at all, they are political and cultural.

The U.S. has pursued happiness with greater determination and more abundant success than any other nation in history. For 45 years it waged, with steady resolve and remarkable forbearance, a Cold War that preserved the security of the Western world without sacrificing its liberty in the process. So remarkable has been our achievement that millions of people from every corner of the globe have come here to be part of America. And what have they found? A nation of grumpy citizens, convinced that their country, or at least its government, has gone to hell in a hand basket.

More Americans today than at any time since the late 1950s say that they distrust the people

who manage their affairs: Around 75% believe that they have little or no confidence in the government.

Part of this grumpiness reflects the recent recession. As we recover from those bad times, we will recover a bit from our bad mood. But only a bit. The decline in popular confidence did not begin with the recession, or the Bush Administration, or Watergate or Vietnam; it began in the early 1960s and has been going, with only occasional and modest upticks, ever since. Whatever irritates us, it has been irritating us for a long time.

Politicians can take some solace in the fact that the decline in confidence has not been limited to government but has affected virtually every major institution in our society, especially corporations and labor unions. But it is little solace: We don't vote for corporate officials; we do vote for governmental ones.

Before trying to explain why the public is so grumpy now, I think it worth asking why they were so euphoric before. Maybe low public confidence in government is the norm and the high confidence that existed in the 1950s was the aberration. It's not hard to imagine why we felt so good then. We had just waged, with great success, an immensely popular war for a manifestly good cause; at the end of the war we were indisputably Top Nation, with a currency that was the world's standard, a productive capacity that was unrivaled, export markets that took everything we produced and begged for more and a monopoly on the atom bomb.

My guess is that Americans have usually been

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suspicious of their politicians and that the Eisenhower-era euphoria was unusual, perhaps unprecedented. I'd like to believe that because I find it troubling that Americans might normally be so silly as to think they could always trust officials in Washington to do the right thing.

But even if we discount the slide on the grounds that we were overdue for a return to normalcy, there are features of the current anger that strike me as more troublesome than anything we can attribute to the post-Ike hangover.

One is the condition of our inner cities. It is not just that they are centers of unemployment, high crime rates, school dropouts and drug abuse; that has, alas, always been the case. Today, however, the problems seem more pervasive, more widespread and more threatening than in the past. Once there were bad neighborhoods to be avoided; elsewhere, life was, if not prosperous, at least orderly. Today the signs of decay seem omnipresent—panhandlers and graffiti are everywhere, senseless shootings can occur anywhere and drug use has penetrated even the best schools.

To cope with these problems in the past we have relied on the schools and the police. But today that reliance seems misplaced; the schools don't teach students, the police can't maintain order.

Indeed, the government as a whole seems to be out of control. It has a huge peacetime deficit at which politicians feebly gesture; the number of interest groups besieging Congress has risen tenfold since 1960; we are entertained by the prospect of legislators easily writing bad checks when many ordinary folk find it impossible to write good ones; everybody knows that the nation faces serious problems, but the only issue on which Congress has been able to break out of its policy gridlock has been doling out favors to the savings and loan industry; the presidential race confronts us with the wearying spectacle of candidates exchanging personal barbs and policy bromides.

While I think there is some exaggeration in most of these complaints, there is much truth in all of them. To this extent the public's grouching is well founded. Why do these problems exist?

There are three reasons: prosperity, freedom and democracy.

Prosperity. For a century or more, dangerous drugs have been consumed. Middle-class people used opium, jazz musicians used heroin, stockbrokers sniffed cocaine. But starting in the 1960s, these drugs moved out of the elite markets and entered the mass market. The reason was that the nation had become prosperous enough so that ordinary people could afford them. The discovery of crack cocaine in the early 1980s brought that drug within the reach of

almost everyone. Everybody knows that drug addicts often steal to support their habits. What most people don't know is that today many addicts do not have to steal to do this; they can get by on the strength of part-time jobs, family support and public aid.

The inner city has always been a haven for criminals who could take advantage of its anonymity, disorder and low-cost housing. So long as they had to search out their victims on foot, the victims were neighbors. The availability of cheap automobiles put everyone within reach of burglars and robbers. As these offenders began to share in the general prosperity, they were able to replace fists with guns and cheap Saturday-night specials with modern semiautomatic weapons.

We have always had youth gangs in our cities, but even as late as the 1950s they were armed, if at all, with knives. When I was growing up in southern California, a dangerous gang was one whose members had made zip guns out of lengths of tubing taped to crude wooden stocks and loaded, one round per gun, with .22-caliber bullets. Today many gangs can afford Uzis, MAC-10s and 9mm pistols.

All of these changes should have been anticipated because there is no way to confine prosperity to law-abiding people only. The extraordinary standard of living that makes Americans the envy of much of the world extends to the criminal as well as the noncriminal; the rising tide has, indeed, lifted all boats, including those carrying pirates.

What frustrates many Americans, I think, is that their hard-earned prosperity was supposed to produce widespread decency. They had been taught to believe that if you went to school, worked hard, saved your money, bought a home and raised a family, you would enjoy the good life. About this they were right. But they also thought that if most people acted this way their communities would improve. About this they were not right. What produced the good life for individuals did not produce it for cities.

The reason is that prosperity enabled people to move to the kinds of towns Americans have always wanted to live in—small, quiet and nice. As the middle class moved out to the suburbs they took with them the system of informal social controls that had once helped maintain order in the central cities. As employers noticed that their best workers were now living outside these cities, they began moving their offices, stores and factories to the periphery.

Prosperity not only enhanced the purchasing power of urban criminals, it deprived them of the legitimate jobs that had once existed as alternatives to crime and it emancipated them from the network of block clubs, PTAs and

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watchful neighbors that are the crucial partners of the police.

As we Americans got better off individually, our cities got worse off collectively. This was probably inevitable. But it left us feeling angry and cheated.

Freedom. Freedom in the last 30 years has undergone an extraordinary expansion in at least two ways. The powers exercised by the institutions of social control have been constrained and people, especially young people, have embraced an ethos that values self-expression over self-control. The constraints can be found in laws, court rulings and interest-group pressure; the ethos is expressed in the unprecedented grip that the youth culture has on popular music and entertainment.

One should not exaggerate these constraints. The police, for example, must now follow much more elaborate procedures in stopping, arresting and questioning suspects. This is burdensome, but it is not clear that it has materially reduced their ability to solve crimes or arrest criminals. Most homicides, robberies and burglaries are solved because there is eyewitness testimony or physical evidence; confessions are not typically the critical determinant of a successful prosecution. An important exception involves consensual crimes, such as drug dealing. Lacking a victim or a witness, many prosecutions depend on undercover drug purchases or overheard conversations, and what can be purchased or overheard is now far more tightly regulated.

These constraints have become particularly restrictive with respect to the police's ability to maintain order. Gangs, vagrants, panhandlers, rowdy teenagers and graffiti painters were once held in check by curbside justice: threats, rousts and occasional beatings. Today the threats are emptier, the rousts rarer, the beatings forbidden. In many places vagrancy and public drunkenness have been decriminalized. In cities where the police kicked or arrested graffiti painters they now must organize graffiti paint-out campaigns.

Many of the same restraints have reduced the authority of the schools. Disorderly pupils can still be expelled, but now with much greater difficulty than once was the case. The pressure to pass students without demanding much of them has intensified. As the freedom of students has grown, that of teachers has shrunk. The immense bureaucratic burdens on classroom teachers have deprived them of both time and power, with the result that they have both less time in which to teach and less authority with which to make teaching possible.

The expansion in personal freedom has been accompanied by a deep distrust of custodial institutions. The mentally ill were deinstitutionalized in the belief that they would fare better in community mental health clinics than in remote asylums, but there weren't enough clinics to treat the patients, the patients were not compelled to enter the clinics and their families were unequipped to deal with them. The mentally ill and the drug dependent now constitute a majority, it is estimated, of homeless adults on the streets.

