

## Interest Groups Part 1

Are you aware that there are organizations in the U.S. that use money and pressure to change public policy? Like it or not, such organizations do exist, and they're called interest groups. So, who are they and how do they do what they do?

Interest groups are private organizations whose members share certain views and work to shape public policy. Public policy includes all of the goals the government sets and the various courses of action it pursues to achieve these goals. Interest groups exist specifically to shape public policy.

Political parties and interest groups differ in a few ways. First, political parties are responsible for the nominating process, while interest groups hope to influence those nominations. The primary focus of political parties is to win elections and control government, while interest groups are busy influencing the policies created by the government. Political parties concern themselves with a whole range of public affairs, while interest groups tend to focus on issues that their members are concerned about.

Interest groups raise awareness of public affairs or issues that concern citizens at large, and represent people who share attitudes rather than those who share geography. They provide specialized information to government agencies and legislatures, and can be vehicles for political participation. Interest groups keep tabs on various public agencies and officials, and often compete with one another for influence and size.

So what do you think of interest groups? Is it a good thing that there are groups that represent specific mindsets in the political process? Is it bad for the country to have money in politics? It's a divisive argument that you don't have to make a decision on just yet. We'll be talking more about interest groups as we dig deeper into the political system.

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