Democracy. Americans have two chief complaints about our government. One is that it seems unable or unwilling to cope adequately with the costs of prosperity and the darker side of freedom. The other is that it has not managed to extend that prosperity and freedom to everyone. These two views are not in principle incompatible, but many Americans suspect that in practice they are. That is one reason, I think, that race relations are, at least rhetorically, so bad. Whites think the government is too tolerant of crime, gangs, drug abuse and disorderly behavior; blacks think it is too preoccupied with law and order and not concerned enough with ending racism and widening opportunities. Public reaction to the Los Angeles riots expressed that tension.

But even if that tension did not exist, it is not clear that democracy, American style, could effectively meet popular expectations. Those expectations are that government should be nonintrusive and have a balanced budget; spend more money on education, health care, crime control and environmental protection; strike the right balance between liberty and order; and solve the problems of racism, drug abuse, school failures and senseless violence.

I am not making this up. Every poll that I know of taken over the last few decades shows that large majorities think that the federal government taxes too heavily and spends too little, that deficit financing is wrong, and that Washington should solve problems that no state or local government has been able to solve.

If people are asked how the government can reconcile more spending, lower taxes and a balanced budget, the answer they give is clear: Eliminate waste, fraud and mismanagement. That no amount of waste reduction, fraud detection and bureaucratic reorganization can possibly achieve this reconciliation seems beside the point.

Democracy, American style, does not lend itself to making tough choices. The Constitution was written not to make governing easy but to make it hard; not to empower leaders but to frustrate them.

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The extraordinary standard of living that makes Americans the envy of so much of the world extends to the criminal as well as the noncriminal; the rising tide has, indeed, lifted all boats, including those carrying pirates.

Now, a strong, decisive government might cut through the rhetoric and actually make the "tough choices" of which Americans are so fond (provided, of course, that the tough choices gore someone else's ox). But democracy, American style, does not lend itself to making tough choices. The reason is simple: the Constitution of the United States.

That Constitution was written not to make governing easy but to make it hard; not to facilitate choices but to impede them; not to empower leaders but to frustrate them. The constitutions, written and unwritten, of European democracies are very different: They were designed to allow the government to govern, subject only to the periodic checks of a popular election. Here, popular participation is encouraged; there, it is discouraged. Here, the courts can overturn presidential and congressional actions; there, they cannot. Here, many officials have the power to say "no" and none has the power to say "yes" and make it stick; there, a prime minister can say "yes" and make it stick.

European democracies are designed to be run by leaders like Ross Perot. Of course, abroad no one like Ross Perot would have a chance of becoming a leader, because the system for picking officials is designed to insure that only insiders and never outsiders have a chance at grabbing the golden ring. Candidates for office in England and Europe are chosen by party managers, guaranteeing that only people acceptable to the managers can be nominated. Candidates in the U.S. are picked by people attending caucuses, voting in primaries and signing petitions, creating the possibility for candidates detested by party managers to become party nominees.

This system for making policy and choosing candidates creates quite predictable results, and among them are the very things that so many Americans find distasteful about politics.

Politicians, knowing that party leaders are powerless, run personal campaigns stressing media images and relying on personal attacks. Knowing that money is essential to politics and that party leaders don't have much, candidates raise funds from individuals and interest groups. Aware that a primary campaign is the most important campaign, incumbents look for ways to discourage challengers from appearing.

Once in office, politicians know that it is their personal visibility and not their party's slogans

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that affect their chances of staying in office. Accordingly, they organize the Congress so that all members will have large staffs, all members will be able to introduce high-profile bills (even if many are doomed to defeat) and as many members as possible will have a chance to chair a committee or subcommittee. When a bill is passed, it is in everyone's interest to insure that it contains something for every important constituency; if the result is confusion or contradiction, the bureaucracy can be left with the task of sorting things out. When the bureaucracy can't sort it out—when it can't both build highways and make it easy for people to go to court to block highway construction—Congress and the White House can blame the mess on "the bureaucrats" and promise that heads will be knocked and names taken.

In making policy in a highly participatory system, officials will have no incentive to say that the government shouldn't tackle a problem or doesn't know how to solve it and every incentive to claim that government must "do something" and that they know just what to do. As a result, we have crime bills that don't reduce crime, drug abuse bills that don't curb drug abuse, education bills that don't improve learning and disability insurance that can't define "disability." The more such things are done, the more interest groups will have an incentive to organize lobbying efforts and open offices in Washington. The more such offices are opened, the more pressure there will be for more bills and the smaller the chances that any given bill will make much sense.

What Americans don't see is a constitutional system at work in an era of big government and mass participation; what they do see are the things that they don't like about politics.

They see interminable, expensive, attack-based campaigns. They don't see the fact that campaigns would be very short (about two months), much less expensive and (perhaps) less attack-based if we didn't have primary elections or caucuses, if party managers picked candidates and if candidates had to run defending a party record.

They see special-interest groups proliferating. They don't see that these organizations are simply the most visible form of popular participation in government, participation that cannot

If you get arrested abroad, you will appreciate the constraints on the American police. The Swiss and the Swedes may strike you as civilized people, and they are, but I would not advise you to provoke the police in Geneva or Stockholm.

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be extended to individuals without also extending it to groups, and they don't see that having many interests is a *result*, not the cause, of big government.

They see American politicians accused of lying, corruption and self-dealing. They don't see the lying, corruption and self-dealing in parliamentary regimes, and they don't see it because there are not in those places the checks and balances and incessant rivalries of American-style democracy that provide politicians with an incentive to expose such misconduct.

They see a government that cannot solve the critical problems of our time. They don't see that no other free government has solved those critical problems, either. European democracies run big deficits (often they are, relative to GNP, bigger than ours), are equally baffled by youth disorders and drug abuse and have made even less progress in combatting racism.

What, a citizen may ask, do we get out of all of this confusion, pettiness, incompetence and gridlock?

Prosperity, freedom and democracy.

Cheer up, Americans. You are right to be grumpy, but there is no system for governing a large, free and complex society such as ours that is likely to do much better or make you less grumpy. If you don't believe it, travel.

On your travels you will meet countless people who want to know how to immigrate to the U.S. You will discover that our standard of living, in purchasing power equivalents, is the highest in the world. You will discover that among the larger democracies, our tax rates are the lowest in the world. You can talk to conservative leaders in England, Germany and Sweden who will speak enviously of a nation, America,

that has managed to keep the economic burden of social welfare programs so small. (Relatively small, anyway.) American environmental regulations, though sometimes poorly designed and badly administered, set the standard for most of the world.

If you get arrested abroad, you will appreciate the constraints on the American police. The Swiss and the Swedes may strike you as civilized people, and they are, but I would not advise you to provoke the police in Geneva or Stockholm.

If it irritates you that members of Congress pay themselves so much and have such large staffs, try getting your problems solved by a member of the British House of Commons or the French Chamber of Deputies. You will discover that those skilled debaters and bright intellects can't really do very much for you. As individuals, they don't have much power. And not having much power, it stands to reason that they won't be able to vote themselves big salaries or large staffs. If you don't want your legislators to have many perks, strip them of their power—which necessarily includes the power to help you.

—And when you get home, look up the public opinion polls that compare how Americans feel about their country and its institutions with how many Europeans feel about theirs. By then you may not be surprised to learn that Americans have much more confidence in their institutions, public and private, than Germans, Frenchmen or Spaniards have in theirs. And you may not be surprised to learn that by majorities of roughly two-to-one Americans are more inclined than many Europeans to say that they are very proud to be citizens of their country and willing, if necessary, to fight for it.

administration, though, occur in a milieu of concern about opinion, either actual or latent. That concern also disposes decision makers to attend to shades of opinion and preference relevant to decision though not necessarily of great electoral strength—disposition of no mean importance in the promotion of the profitable treatment of people in a democratic order. The changes are that the effect of organized groups on public opinion occur mainly over the long run rather than in short-run maneuvers connected with particular Congressional votes. Moreover, group success may be governed more by the general balance of partisan strength than by the results of group endeavors to win friends in the mass market. An industry reputed to be led by swindlers may expect the most complete reception from legislative committees, especially at times when the balance of strength is not friendly to any kind of business. If the industry can modify its public image, a task that requires time, its position as it maneuvers on particular issues about which few of the public can ever know anything may be less unhappy than its modification may be better attained by performance than by propaganda.

❖ Pressure Group Politics

Both groups theorists, such as David Truman in selection 30, and their critics, such as Theodore Lowi in selection 31, make the apparently reasonable assumption that interest groups represent their constituents. Group theorists argue that such representation defines the public interest, while opponents of "interest group pluralism" charge, as James Madison did in *Federalist 10*, that factions or special interests undermine the national interest. The authors of the following selection shed new light on interest group politics, pointing out that important changes have taken place in special-interest representation since World War II. Their argument fits in nicely with that of V. O. Key, Jr., in selection 32, as both point out that the bureaucratization of interest groups and the control of group organizations call into question the ability of special interests to link their constituents with government.



Walter Isaacson

RUNNING WITH THE PACS



Like electronic images gobbling dots across a video screen, the PAC-men darted among the elegant rooms of the National Republican Club on Capitol Hill. At a

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fund raiser for Congressman Eldon Kudd of Arizona, they dropped their checks into a basket by the door or pressed them into the candidate's palm, before heading for the shrimp rolls and meatballs. Downstairs, other PAC-men crowded into a reception for Delaware Congressman Tom Evans, which featured piano music and White House luminaries. A few stopped in at the party for Deborah Cochran of Massachusetts. Because she is a long-shot challenger, they mainly left business cards rather than checks. But still she came out ahead; the cost of the event was picked up by the National Rifle Association.

Although Congress has adjourned and most members have headed home for the final stretch of the 1982 campaign, candidates can still be found buzzing back to Capitol Hill. They know that Washington is where the money is these days, or at least where one dips into the honey-pot of contributions from political action committees (PACs). In a circular chase that is dominating congressional politics as never before, the candidates are courting the PACs, and the PAC-men are courting the candidates. "Harry Truman said that some people like government so much that they want to buy it," says Democratic Congressman David Obey of Wisconsin. "The 1982 elections will see Truman proved right."

There is nothing inherently evil about PACs: they are merely campaign committees established by organizations of like-minded individuals to raise money for political purposes, a valid aspect of the democratic process. In the wake of Watergate, Congress amended the federal election laws in 1974 to limit the role of wealthy contributors and end secretive payoffs by corporations and unions. The new law formalized the role of PACs, which were supposed to provide a well-regulated channel for individuals to get together and support candidates. But as with many well-intended reforms, there were unintended consequences. Instead of solving the problem of campaign financing, PACs became the problem. They proliferated beyond any expectation, pouring far more money into campaigns than ever before. Today the power of PACs threatens to undermine America's system of representative democracy.

This year there are 3,149 PACs placing their antes into the political pot, up from 2,551 in 1980 and 113 in 1972. The estimated total of funds they will dispense for campaigns this year: a staggering \$240 million. There is Back Pac, PeacePac and Cigar-Pac. Beer distributors have a committee named—what else?—SixPAC. Whataburger Inc. has one called Whata-Pac. The Concerned Rumanians for a Stronger America has a PAC, as does the Hawaiian Golfers for Good Government. And so do most major corporations and unions.

By law a PAC can give \$5,000 to both a candidate's primary and general election campaigns, while an individual contributor can give only \$1,000 to each. Presidential elections are financed by federal funds, so most of the money is channeled into congressional, state and local races. Since PACs tend to run in packs, a popular candidate, particularly a powerful incumbent, may raise more than half his war chest from these special-interest groups. One example: Democratic Congressman Thomas Luken of Ohio, who has sponsored numerous special-interest bills and raised some \$100,000 from PACs.

During Campaign '82, PACs will directly donate at least \$80 million to House and Senate candidates—a leap of more than 45 percent from 1980. Another \$160 million may be spent by PACs on local races, independent political advertising, and

administrative activities. Says Democrat James Shannon of Massachusetts: "PACs are visibly corrupting the system."

Critics believe that PACs have distorted the democratic process by making candidates beholden to narrow interests rather than to their constituents. "Dependency on PACs has grown so much that PACs, not constituents, are the focus of a Congressman's attention," says Common Cause President Fred Wertheimer, whose citizens' lobby is fighting to reform the system. Special interests, of course, should be able to fight for their own concerns, but the power of PACs has upset the delicate balance between private interests and the public good. Indeed, PAC victories—continued price supports for dairy farmers, the defeat of a proposed fee on commodity trades, a proposed exemption from antitrust laws for shipping companies—often come at taxpayer expense. "It is not surprising there are no balanced budgets," says Republican Jim Leach of Iowa, who is one of fewer than a dozen members of Congress who refuse to take PAC money.

In addition, the close correlation between special-interest donations and legislative votes sometimes makes it seem that Congress is up for sale. Says Republican Senator Robert Dole of Kansas: "When these PACs give money they expect something in return other than good government." Democratic Congressman Thomas Downey of New York is more blunt: "You can't buy a Congressman for \$5,000. But you can buy his vote. It's done on a regular basis." This is one reason why Michigan Democrat William Brodhead decided to quit Congress this year. Says he: "I got sick of feeling indebted to PACs. There is no reason they give money except in the expectation of votes."

Another problem is that PACs have helped raise the cost of campaigning, just as the desire to buy more and more expensive television time increases a candidate's dependency on PACs. Says Democrat Andrew Jacobs of Indiana, a critic of PACs: "It's like getting addicted by a pusher. You become accustomed to lavish campaigns." In 1974 the average cost of campaigning for the House was \$50,000; in 1980 the average was \$150,000, and this year races costing \$500,000 are not uncommon. Says House Republican Leader Robert Michel of Illinois, who has raised more than \$220,000 from PACs: "This year I'll pay several hundred thousand dollars for a job that pays \$60,000."

Before the sanctioning of PACs in the early 1970s, corporations and unions were generally prohibited from donating to campaigns. Money from large special interests, however, was often funneled secretly in stuffed envelopes; Lyndon Johnson built his power base by serving as a conduit for campaign donations from oil tycoons and construction companies, and one of the key Watergate revelations was the pernicious influence of large corporate payoffs made under the table. But the national parties, and the local political machines, remained the dominant force in the control of campaign funds. By diminishing the role of parties, PACs tend to make elected officials more narrow in their allegiances. This lessens the chance for broad coalitions that balance competing interests. Says Stuart Eizenstat, former domestic affairs adviser to Jimmy Carter: "PACs balkanize the political process."

Labor unions, which organized the first political action committee, will pump some \$20 million into the 1982 campaign through 350 separate PACs. Business followed

the union lead and soon overtook them: this year 1,497 corporate PACs will give \$30 million to the candidates. Trade associations such as the National Association of Realtors and the American Medical Association (A.M.A.) account for 613 PACs, which will chip in another \$22 million. An additional 45 PACs are run by cooperatives like the Associated Milk Producers, and will give \$2 million this election. By far the greatest, and most worrisome, growth has been among the loose cannons of the PAC arsenal, ideological PACs not connected to any organization. Among them: the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC) and North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms' Congressional Club. The 644 nonconnected PACs are expected to donate only \$6 million directly to candidates. But they will use most of their money for negative propaganda unauthorized by any candidate and for building up direct-mail lists that will help fund future political wars.

PAC money is mainly helping incumbents, since most PACs are guided by the pragmatic desire for access to power. Many corporate PACs that supported successful conservative challengers in 1980 are concentrating this year on solidifying Republican gains. Only 15 percent of the PAC money has gone to challengers so far this election. In the past this bias toward incumbents meant that Democrats fared slightly better with PACs than Republicans, but now the increasing strength of corporate PACs (which give 65 percent of their money to Republicans) relative to labor PACs (which channel 90 percent of their funds to Democrats) could mean that G.O.P. candidates receive slightly more money.

The PACs are playing a dominant role in many races around the country. When Ohio Republican Paul Pfeifer launched his challenge against Senator Howard Metzenbaum last spring, he was given so little chance that the pragmatic PACs shunned him. Metzenbaum's \$3 million campaign fund, on the other hand, included \$350,000 in PAC money by the end of the summer, mainly from unions. But last month, while Metzenbaum was in Washington conducting a maverick crusade against special-interest bills, Pfeifer began showing strength in the polls. Suddenly PAC money started flowing to the challenger. Says a Pfeifer aide: "More than anything else, a poll will speak to the PAC community. They're like a business trying to invest." One-third of Pfeifer's campaign donations are now from PACs.

Congressmen Ike Skelton and Wendell Bailey of Missouri have been pitted against each other by redistricting. Such a clash of incumbents inevitably triggers heavy PAC spending, and some groups like the A.M.A. have hedged their bets by donating to both. With dairy and labor PACs lining up behind Democrat Skelton, and corporate ones behind Republican Bailey, each side has raised \$100,000 from special interests.

Another heated PAC showdown is the California race between Democrat Phillip Burton and Republican Milton Marks. When Marks first flew to Washington to solicit PAC money, he ran into Burton at a restaurant. "I'm here to raise money to run against you," Marks proclaimed jovially. Of his 800 PAC solicitations, Marks hooked 100 donors, raising almost \$100,000. Burton piously proclaims he will never take corporate PAC money. But he will take it from labor, progressive groups and conservationist clubs. More than half of his \$450,000 reelection fund will come from such PACs.

A far different type of political influence develops when an ideological PAC targets a race. NCPAC, for example, is notorious for mounting negative campaigns

against candidates it hopes to see defeated. In these races NCPAC rarely makes direct contributions to a candidate, and thus can spend as much as it wishes. (In 1976 the Supreme Court ruled that parts of the federal election law violated the right of free speech. It said that candidates may personally use as much of their own money as they want, and that unaffiliated groups, like NCPAC, can spend unlimited amounts on their own advocacy campaigns as long as their activity is not authorized by any candidate's official organization.) Moreover, since NCPAC is not affiliated with a candidate, it is less accountable for the tone and content of its campaign. As NCPAC Chairman Terry Dolan has admitted, "A group like ours could lie through its teeth, and the candidate it helps stays clean." NCPAC played a loud but indefinite role in the defeat of four liberal Senators in 1980, but since then it has waned in power if not in dollars.

Liberal groups have responded to NCPAC and other right-wing organizations by forming PACs of their own. Among the new groups is Progressive PAC (ProPAC), which will spend \$150,000 in the election, most of it having gone into now abandoned negative campaigns against conservatives. Another is Democrats for the '80s (nicknamed PamPAC for Founder Pamela Hartman), which is spending \$500,000. One of the richest ideological PACs is that of the National Organization for Women, which hopes to donate more than \$2 million this year to candidates for support its feminist positions and who oppose Reaganomics. Says newly elected NOW President Judy Goldsmith: "We will proceed with work on defeating the right wing."

The growing importance of PAC donations means that the scramble for such money has become an integral part of campaigning. "It used to be that lobbyists lobbied Congressmen," says PAC critic Mike Synar, a Democratic Congressman from Oklahoma. "Now, Congressmen lobby lobbyists—for money." When that inevitable creature of the PAC explosion, the National Association for Association PACs, threw a party, 80 Congressmen showed up. "I've never seen such a group grope," says Democrat Dan Glickman of Kansas. Republican James Coyne of Pennsylvania playfully installed five PacMan video games near the bar of one of his Washington fund raisers in honor of the real PAC-men who have donated \$126,000 to his 1982 campaign. Other lawmakers shower the PACs with glossy brochures soliciting money.

Republican Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah has already collected an astounding \$750,000 from 531 PACs. Over scrambled eggs at a breakfast last Tuesday in Salt Lake City, he graciously accepted \$5,000 more from the Association of Trial Lawyers. Such support, his campaign manager says, "shows a level of commitment to Hatch nationwide by thousands of people." It also shows, critics say, that he is intensely pro-business and chairs the powerful Labor and Human Resources Committee.

Indeed, the pursuit of PAC money has given a national flavor to state campaigns. Two Democratic congressional hopefuls from California, Doug Bosco and Barbara Boxer, ran into each other this year in the Washington waiting room of a PAC they were both courting. Says Bosco: "You get kind of bored with yourself going from PAC to PAC to PAC. You get the feeling you are being processed." San

Diego's Republican mayor Pete Wilson, running for the Senate, made a pilgrimage to Washington a few weeks ago and met with Bernadette Budde of the Business Industry PAC (BIPAC). He also held a \$500-per-PAC-man reception at a hotel near the White House. Total take: \$75,000.

Houston and Dallas, where the oil money runs thick, have become hubs of PAC activity. "We had a congressional candidate here from North Carolina recently and gave him a few thousand dollars," says Jack Webb, executive director of the Houston PAC. "Then we took him around and introduced him to other oil folks and I'm pretty sure he left with more than \$10,000 in pledges." HouPAC plans to give away \$200,000 this year, ten times its donations for 1980.

Deciding how to divvy up their bounty can be a complex process for PACs. The 20 trustees of the Realtors PAC held the last of a dozen strategy sessions in Chicago's downtown Marriott Hotel two weeks ago, working late into the night and through the next day to cull the 150 worthy candidates who would receive the last of the \$2.5 million allotted for 1982. Each trustee had a folder on applicants that included voting records and "campaign intelligence reports" prepared with the aid of eight full-time field specialists. Washington staffers gave briefings on where incumbents stand on such issues as the balanced-budget amendment and the mortgage subsidy bill.

Candidates seeking the Realtors' money must submit answers to a six-page questionnaire. In some cases the "correct" answers are all too obvious. "Do you agree or disagree [that] trade associations have a right and a responsibility to hold members of Congress accountable for their votes?" Others are trickier. One asks candidates to rank what contributes most to high interest rates: record deficits, restrictive monetary policy, excessive tax cuts, etc. (A: The Realtors have fought strongly against high deficits.) "Sometimes candidates plead with me to give them the correct answers," says Political Resources Director Randall Moorhead.

Typical of the Realtors' deliberation was their discussion of the Texas Senate race between Democratic Incumbent Lloyd Bentsen and Challenger Jim Collins. Although Republican Collins was very sympathetic to the Realtors' philosophy and had been a supporter in the House, Bentsen is the incumbent and likely victor. He got the \$4,250. Challengers are referred to as "risk capital ventures."

The choices for smaller PACs are simpler. At a meeting this month to hand out the last of its \$225,000 congressional donations, the PAC of the Grumman Corp., maker of fighter jets, gave another \$1,000 to Democrat William Chappell of Florida, who is on the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee. Says Grumman PAC Chairman Dave Walsh: "We have selfish interests. We dole out money to those on committees dealing with defense and to those whose viewpoint is in line with ours."

Small PACs often look to larger ones for guidance. The Chamber of Commerce, BIPAC and the AFL-CIO publish "opportunity lists" to lead like-minded PAC money where it will do the most good. The Chamber recently produced a video version of its list by broadcasting a four-hour, closed-circuit television show called *See How They Run* to 150 PAC managers in seven cities. It opens with patriotic music and a waving flag as Chamber President Richard Leshner extols "a brighter future for America through political action." Presidential Assistant Kenneth Duberstein joins Chamber analysts in handicapping 50 key races. One of the

Chamber choices, Pennsylvania's Coyne, expresses the sentiment of the rest of the all-Repub-
'ineup: "The key to my race is, Can we marshal the resources?"

An al-
an INC. magazine, which is aimed at independent businessmen, of-
fers advice on "some ways to measure your return" from PAC donations. It explains
how to compute the "equity share" and "cost-vote ratio" that can be "bought" for
each candidate. "Special interests don't contribute to congressional candidates for
the fun of it," the article advises. "They do so to get things done." It dismisses any
moral qualms: "if politicians want to sell and the public wants to buy, there is not
much you can do to stop the trade."

The question of whether PAC donations actually buy votes or only reward
members who tend to vote properly is akin to that of the chicken and the egg. One
thing is certain: the combination of chickens and eggs fertilizes the legislative
process. The National Automobile Dealers Association, which will contribute
more than \$850,000 to congressional candidates this election, was able to kill a reg-
ulation requiring that buyers be informed of known defects in used cars for sale. The
United Auto Workers (U.A.W.) is handing out more than \$1 million this year
while it lines up support for a "domestic content" bill that requires foreign firms to
use a high percentage of American parts and labor in cars they sell in the U.S.
Lockheed Corp., like its competitor Boeing, donated heavily to the House and Sen-
ate armed services committees as it fought to win a Government contract for its C-
5B cargo plane. The National Rifle Association (N.R.A.) will give away \$1.3 mil-
lion this year, some of it to help Senate Judiciary Committee members who
approved a law loosening gun-control regulations.

Although lobbyists and Congressmen deny that votes are for sale, the link to
donations is often uncomfortably clear. The U.A.W. PAC in New Jersey has long
backed Congressman Peter Rodino. But last month Rodino was informed that fu-
ture support would be contingent on his agreeing to co-sponsor the domestic con-
tent bill. When his office said he would, the union publicly announced that its en-
dorsement came "following Rodino's decision to sign on as a co-sponsor" of the bill.
The appearance of coercion annoyed Rodino. Said an aide: "He thought it was the
most heavyhanded thing he had seen during his career." Rodino withdrew as a co-
sponsor, although he is still backing the bill.

An example of how donations and votes go hand in palm is the House passage
of a bill that would allow the shipping industry to fix prices, which could raise
freight costs by about 20 percent. The Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee
has long been a safe harbor for special interests. "Any bill coming out of the Mer-
chant Marine ought to go straight to the grand jury," jokes one Congressman. Both
labor and business groups formed an alliance to pass the price fixing bill, with the
Seafarers' Union and Lykes Bros. Steamship Co. leading the lobbying by 13 inter-
ested PACs. Their total donations to Merchant Marine Committee members:
\$47,850. After passing the bill 33 to 0, the committee got the House rules sus-
pended to allow only 40 minutes of debate. Since most Congressmen had little idea
of what was in the bill, many voted in response to thumbs-up signs from committee
members. The bill passed 350 to 33.

Among other PAC-man specials:

The Professionals Bill. The A.M.A. and American Dental Association have
been lobbying for a law that would exempt professionals from Federal Com-
mission regulation and thus permit them to fix prices. The bill is still awaiting
House action. Since 1979 the two groups have given \$2.3 million to House mem-
bers, 72 percent of it to 213 co-sponsors of the bill. Each sponsor got an average of
\$7,598, according to Consumer Advocate Ralph Nader's Congress Watch. Thomas
Luken, the prime sponsor, got \$14,750. Luken, one of Congress's most notorious
PAC-men, also sponsored the bill revoking the used-car regulation.

The Beer Bill. Brewers want to be allowed to designate monopoly territories for
their distributors, which could raise the cost of beer 20 percent. The legislation is
pending in the House. SixPAC has handed out \$35,000 to members of the Judiciary
Subcommittee on Monopolies. Democrat Jack Brooks of Texas, the chief sponsor,
got a \$10,000 contribution, a \$1,000 honorarium for a speech and a trip to Las Ve-
gas from SixPAC this year.

The Bankruptcy Bill. The credit industry is pushing for a law that would funda-
mentally change the legal concept of a "fresh start" for those who go broke. The
pending bill would require individual debtors, but not business, to pay back debts
after declaring bankruptcy. Six credit PACs, led by the American Bankers Associa-
tion and Household Finance Corp., have donated \$704,297 to 255 Congressmen
co-sponsoring the bill.

Commodity Traders' Fee. PACs representing three major groups of commodities
brokers have been fighting a Reagan Administration proposal to set a 6¢ to 12¢ fee
on each trade to finance the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. They have
contributed to most members of the House and Senate agriculture committees,
both of which voted to reject the fee. "It isn't buying votes," said Michael McLeod,
a lobbyist with the Chicago Board of Trade. "It's just how the political system
works."

Clean Air. The House Health and the Environment Subcommittee voted this year
to weaken considerably the Clean Air Act. The twelve members who voted for the
relaxation got a total of \$197,325 from the PACs of the seven major industries af-
fected. Republican Senator Steve Symms of Idaho, who got \$97,500 during his
1980 campaign from affected industries, dutifully introduced one industry amend-
ment after another. "It was clear he had no idea what was in those amendments,"
says one Senator. Members of his committee even privately mocked him, asking,
"Which campaign check had that amendment even privately attached to it?"

When a bill emerges from committee, and the debate becomes publicized, it
becomes harder for special interests to be effective. Grassroots pressure by those in
favor of the Clean Air Act, and perhaps also the growth of environmental PACs,
make it likely that the act will pass without being significantly weakened.

Defenders of the PAC system say that contributions are an effect, not a cause,
and that they are given to those who are already known to be supportive of a PAC's

position. "The idea that there's a *quid pro quo* is balderdash," says Republican Congressman Bill Frenzel of Minnesota. Argues BIPAC's Budde: "Pacs are not buying anyone. They're rewarding." Because a single PAC is limited to \$5,000 a race, the power it can command, while large, is not overwhelming. The most you can purchase, proponents claim, is access. Says Grumman PAC Chairman Walsh: "We don't expect contracts because we gave someone \$5,000. But the likelihood of us getting in to see the Congressman is much higher."

The backers of PACs point out that, like rivers to the sea, special-interest money will find a way to flow into campaigns, and the PAC channel keeps the process regulated and open to public scrutiny. Small donors, who once felt they had no impact, can now pool their money with like-minded voters. "PACs have redistributed political influence," says Phil Gramm of Texas. "They've taken power away from the smoke-filled room." Agrees Jack Webb of HouPAC: "PACs get people involved who otherwise might not be. They're a damned good thing."

There is no argument about one major PAC fact: within ten years, PACs have become a significant method of financing congressional campaigns, accounting for more than one-fourth of all money raised by candidates, and more than one-third of all money raised by incumbents. The average candidate now gets three times as much money from PACs as from a political party. This year, the national campaign committees of the Republican Party have been revitalized by a surge of donations. Even so, unless the laws are changed, PACs are destined to remain much more important than national parties as a source of funds for candidates. Says Herbert Alexander, a professor at the University of Southern California who has written about campaign finance: "The decline of the parties is, in part, a consequence of election reform gone awry."

PACs have become so important and controversial that they are now an issue of their own on the campaign trail. Their proper role is being debated, for example, in the Senate race in Montana. Democratic Incumbent John Melcher is receiving contributions from a wide array of labor, corporate and association PACs. They have given him more than \$350,000, over half his campaign fund. "How can you work for your constituents when you've got \$10,000 chits out?" demands Republican Challenger Larry Williams, a self-made millionaire. Melcher is countering by making an issue of the fact that NCPAC has waged an irresponsible \$250,000 independent effort to defeat him. One of Melcher's television ads depicts NCPAC operatives flying into the state with money-stuffed briefcases to "defeat Doc Melcher."

Democrat Joseph Kolter is also trying to turn PAC donations into an issue in his bid to unseat Republican Congressman Eugene Atkinson of Pennsylvania. Last year Atkinson made a dramatic switch in party allegiance. As a Democrat, he had pi-ously refused on principle to accept PAC money, but since becoming a Republican he has raised \$40,000 from business-oriented PACs. In his campaign speeches, Kolter reels off a list of Atkinson donors, referring to General Public Utilities Corp. as "the people who brought you Three Mile Island" and to a group of major industries as "the filthy five." Kolter has his own PAC sources; he is drawing the maximum donations from the United Steel Workers, the U.A.W. and other unions.

Any attempt to reform the PAC system is vulnerable to the law of unintended consequences. Individuals, groups, corporations and unions will continue to have the desire and resources to support favored candidates. They also have the right, and even the responsibility, to do so. Trying to restrict such efforts too severely could just divert them into other, less worthy approaches, like the one followed by NCPAC. Says Michael Malbin, a political analyst at the American Enterprise Institute: "Unless you repeal the First Amendment, people with private interests in legislation will be active."

Public financing of campaigns would solve many of the problems. The same arguments that were persuasive at the presidential level—the need to lower the role of fat-cat donors and special interests—are at least as compelling when it comes to Congress. (In the primaries, presidential candidates raise money, some of it from PACs, that is matched by federal funds. The general election is fully financed by federal money.) But such a process presents practical difficulties: some districts and states are much more expensive to campaign in than others, and incumbents (who make the laws) are unlikely to vote for a system that removes their own built-in advantage. "It's like sending goats to guard the cabbage patch," says Andrew Jacobs of Indiana, one of the Congressmen who refuse PAC money. Moreover, public financing could be expensive.

Raising the \$1,000 limit that an individual can contribute to a campaign would help dilute the power of PACs. The individual limit had stayed the same since 1974 despite inflation. "Individual contributions are far less effective than those from a PAC," says Republican Congresswoman Millicent Fenwick of New Jersey. "The PACs lobbyist will come and twist arms." In her race for a Senate seat, Fenwick has refused PAC money.

Individual donations from corporate leaders, of course, can exert the same type of influence as money from PACs. Indeed, the PAC-stemious Fenwick has raised \$13,650 from the top executives of a Wall Street investment firm, far more than the limit imposed on the firm's PAC. But the greatest threat posed by individual contributions in the past was the secrecy surrounding them and their disproportionate amounts. A new \$5,000 limit would seem reasonable in light of today's strict reporting requirements.

Another option would be to limit the total amount a House candidate could raise from PACs. A bill setting a \$70,000 limit on the amount a House candidate could raise from PACs passed the House in 1979, but died in the Senate. A new measure has been introduced in the House setting the PAC money ceiling at \$75,000.

The ideal reform would incorporate elements of each of these proposals. Partial federal financing, either by direct grants or matching funds, could water down the importance of PACs. So could raising the private contribution limit. Increasing the amount people can donate to the national parties, currently \$20,000 each year, could strengthen the role of the parties. Finally, setting a reasonable limit on the amount a candidate can get from PACs, certainly no more than \$75,000 an election, would rein in the PAC-men.

The difficulty is not so much finding solutions, but persuading Congressmen, who benefit so handsomely, to change the present situation. "It is a lot easier to

raise money from PACs than from other sources," observes PAC Critic Barney Frank, a Democratic Congressman from Massachusetts. "You sit there, somebody hands you \$3,000, and you say 'Thank you.'" In the end, it is pressure from the voters that may limit the power of the PACs. Some lawmakers, like Missouri Democrat Richard Gephardt, detect rumblings of reform. Says he: "There is a growing sense that the system is getting out of hand."

❖ MONEY, PACs, AND ELECTIONS

Political campaigning has become increasingly expensive at all levels of government. Only presidential campaigns are publicly funded, although candidates in presidential primaries have to garner a certain amount of private contributions to qualify for federal matching funds. The rise of political action committees, which the campaign finance laws of the 1970s recognized as legitimate, has enhanced the influence of private money and interest group power in the political process. Money and politics go together in the contemporary political environment, and Political Action Committees are a major source of campaign funds. While PACs are perfectly legitimate organizations, authorized and even encouraged by the campaign finance laws of the 1970s, they are often portrayed as the bad guys of American politics. They are the modern-day "factions" of the James Madison attack in *Federalist 10*. The author of the following selection suggests that PAC-bashing is overdue.

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Larry J. Sabato

THE MISPLACED OBSESSION WITH PACS

The disturbing statistics and the horror stories about political action committees seem to flow like a swollen river, week after week, year in and year out. Outrage extends across the ideological spectrum: the liberal interest group Common Cause has called the system "scandalous," while conservative former senator Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.) has bluntly declared, "PAC money is destroying the election process. . . ." In more and more recent campaigns, political action committees have been portrayed as the central corrupting evil in American politics. In Massachusetts in 1984, for example, all the major contenders for the U.S. Senate in both parties re-

From *Paying for Elections: The Campaign Finance Thicket* (New York, The Twentieth Century Fund, 1989, pp. 9-18), by Larry J. Sabato. Reprinted with permission from the Twentieth Century Fund, New York.

used to take PAC money, and one candidate even got his Democratic opponent to sign a statement pledging to resign his seat in Congress should he "unwillingly accept and keep a campaign contribution from a political action committee."

Candidates from Maine to California have scored points by forswearing the acceptance of PAC gifts earlier and more fervently than their opponents. The Democratic party included in its 1984 national platform a call for banning PAC funds from all federal elections, despite its aggressiveness in attracting PAC money to itself and its candidates.

PAC-bashing is undeniably a popular campaign sport, but the "big PAC attack" is an opiate that obscures the more vital concerns and problems in campaign finance. PAC excesses are merely a symptom of other serious maladies in the area of political money, but the near-obsessive focus by public interest groups and the news media on the PAC evils has diverted attention from more fundamental matters. The PAC controversy, including the charges most frequently made against them, can help explain why PACs are best described as agents of pseudo corruption.

The PAC Era

While a good number of PACs of all political persuasions existed prior to the 1970s, it was during that decade of campaign reform that the modern PAC era began. Spawned by the Watergate-inspired revisions of the campaign finance laws, PACs grew in number from 113 in 1972 to 4,196 by 1988, and their contributions to congressional candidates multiplied more than fifteenfold, from \$8.5 million in 1971-72 to \$130.3 million in 1985-86.

The rapid rise of PACs has engendered much criticism, yet many of the charges made against political action committees are exaggerated and dubious. While the widespread use of the PAC structure is new, special interest money of all types has always found its way into politics. Before the 1970s it simply did so in less traceable and far more disturbing and unsavory ways. And while, in absolute terms, PACs contribute a massive sum to candidates, it is not clear that there is proportionately more interest-group money in the system than before. As political scientist Michael Malbin has argued, we will never know the truth because the earlier record is so incomplete.

The proportion of House and Senate campaign funds provided by PACs has certainly increased since the early 1970s, but individuals, most of whom are unaffiliated with PACs, together with the political parties, still supply about three-fifths of all the money spent by or on behalf of House candidates and three-quarters of the campaign expenditures for Senate contenders. So while the importance of PAC spending has grown, PACs clearly remain secondary as a source of election funding. PACs, then, seem rather less awesome when considered within the entire spectrum of campaign finance.

Apart from the argument over the relative weight of PAC funds, PAC critics claim that political action committees are making it more expensive to run for office. There is some validity to this assertion. Money provided to one candidate funds the purchase of campaign tools that the other candidate must match in order to stay competitive.

In the aggregate, American campaign expenditures seem huge. In 1988, the total amount spent by all U.S. House of Representatives candidates taken together was about \$256 million, and the campaign cost of the winning House nominee averaged over \$392,000. Will Rogers's 1931 remark has never been more true: "Politics has got so expensive that it takes lots of money to even get beat with."

Yet \$256 million is far less than the annual advertising budgets of many individual commercial enterprises. These days it is expensive to communicate, whether the message is political or commercial. Television time, polling costs, consultants' fees, direct-mail investment, and other standard campaign expenditures have been soaring in price, over and above inflation. PACs have been fueling the use of new campaign techniques, but a reasonable case can be made that such expenses are necessary, and that more and better communication is required between candidates and an electorate that often appears woefully uninformed about politics. PACs therefore may be making a positive contribution by providing the means to increase the flow of information during elections.

PACs are also accused of being biased toward the incumbent, and except for the ideological committees, they do display a clear and overwhelming preference for those already in office. But the same bias is apparent in contributions from individuals, who ask the same reasonable, perhaps decisive, economic question: Why waste money on contenders if incumbents almost always win? On the other hand, the best challengers—those perceived as having fair-to-good chances to win—are usually generously funded by PACs. Well-targeted PAC challenger money clearly helped the GOP win a majority in the U.S. Senate in 1980, for instance, and in turn aided the Democrats in their 1986 Senate takeover.

The charge that PACs limit the number of strong challengers is true, because by giving so much money so early in the race to incumbents, they deter potential opponents from declaring their candidacies. On the other hand, the money that PACs channel to competitive challengers late in the election season may actually help increase the turnover of officeholders on election day. PAC money also tends to invigorate competitiveness in open-seat congressional races where there is no incumbent.

One line of attack on PACs that seems fairly justified is the feeling that these important components of our democratic political system are themselves undemocratic in some respects. For example, in some cases their candidate selection process completely severs the connecting link between contributor and candidate. As political scientist David Adamany has noted, this condition is most apparent in many of the politically ideological nonconnected PACs, whose lack of a parent body and whose freestyle organization make them accountable to no one and responsive mainly to their own whims. Leaders of ideological PACs, however, insist that their committees are still democratic, since contributors will simply stop giving if dissatisfied with the PACs' candidate choices.

But ideological PACs raise most of their money by direct mail, which means that the average donor's only source of information about the PAC's activities is their own communication, which, not surprisingly, tends to be upbeat and selective in reporting the committee's work. Moreover, as political scientist Frank Sorauf has stressed, since direct mail can succeed with only a 2 to 5 percent response rate, and

since prospecting for new donors is continuous, decisions by even a large number of givers to drop out will have little impact on PAC fundraising.

Ideological PACs are not alone in following undemocratic practices. When the AFL-CIO overwhelmingly endorsed Democrat Walter Mondale for president in 1983, thereby making available to him the invaluable resources of most labor PACs, a CBS News/*New York Times* poll showed that less than a quarter of the union members interviewed had their presidential preferences solicited in any fashion. If a representative sampling had taken place, the AFL-CIO might not have been so pro-Mondale, since the CBS/*Times* poll indicated that Mondale was not favored by a majority of the respondents and was in fact in a statistical dead heat with Senator John Glenn (D-Ohio) for a plurality edge.

Nor can many corporate PACs be considered showcases of democracy. In a few PACs the chief executive officers completely rule the roost, and in many the CEOs have inordinate influence on PAC decisions. *

PAC Money and Congressional "Corruption"

The most serious charge leveled at PACs is that they succeed in buying the votes of legislators on issues important to their individual constituencies. It seems hardly worth arguing that many PACs are shopping for congressional votes and that PAC money buys access, or opens doors, to congressmen. But the "vote-buying" allegation is generally not supported by a careful examination of the facts. PAC contributions do make a difference, at least on some occasions, in securing access and influencing the course of events, but those occasions are not nearly as frequent as anti-PAC spokesmen, even congressmen themselves, often suggest.

PACs affect legislative proceedings to a decisive degree only when certain conditions prevail. First, the less visible the issue, the more likely that PAC funds can change or influence congressional votes. A corollary is that PAC money has more effect in the of the legislative process, such as agenda setting and votes in subcommittee meetings, than in later and more public floor deliberations. Press, public, and even "watchdog" groups are not nearly as attentive to initial legislative proceedings.

PAC contributions are also more likely to influence the legislature when the issue is specialized and narrow, or unopposed by other organized interests. PAC gifts are less likely to be decisive on broad national issues such as American policy in Nicaragua or the adoption of a Star Wars missile defense system. But the more technical measures seem tailor-made for the special interests. Additionally, PAC influence in Congress is greater when large PACs or groups of PACs (such as business and labor PACs) are allied. In recent years, despite their natural enmity, business and labor have lobbied together on a number of issues, including defense spending, trade policy, environmental regulation, maritime legislation, trucking legislation, and nuclear power. The combination is a weighty one, checked in many instances only by a tendency for business and labor in one industry (say, the railroads) to combine and oppose their cooperating counterparts in another industry (perhaps the truckers and teamsters).

It is worth stressing, however, that most congressmen are not unduly influenced by PAC money or party votes. The special conditions simply do not apply to most legislative issues, the overriding factors in determining a legislator's votes include party affiliation, ideology, and constituents' needs and desires. Much has been made of the passage of large tax cuts for oil and business interests in the 1981 omnibus tax package. The journalist Elizabeth Drew said there was a "bidding war" to trade campaign contributions for tax breaks benefiting independent oil producers. Ralph Nader's Public Citizen group charged that the \$280,000 in corporate PAC money accepted by members of the House Ways and Means Committee helped to produce a bill that "contained everything business ever dared to ask for, and more." Yet as Robert Samuelson has convincingly argued, the "bidding war" between Democrats and Republicans was waged not for PAC money but for control of a House of Representatives sharply divided between Reaganite Republicans and liberal Democrats, with conservative "boll weevil" Democrats from the southern oil states as the crucial swing votes. The Ways and Means Committee actions cited by Nader were also more correctly explained in partisan terms. After all, if these special interests were so influential in writing the 1981 omnibus tax package, how could they fail so completely to derail the much more important (and, for them, threatening) tax reform legislation of 1986?

If party loyalty can have a stronger pull than PAC contributions, then surely the views of a congressman's constituents can also take precedence over those of political action committees. If an incumbent is faced with choice of either voting for a PAC-backed bill that is very unpopular in his district or forgoing the PAC's money, the odds are that any politician who depends on a majority of votes to remain in office is going to side with his constituency and vote against the PAC's interest. PAC gifts are merely a means to an end: reelection. If accepting money will cause a candidate embarrassment, then even a maximum donation will likely be rejected. (The flip side of this proposition makes sense as well: if a PAC's parent organization has many members or a major financial stake in the congressman's home district, he is much more likely to vote the PAC's way—not so much because he receives PAC money but because the group accounts for an important part of his electorate. Does a U.S. senator from a dairy state vote for dairy price supports because he received a significant percentage of his PAC contributions from agriculture, or because the farm population of his state is relatively large and politically active? When congressmen vote the National Rifle Association's preferences is it because of the money the NRA's PAC distributes, or because the NRA, unlike gun-control advocates, has repeatedly demonstrated the ability to produce a sizable number of votes in many legislative districts?)

If PACs have appeared more influential than they actually are, it is partly because many people believe legislators are looking for opportunities to exclaim (as one did during the Abscam scandal) "I've got larceny in my blood!" It is certainly disturbing that the National Republican Congressional Committee believed it necessary to warn its PAC-soliciting candidates: "Don't ever suggest to the PAC that it is 'buying' your vote, should you get elected." Yet knowledgeable Capitol Hill observers agree that there are few truly corrupt congressmen. Simple correlations notwithstanding, when most legislators vote for a PAC-supported bill, it is because

of the merits of the case, or the entreaties of their party leaders, peers, or constituents, and not because of PAC money.

When the PAC phenomenon is viewed in the broad perspective of issue-party allegiance, and constituent interests, it is clear that merit matters most in the votes of most congressmen cast. It is naive to contend that PAC money never influences decisions, but it is unjustifiably cynical to believe that PACs always, or even usually, push the voting buttons in Congress.

PACs in Perspective

As the largely unsubstantiated "vote-buying" controversy suggests, PACs are often misrepresented and unfairly maligned as the embodiment of corrupt special interests. Political action committees are a contemporary manifestation of what James Madison called "factions." In his *Federalist*, No. 10, Madison wrote that through the flourishing of these competing interest groups, or factions, liberty would be preserved.

In any democracy, and particularly in one as pluralistic as the United States, it is essential that groups be relatively unrestricted in advocating their interests and positions. Not only is that the mark of a free society, it also provides a safety valve for the competitive pressures that build on all fronts in a capitalistic democracy. And it provides another means to keep representatives responsive to legitimate needs.

This is not to say that all groups pursue legitimate interests, or that vigorously competing interests ensure that the public good prevails. The press, the public, and valuable watchdog groups such as Common Cause must always be alert to instances in which narrow private interests prevail over the commonweal—occurrences that generally happen when no one is looking.

Besides the press and various public interest organizations, there are two major institutional checks on the potential abuses wrought by factions, associations, and now PACs. The most fundamental of these is regular free elections with general suffrage. As Tocqueville commented:

Perhaps the most powerful of the causes which tend to mitigate the excesses of political association in the United States is Universal Suffrage. In countries in which universal suffrage exists, the majority is never doubtful, because neither party can pretend to represent that portion of the community which has not voted.

The associations which are formed are aware, as well as the nation at large, that they do not represent the majority: this is, indeed, a condition inseparable from their existence; for if they did represent the preponderating power, they would change the law instead of soliciting its reform.

Senator Robert Dole (R-Kan.) has said, "There aren't any poor PACs or Food Stamp PACs or Nutrition PACs or Medicare PACs," and PAC critics frequently make the point that certain segments of the electorate are underrepresented in the PAC community. Yet without much support from PACs, there are food stamps, poverty and nutrition programs, and Medicare. Why? Because the recipients of governmental assistance constitute a hefty slice of the electorate, and votes matter more

UPWARD TO POLITICIANS. Furthermore, many citizens outside the affected groups have also made known their support of aid to the poor and elderly—making yet a stronger electoral case for these PAC-less programs.

The other major institution that checks PAC influence is the two-party system. While PACs represent particular interests, the political parties build coalitions of groups and attempt to represent a national interest. They arbitrate among competing claims, and they seek to reach a consensus on matters of overriding importance to the nation. The parties are one of the few unifying forces in an exceptionally diverse country.

If interest groups and their PACs are useful to a functioning democracy, then political parties are essential. Yet just as PACs began gathering strength in the 1970s, the parties began a steady decline in power. In the past decade the rehabilitation of the party system has begun, but there is a long way to go. A central goal of the campaign financing reform agenda should be to strengthen the political parties, and to grant them a kind of "most favored nation" preferential status in the machinery of elections and campaign finance. Reforms to bolster the parties will also serve to temper the excesses of PACs by reducing their proportional impact on the election of public officials.

However limited and checkmated by political realities PACs may be, they are still regarded by a skeptical public as thoroughly unsavory. PACs have become the embodiment of greedy special interest politics, rising campaign costs, and corruption. It does not seem to matter that most experts in the field of campaign finance take considerable exception to the prevailing characterization of political action committees. PACs have become, in the public's mind, a powerful symbol of much that is wrong with America's campaign process, and candidates for public office naturally manipulate this symbol as well as others for their own ends. It is a circumstance as old as the Republic.

PACs, however, have done little to change their image for the better. Other than the business-oriented Public Affairs Council, few groups or committees have moved to correct one-sided press coverage or educate the public on campaign financing's fundamentals. In fact, many PACs fuel the fires of discontent by refusing to defend themselves while not seeming to care about appearances. Giving to both candidates in the same race, for example—an all-too-common practice—may be justifiable in theory, but it strikes most people as unprincipled, rank influence purchasing. Even worse, perhaps, are PACs that "correct their mistakes" soon after an election by sending a donation to the winning, but not originally PAC-supported, candidate. In the seven 1986 U.S. Senate races where a Democratic challenger defeated a Republican incumbent, there were 150 instances in which a PAC gave to the GOP candidate before the election and to the victorious Democrat once the votes were counted. These practices PACs themselves should stop. Every PAC should internally ban double giving, and there should be a moratorium on gifts to previously opposed candidates until at least the halfway point of the officeholder's term.

Whether PACs undertake some necessary rehabilitative steps or not, any fair appraisal of their role in American elections must be balanced. PACs are neither

political innocents nor selfless civic boosters. But, neither are they cesspools of corruption and greed, nor modern-day versions of Tammany Hall.

PACs will never be popular with idealistic reformers because they represent the rough, cutting edge of a democracy teeming with different peoples and conflicting interests. Indeed, PACs may never be hailed even by natural allies; it was the business-oriented *Wall Street Journal*, after all, that editorially referred to Washington, D.C., as "a place where politicians, PACs, lawyers, and lobbyists for unions, business or you-name-it shake each other down full time for political money and political support."

Viewed in perspective, the root of the problem in campaign finance is not PACs; it is money. Americans have an enduring mistrust of the mix of money (particularly business money) and politics, as Finley Peter Dunne's *Mt. Dooley* revealed:

I never knew a pollytician to go wrong until he'd been contaminated by contact with a business man. . . . It seems to me that th' only thing to do is to keep pollyticians an' business men apart. They seem to have a bad influence on each other. Whiniver I see an alderman an' a banker walkin' down th' street together I know th' Recordin' Angel will have to ordher another bottle iv ink.

As a result of the new campaign finance rules of the 1970s, political action committees superceded the "fat cats" of old as the public focus and symbol of the role of money in politics, and PACs inherited the suspicions that go with the territory. Those suspicions are valuable because they keep the spotlight on PACs and guard against undue influence. It may be regrettable that such supervision is required, but human nature—not PACs—demands it.

Part I

1. What are the three parts of the unelected power structure that has grown in Washington since the Kennedy era?
2. How did media coverage of the Iran Hostage Crisis harm the political future of President Jimmy Carter?
3. What are two factors of political life that the media has the ability to affect?
4. How did Nancy Reagan manipulate the media to change her image as a rich, high-living, snob during the depths of the 1982 recession?
5. What is the advantage of a grassroots lobby effort?
6. What are some of the factors that make the AARP such a powerful lobby?
7. If you were a politician like former Senator Charles Percy of Illinois, why would you respect and fear the American-Israeli Public Action Committee (AIPAC)?

Part II

8. What makes Tony Battista a legend as on staff member of a Congressional committee?
9. While Battista generally had a positive effective on government policy, in what way would such a person have the power to harm government policy?
10. Why does a staff member at the White House like the National Security Advisor have more power than the Secretary of State?
11. How was it possible for Col. Oliver North and National Security deputy John Poindexter to operate an illegal foreign policy scheme out of the White House?
12. What was strange about the staff influence in getting Pres. Reagan to endorse and launch the multi-billion dollar star wars (SDI) program?
13. What evidence is there that Pres. Reagan and Secretary of Defense Weinberger didn't really understand the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) they were promoting?
14. What dilemma does the growth of power in the hands of media, lobbyists and staff present to American voters?

AP Government

PAC Bonus Activity

Brady

The following activity is worth **10** bonus points in the **test and quizzes category**. To obtain all the points you must complete the following tasks:

- 1) List the **top ten PACS** for income received.
- 2) List the **top ten PACS** for money disbursed,
- 3) List the **top ten PACS** for money on hand (war chest).
- 4) One PAC with an **unusual name** will appear at the top or near the top in all three of the above categories. What is the PAC and what does the acronym stand for?
- 5) Graph the total number of **PACS from 1974 to 2014**, as best you can.
- 6) What is **“soft”** money?
- 7) What is **“hard”** money?
- 8) What is the **Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act** and who sponsored it?
- 9) What is a **“527”** and what effect did they have on the last two presidential elections (2008 and 2012)?
- 10) How did **Super-PACS** originate and what effects did they have on the last presidential election (2012)?

Please see me if you have questions about websites and other sources to use.

